



# **30th MELTA International Conference 2022**

*10-11 September 2022*

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## NOTE FROM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

It gives us great pleasure to present to you the proceedings of the 30th MELTA International Conference, *English Language Education and The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. The conference features ELT professionals sharing innovations in exploring and embracing education for the future. The conference brings together education policy makers, practitioners, and scholars to engage and collaborate with colleagues from around the world to evolve solutions in English language education focused on developing sustainable literacies that are future proof and relevant focusing on the following sub-themes:

- Teacher Professional Development
- Pedagogy
- Creativity in Language Learning
- ELT Materials Development and Adaptation

On behalf of the 30th MELTA International Conference proceedings committee, I would like to express my gratitude to Associate Professor Dr Naginder Kaur, Dr Ramiza Darmi, Dr Surindar Kaur, Dr Fatin Nabila, Dr Bazrina, Mr Nur Haziq, Mrs Azie Azlina, Mrs Nur Dalila, and Ms See Jasmine for their tireless effort in editing and reviewing the submitted papers for this proceedings book. Thank you to all authors too for your invaluable scholarly contributions. We would also like to invite you to submit revised versions of your full papers, after the conference, to MELTA's journals, *The English Teacher* (ISSN 0128-7729) and the *Malaysian Journal of ELT Research* (ISSN: 1511-8002). Thank you and wishing everyone a fruitful session.

Dr Ilyana Jalaluddin  
Editor-in-Chief  
30th MELTA International Conference Proceedings  
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# **Teacher Professional Development**

# CPD, LOCKDOWN-STYLE: EMPOWERMENT THROUGH INNOVATION

**Ho Theen Theen<sup>1</sup>, Anis Alisya bt Abdullah<sup>2</sup>, Juria Laing<sup>3</sup> and Willie ak Jandar<sup>4</sup>**

*<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Tun Abdul Razak, Samarahan*

*[\\*ho23-33@epembelajaran.edu.my](mailto:ho23-33@epembelajaran.edu.my)*

## Abstract

The lack of teachers trained for a particular subject in particular schools is an issue that is less visible than an outright shortage of teachers, but no less significant. To address this problem, a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme spearheaded by IPG Kampus Tun Abdul Razak was implemented to provide support to non-option primary school English teachers in Sarawak, focusing on interpreting the current syllabus and applying Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). The training principle applied was to empower teachers to take ownership of their own professional development; hence training sessions favoured self-reflective activities over more prescriptive methods for delivery of content. Unfortunately, the nationwide Movement Control Order during the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated changes to the implementation of the training module in order to transition to a fully online mode from the originally planned face-to-face mode of training. Post-training, research was conducted on the impact of the CPD, focusing on three principal areas: module content, implementation, and participants' engagement. Qualitative data was collected asynchronously through semi-structured written feedback from 258 participants and focus groups involving 60 trainers. This paper presents part of the findings, specifically on the effects from changes made in the training mode. Data analysis revealed three main themes: diffusion of attention, depersonalization, and technology-actuated stress. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the overall data from the main study indicated a positive and beneficial outcome from the training, wherein the objectives of the CPD were deemed to be well achieved despite the various challenges and shortcomings described in this paper.

**Keywords:** ELT, CPD, professional development, pandemic, online training

## 1. Introduction

In 2020, the Sarawak Ministry of Education, Innovation and Talent Development, then known as MESTR, took the initiative to conduct a lab to identify strategies to increase students' enrolment in STEM package in schools, which hovered around just over 32% compared to the targeted 60% based on data from the Sarawak State Education Department. It was also in 2020 that Sarawak first implemented the Dual Language Programme (DLP) which saw the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English starting from Year 1 students. With almost one third of primary EL teachers and more than half of Science and Mathematics teachers not trained to teach the subject, it was imperative for these teachers be given training to ensure effective delivery of lessons. It was agreed that this vital task would be assigned to the four institutes of teacher education (ITE) in Sarawak, spearheaded by Tun Abdul Razak Campus. Subsequently, a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme was developed for the purpose of better equipping non-option teachers of Science, Mathematics and English Language teachers for the task entrusted to them. This paper presents research conducted on the implementation



and effectiveness of this CPD programme. However, it should be noted that only data on the non-option English Language teachers is included.

A training module was produced that focused on the immediate needs of the course participants (CPs), which were firstly interpreting the EL primary school syllabus, requiring them to unpack and repack the curriculum, and no less importantly, enhancing their pedagogical content knowledge. The training principle applied was to empower CPs to take ownership of their own professional development by applying metacognitive strategies. This is an innovative approach in comparison to the usual practice of CPD courses, wherein trainers steered away from telling CPs how teaching should be done by prescribing to CPs what to do and what not to do in their classes. Likewise, CPs were not provided with large numbers of sample lesson plans to replicate without a strong grasp of the underlying principles in those plans. Instead, the training included more self-reflective activities and sharing of best practices in which CPs not only shared what worked, but also what did not work for them. Finally, CPs were encouraged to form their own professional learning community after their training course was over.

The CPD was originally designed for face-to-face training, not anticipating that the pandemic would last longer than a few months. As the Movement Control Order became more protracted, it became apparent that it would be necessary to modify the training to proceed with fully online implementation. This study examines the impact of delivering this CPD course online, from CP's perspectives. This is important as part of the ongoing efforts in the ITE to improve the effectiveness of training courses, especially those that are conducted online as this is expected to become more common in post-pandemic times.

## 2. Related Literature

The pandemic led to major changes in education-delivery systems worldwide, most characteristically a shift to online classes at all levels. Researchers were prompt in studying this phenomenon, ranging in context from personal and professional development in online courses (Mikołajczyk, 2022) to remote supervision of teachers (Alhashem et al., 2022). One common area of study was the engagement of learners (Bailenson, 2021; Kumtepe et al., 2019; Maini et al., 2021; Martin & Bolliger, 2018; Sia & Abbas Adamu, 2021), hence this study is in good company in this respect in including learner engagement as one of its areas of study. The findings and recommendations from the current research are also comparable to those of the aforementioned studies, as well as those from Ajaz (2021) and Lear et al. (2010).

## 3. Methodology

The study included 258 CPs and 60 trainers. During the CPD course, CPs were divided into 15 groups with 4 trainers each group. Data was collected asynchronously by the trainers from their respective groups in the form of semi-structured written feedback, which later fed into a focus group comprising all the trainers. The data is thus wholly qualitative in nature. Content analysis of the raw data was then carried out to identify the themes related to the following three research questions.

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the CPD in terms of module content?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the CPD in terms of the implementation of the online training?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the CPD in terms of participants' engagement?

## 4. Findings and Discussion

The research included both the strengths and weaknesses of the CPD training, but only a selected part of the findings is presented here, specifically the problems encountered by CPs during the course. This is in the interests of continuous quality improvement, for the benefit of not only the ITE, but also other parties who may wish to conduct similar training courses online. It should not therefore be inferred that the CPD training did not achieve its goals. In fact, the entire body of data indicates that both CPs and trainers considered the CPD training as a whole to be greatly successful.

The discussion is organised according to the three main findings of this research: diffusion of attention, depersonalization, and technology-actuated stress. Each section also includes recommendations for improvements.

### Diffusion of attention

Responses from the CPs suggested that it was a challenge for them to maintain their focus over the entirety of the CPD course. This is likely to stem from the structure of the training. Excluding the on-site phase, it was originally planned to have a total of 52 face-to-face contact hours. This was significantly reduced in the online mode, down to just 27 hours over 9 afternoons. There was thus the immediate problem of possible watering down of the course content. The solution was to adopt a Flipped Classroom approach, wherein the CPs had to cover material on their own time before discussion and activities in Google Meets. Nevertheless, CPs still had to conduct online classes for their own pupils in the mornings. This meant that CPs were constantly changing roles, which made it difficult for them to maintain their focus. Inability to manage their time would result in CPs being unable to keep up because they had not managed to do their “homework” for the day. Not only that, but CPs also had to deal with a less than ideal learning environment with numerous distractions, stemming from the conflation of their work and learning environments.

The recommendation arising from this finding would be to reduce the diffusion of attention on the part of CPs by freeing them from other job-related responsibilities for the duration of the training. Simply put, teachers on an online course should not be expected to concurrently teach their normal classes as this also entails preparation time, and this is particularly pertinent if the course design includes self-directed learning activities. Likewise, time to attend to CPs’ daily personal needs must also be factored in when designing online learning, as suggested by Ajaz (2021)’s findings.

### Depersonalization

Depersonalization as a result of isolation and reduced interaction in online classes was a common finding in the studies referred to, including Lear et al. (2010), Kumtepe et al. (2019) and Mikołajczyk (2022). In the context of the CPD, the main factor appeared to be the mode of training. The CPs spent most of their time listening to others, and even though the direct input from trainers had been reduced, CPs still had to sit through a lot of presentations by other groups. These presentations are as much one-way interaction as lectures, albeit with different speakers instead of the same one all the time. Inevitably, the CPs’ attention may start to wander, particularly if they had both audio and video turned off. This was a necessity because otherwise, there would be lagging in the online meeting, not to mention requiring considerably more data. Even when CPs were able to keep their video feed on, they faced the problem of screen fatigue, which is a paraphrase of the term ‘zoom fatigue’ used by Bailenson (2021). This is a result of feeling like one is constantly under scrutiny by the other participants in the video meeting and

being forced into unnatural non-verbal behaviour and can take a toll on participants' mental and emotional energy. Screen fatigue was likewise a problem identified in Sia et al. (2021).

To address the matter of depersonalization, it is recommended that trainers conducting a fully online course should include more interactive activities using online applications and websites instead of just delivering content through lecture-style video meeting sessions. Likewise, CPs should be given opportunities to interact with each other outside scheduled interaction hours by making use of social media and instant messaging services as suggested by Martin & Bolliger (2018), since interactivity and a sense of community have been found to be correlated to learner engagement (Lear et al., 2010; Kumtepe et al., 2019). Similarly highlighting the importance of interaction, Mikołajczyk (2022) suggests that hybrid modes of training may be effective to overcome the sense of isolation that many online learners experience.

With regard to the cognitive load (or overload as the case may be) from one-way interaction, it is also suggested that the results of group discussions can be documented in written form on online platforms that are accessible by all participants, instead of being orally presented in synchronous sessions. Feedback—also written—can then be given asynchronously by the trainer and fellow participants, thus retaining the collaborative learning benefits of sharing the results of group discussions.

### **Technology-actuated stress**

The final finding on technology-actuated stress is perhaps something of a foregone conclusion, given the circumstances of the training. To begin with, even though access to technology is not a determinant of achievement but rather a precursor according to Hattie (2008), it was a crucial element for this particular CPD since it was literally impossible for CPs to join the training without the necessary hardware. Due to the sudden onset of the pandemic, very few of the CPs and even the trainers could be said to fully equipped with the necessary hardware, including gadgets and internet connectivity. The pandemic and the accompanying Movement Control Order placed severe restrictions on supplying what was lacking, even more so for the CPs who were in rural areas, which actually made up the majority. Abdullah & Letchamanan (2022) have pointed out that dissimilar access to supporting facilities is a root cause of inequality in education among children, and this is no less true for the CPs in the context of this CPD.

Even when hardware was not an issue, CPs did not necessarily have the digital skills to use their equipment—they, like other teachers worldwide—were still grappling with the fundamental skills required for full-scale online teaching and learning, which was in its infancy at the time of the training. Many trainers faced the same challenges, and those trainers who were more tech-savvy found themselves in a Catch-22 situation: when they tried to increase interaction by using apps or websites, the CPs lacked the skills to participate in these activities. The lack of skills is significant in the light of studies like Maini et al. (2021) which found teachers' and students' technical readiness to be one of the key factors influencing students' satisfaction with online learning.

Since the CPD had been designed for face-to-face interaction, a digital skills component was never included in the contents. Hence, trainers had to come up with ad-hoc training sessions for their respective groups, which took time away from the main course contents. All this led to a lot of frustration and stress, and undoubtedly had a detrimental effect on morale, both for CPs and trainers, as indicated by the findings from Sia et al. (2021).

With regard to this finding, the recommendation is to take into account potential participants' internet access in the selection process to prevent undue stress should they be enrolled in an online course. As for those who are in dire need of the training but are serving in areas with intermittent or non-existent connectivity, face-to-face training may be a more viable option. In terms of course design, collecting preliminary information on potential participants' current digital skills can be a precursor to decisions on whether to include a digital skill component in the course content.

## 5. Conclusion

"A crisis is a terrible thing to waste." The oft-quoted words from economist Paul Romer (2004, in Chisholm-Burns, 2010) aptly sums up the spirit in which this paper is presented. The team from Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Tun Abdul Razak do not wish the challenging experiences while conducting online training during a pandemic to go to waste. Since it is widely accepted that online education and training are here to stay even in the post-pandemic era, it is hoped that this input on the problems faced by participants and pertinent recommendations for further improvement would contribute to better training practices for CPD in all fields.

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# REDUCING TOPIC FRONTING TO DEVELOP TESL TRAINEES' AWARENESS IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Megawati Soekarno<sup>1,\*</sup> and Aaron Charles<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia*

<sup>2</sup>*Sekolah Kebangsaan Palak, Pulau Banggi, Kudat, Sabah, Malaysia*

[\\*megawati.s@ums.edu.my](mailto:*megawati.s@ums.edu.my)

## Abstract

Regarding sustainability in 21st-century learning, most people will think about the impact of human activities on the economy and the environment. However, a significant part of sustainable resources also involves society, and teacher professional development has become a significant field in itself. Language learning has moved away from conventional structural and topical learning into a more communicative academic pursuit. Due to the extensive reliance on the internet and the pandemic-induced online learning, communication strategy training has been supportive of the development of technical discourse in pedagogical programmes such as Teaching ESL (TESL). In higher education, English is taught and learnt for specific purposes, and the learners' awareness of their communication strategies becomes exceptionally crucial. Consequently, it was unacceptable to observe that several TESL trainees were unaware of using topic fronting, a Malaysian variety communication strategy. Despite being an achievement communication strategy, topic fronting does not abide by the English language grammatical rule. Thus, the high use of this deviant English speech pattern strategy among ESL learners would affect them adversely, especially in their academic discourse. There has been an observation that topic fronting has emerged in the TESL trainees' written assessments, such as assignments and project reports

**Keywords:** topic fronting, TESL trainee, awareness

## 1. Introduction

When discussing innovation in education or 21st-century learning, most people will consider using technology in outreaching and learning. There is a stereotype regarding the word "innovation", circulating in advances in technology, utilisation of gadgetry in learning, rampant dependence on the internet in material sources, and the pandemic induced online learning. In reality, innovation is more than that. Research into communication strategies and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is a thriving area of investigation that has so far looked into cooperative strategies leading to successful communication and mutual understanding or how miscommunication is resolved. Above all, academic and business ELF (BELF) contexts and, more recently, international students' communities (Vettorel, 2019).

Communication strategies, rather than a mere compensation device, are thus to be considered an essential element in the process of effective communication in that speakers strategically use them as part of "communicative capability." Regardless of language source, level of

proficiency or specialisation, Soekarno's (2019) thesis showed that communication strategy training is an effective method to implement the use of achievement strategies in technical interactions. Richards and Schmidt (2009) initially identified communication strategies as techniques that learners use to overcome communication problems caused by a lack of linguistic resources to convey their intended meaning.

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Communicative competence comprises grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). When a communication problem crops up in a conversation, interactional modifications are utilised to bridge the gap and continue the conversation.

Among the most prevalent of these interactional modification or communication strategies used among Malaysians is the use of fillers (Soekarno & Ting, 2014), code-switching (David, 2013; Then & Ting, 2010), and topic fronting (Benson, 1990; Soekarno, 2019, Ting & Phan, 2008; Ting & Kho, 2008).

Today's world looks at a different environment in language learning and, most importantly, communication practice. With this in mind, the perception of the use of communication strategies would also need to change. One of the aspects that are in need of change is the acceptance of an obsolete norm, the use of topic fronting which was cited as a characteristic of the Malaysian variety of English by Benson (1990). Topic fronting is a communication strategy where the speaker makes use of subject plus predicate syntactic structure to parcel up information to emphasise the topic. This is derived from Clennell's (1995) Discourse-Based perspective communication strategies which use topic plus syntactic comment structures to portion information.

Soekarno's (2019) study, this study observed the procedure of communication strategy training involving 23 limited English proficiency learners that were carried out over 13 sessions, with each session focusing on a different communication strategy. This study shows the process and outcome in the attempt to reduce topic fronting by developing the TESL trainees' awareness of their use of communication strategies. The outcome of this research should inculcate the use of suitable achievement strategies among TESL trainees, which will be transferred to future ESL learners' global use.

## **2. Issues of Topic Fronting among Malaysians**

The post-pandemic situation is forcing us to eradicate topic fronting as we face virtual interactions with a higher number of Native speakers than ever before. Past research has identified that topic fronting is a part of the communication strategy grouped as collaborative strategies with tonicity devices and fillers used in conversational maintenance. A helpful strategy that emphasises the topic to prepare the interlocutor for details to follow, topic fronting is generally accepted as a Malaysian communication strategy. However, one still has to concede that despite its usefulness, the topic fronting is a deviation from acceptable Native speaker use of English.

Many second language learners regard speaking ability as the measure of knowing a language and value the ability to converse more than reading, writing, or comprehending oral language. On the other hand, many teachers of second language's view mastery of language as the ability

to apply the learned rules such as syntactic features, vocabulary specifications, and possible prosodic features. They use drills and communicative practice to instill accuracy and confidence in speaking. Communicative competence is defined as comprising grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). When a communication problem crops up in a conversation, interactional modifications are utilised to bridge the gap and continue the conversation. Among the most prevalent of these interactional modification or communication strategies used among Malaysians is the use of fillers (Soekarno & Ting, 2014), code-switching (David, 2013; Then & Ting, 2010), and topic fronting (Benson, 1990; Soekarno, 2019; Soekarno, Othman, Ab Aziz & Nik Mohamed, 2021; Ting & Phan, 2008; Ting & Kho, 2008).

Topic fronting generally refers to any construction in which a word group that customarily follows the verb is placed at the beginning of a sentence under English grammar (Nordquist, 2020). Identified as “front-focus” or “preposing,” this type of fronting has a variety of purposes in discourse, especially in the conservation of cohesion. It can be used to maintain the movement of textual information, express contrast, and provide emphasis to specific elements. When utilised in dialogues, topic fronting allows the speaker to place the focus at the beginning of a sentence to make a story more interesting. However, fronting can also trigger something called inverted subject-verb order (Pearce, 2007). Moving the subject out of its natural environment involves a shift of emphasis and represents another aspect of this focus device. An example of topic fronting from Wolcott and Vinciguerra (2011) shows that it is unsuitable for technical utterances and second language teaching as this will create confusion. This happens especially among limited proficiency learners and absolute beginners. For instance, the famous Star Wars Jedi master Yoda: “Powerful you have become Dooku, the dark side I sense in you.”

### 3. Methods

This research utilised the information obtained from focus group discussion (FGD) and an Oral Communication Strategies Inventory (OCSI) opinionnaire proposed in Soekarno’s (2019) research. As qualitative research, this study aimed to explore the nature of the phenomenon of concern or learn about the views of individuals with the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2003; 2012; Zhu & Carless, 2018). Another instrument utilised in this study was the trainees’ presentation, obtained from a TESL Methodology course currently offered at UMS. As part of the coursework requirements, each student was required to develop a module of lesson plans by focusing on the set induction and closure for English Language Teaching. Each student presented their lesson plans which were aligned to the CEFR curriculum within a predetermined duration.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The FGD results show six distinct themes emerging from the research findings, which included:

- Theme 1: Understanding topic fronting,
- Theme 2: Function of topic fronting,
- Theme 3: Awareness of topic fronting,
- Theme 4: Utilisation of topic fronting among future students,

- Theme 5: Concession of topic fronting in teaching and lastly,
- Theme 6: Avoiding topic fronting.

*Table 1: Comparative analysis of TWS and frequency of topic fronting*

SESSION	PARTICIPANT (%)	TOTAL WORD SPOKEN	FREQUENCY OF TOPIC FRONTING						
			T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	Total
UiTM FGD1	88.89	12 036			1	2			3
UiTM FGD2	77.78	9384	1	1	4	1	3	2	12
UiTM FGD3	100.00	9523					4	2	6
UiTM FGD4	100.00	5301	1	2	1	1	2	1	8
UMS FGD1	100.00	6524	2	1		2	1		6
UMS FGD2	100.00	6215	1	1		1			3
UMS FGD3	100.00	7983	3	1	1	6			11
UMS FGD4	100.00	7631		2	3	2	1	3	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	766.67	<b>52561</b>	8	8	10	15	11	8	60
<b>AVE. %</b>	95.83		1.60	1.33	2.00	2.14	<b>2.20</b>	2.00	7.50

Table 1 shows that out of a total of 52561 TWS, there was only 60 times topic fronting was used, making it 1.142 per thousand words. As the word length of the transcripts for the three sessions differed, the total number of communication strategies was normalised for comparison across training sessions (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). The convention is to calculate per 1000 words (ptw) as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Total number of communication strategies}}{\text{Total words spoken}} \times 1000$$

In reference to Soekarno and Ting's (2016, 2020, 2021) application, the number of communication strategies used was counted as raw frequencies. The highest number of topic fronting use is in the UiTM second FGD, with 12 utterances representing all the six themes

obtained from the discourse. The low number is reflective of the participants being TESL trainees and, therefore, having more control and self-awareness in their speech patterns.

The following Table 2 shows the findings for 41 microteaching sessions, where the **panelists'** assessed the primary aspect of the exercise, the trainee's effectiveness in Microteaching.

*Table 2: Effectiveness in microteaching sessions*

PAX	MICROTEACHING				%
	tSI	Ave	tCL	Ave	
MT1	21.00	7.00	14.00	4.67	21.00
MT2	12.00	4.00	24.00	8.00	21.60
MT3	20.00	6.67	14.00	4.67	20.40
MT4	11.00	3.67	24.00	8.00	21.00
MT5	19.00	6.33	22.00	7.33	24.60
MT6	11.00	3.67	18.00	6.00	17.40
MT7	22.00	7.33	22.00	7.33	26.40
MT8	20.00	6.67	14.00	4.67	20.40
MT9	12.00	4.00	11.00	3.67	13.80
MT10	19.00	6.33	13.00	4.33	19.20
MT11	12.00	4.00	19.00	6.33	18.60
MT12	20.00	6.67	14.00	4.67	20.40
MT13	21.00	7.00	14.00	4.67	21.00
MT14	12.00	4.00	17.00	5.67	17.40
MT15	15.00	5.00	22.00	7.33	22.20
MT16	11.00	3.67	14.00	4.67	15.00
MT17	26.00	8.67	23.00	7.67	29.40
MT18	21.00	7.00	11.00	3.67	19.20
MT19	12.00	4.00	14.00	4.67	15.60
MT20	24.00	8.00	15.00	5.00	23.40
MT21	13.00	4.33	19.00	6.33	19.20
MT22	19.00	6.33	19.00	6.33	22.80



MT23	19.00	6.33	15.00	5.00	20.40
MT24	20.00	6.67	23.00	7.67	25.80
MT25	11.00	3.67	21.00	7.00	19.20
MT26	12.00	4.00	21.00	7.00	19.80
MT27	19.00	6.33	16.00	5.33	21.00
MT28	22.00	7.33	12.00	4.00	20.40
MT29	21.00	7.00	14.00	4.67	21.00
MT30	14.00	4.67	14.00	4.67	16.80
MT31	15.00	5.00	16.00	5.33	18.60
MT32	26.00	8.67	16.00	5.33	25.20
MT33	14.00	4.67	16.00	5.33	18.00
MT34	18.00	6.00	16.00	5.33	20.40
MT35	22.00	7.33	15.00	5.00	22.20
MT36	12.00	4.00	18.00	6.00	18.00
MT37	19.00	6.33	13.00	4.33	19.20
MT38	18.00	6.00	20.00	6.67	22.80
MT39	11.00	3.67	12.00	4.00	13.80
MT40	11.00	3.67	11.00	3.67	13.20
MT41	19.00	6.33	13.00	4.33	19.20
t	696.00	232.00	679.00	226.33	825.00
AVE	16.98	5.66	16.56	5.52	20.12

Table 2 shows a decrease in the average result from 5.66% to 5.52% from the Set Induction to Closure. Although it shows a relatively small decrease, it is safe to surmise that the trainees show the attainability of the predetermined objectives in Microteaching. There is also a need to understand the differences between Set Induction and Closure in Microteaching. Despite being allocated only 5 minutes for each activity, the weight of the Set Induction is higher than the Closure as they are the initiators of the whole Teaching and Learning activity. Here we could see how the TESL trainees managed to conduct themselves professionally during the critical segments of a teaching and learning session.

## 5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings in this study identified that the use of a topic-fronting communication strategy among TESL trainees was not something they were aware of before

they participated in the study. Their transcripts showed that they have low utilisation of topic-fronting. The TESL trainees came up with a consensus of avoiding the use of topic fronting in their future teaching altogether. However, they would permit the lower proficiency ESL learners in their class to resort to topic fronting if necessary. The microteaching had shown that these TESL trainees would eventually be able to control their utilisation of topic fronting to project a professional educational practice.

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## EXPLORING THE TEACHING OF WRITING THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

Wong Kian Yong

*SJK(C)Lih Jen*

[g-37120866@moe-dl.edu.my](mailto:g-37120866@moe-dl.edu.my)

### Abstract

Teacher professional development is essential in enhancing and maintaining the teacher quality and the effect flows into the classroom. Professional Learning Community is a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students. This study aims to explore the impact of the professional learning community (PLC) in developing the teaching knowledge and consequently improving the quality of the teaching and learning process. The research was based on Kemmis and McTaggart's Action Research Model. A professional learning community was formed among an English teacher, the Head of English Panel, the senior assistant, and a School Improvement Specialist Coach (SISC+) in PPD Melaka Tengah to teach writing lessons to 20 Year 5 pupils from a Chinese primary school in Melaka. Various PLC strategies were used to conduct 2 cycles of the study. Findings show that the implementation of the professional learning community improves the pupils' learning process, increases collaboration among the teachers, and improves the writing product of the pupils in the writing lessons. The process of conducting the study allowed me to understand the importance of the professional development of a teacher. I also understand that the concept of a teacher as a lifelong learner needs to be practiced to remain an effective teacher.

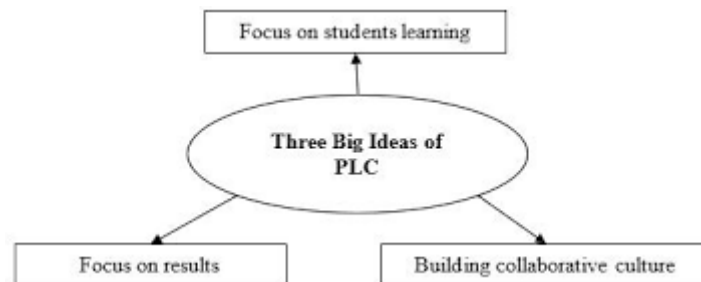
**Keywords:** Professional Learning Community, professional development, writing

### 1. Introduction

A Professional Learning Community can be operationalised as educators working collaboratively and interdependently through ongoing collective inquiry and action research with an intense focus on student learning (Mattos, DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2016). The purpose of the professional learning community is not to shine a light on all of the weaknesses of the individual teacher members, but to draw attention to and share those practices, strategies, and ideas that are working to improve student learning and then build on. (Michelle P., Weiman. K, 2012). Flores and Day (2006) also demonstrate positive attitudes towards teaching" (p. 230). Once teachers experience a feeling of belonging to something that matters and is making a difference for students, they tend to continue working in that environment. However, DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2010) argue that the educators need to understand the "Big Ideas" that represent core PLC principles and how they can sustain the PLC model until it becomes the school's culture. On the other hand, the PLC strategy is carefully selected and made good use of it to ensure the success of a Professional Learning Community.

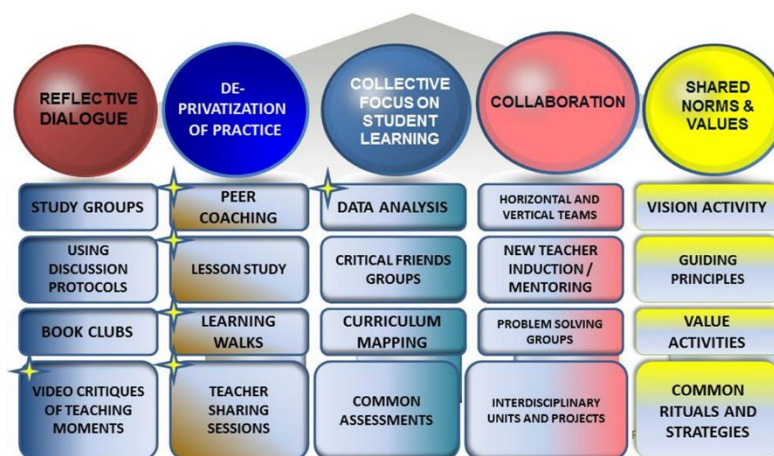


Figure 1: The Three Big Ideas of PLC



Source: Solution Tree

Figure 1: The PLC Strategies



Source: Bahagian Pendidikan Guru

## 2. Problem Statement

Studies show that writing skills are the most difficult skills to teach (Hadi, M. S., Izzah, L., & Paulia, Q. (2021). Teachers find teaching writing more difficult than teaching other language skills such as speaking, listening, and reading (Akinwamide, 2012). My senior assistant observed me teaching a writing lesson. We had discussion protocols after the observation. He responded that my writing lesson was lack of fun element. Pupils of different abilities should be given different writing tasks to cater to their needs. I was quite confused and uncertain about how to improve my writing lesson. I started to seek support from experienced teachers and formed a Professional Learning Community to improve my teaching quality.

## 3. Related Literature

A study that explored the link between teacher learning, teacher instructional behavior, and student outcomes showed that engaging in an ongoing learning process led teachers to identify and carry out practices that resulted in increased graduation rates, improved college admission rates, and higher academic achievement for their students (Ancess, J, 2000). Some reports have also proven that implementation of PLC among school members affected the personality, attitude, and organisational behaviour (Alwi et al., 2021) and promoted successful integration among multicultural members in the school community (Munardji et al., 2020). Previous studies conducted on PLC in the context of Malaysia had focused more on the domains of PLC

(Abdullah & Ghani 2013; Abdullah & Ghani 2014; Ismail et al. 2014; Jafar, M. F., Yaakob, M. F. M., Awang, H., Zain, F. M., & Kasim, M., 2022).). Although PLC has been numerously debated and discussed among educators, there is limited literature that explores the influence of PLC on teachers in the context of Malaysian schools, especially primary schools. (Salleh, F., & Ibrahim, A., 2020). This study shows its significance in understanding the implementation of a Professional Learning Community in a primary school.

#### 4. Methods

The research was conducted in a Chinese primary school in Melaka. There were four PLC members in this research, namely a SISC+ PPD Melaka Tengah, the senior assistant 1, the head of the English panel, and a teacher. 20 Year 5 pupils with mixed ability in wiring skills were selected.

##### 4.1 Data Collection Methods

Extended engagement and reflection, continual observation, and triangulation enhanced the credibility of the research. I used the following methods to collect the data and analyse the data.

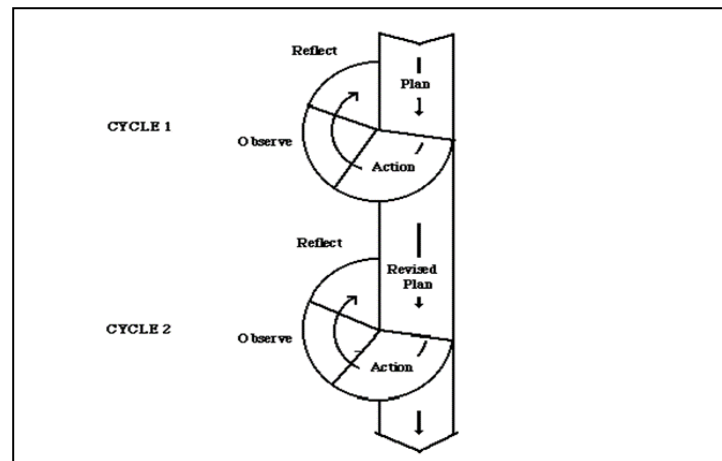
*Table 1: Summary of methods data collections and data analysis*

<b>Data Collection Methods</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>
Teacher Reflection Journal	TRJ/(Cycle)	Categorise
PLC members' reflective form	PLC (No)/(Question Number)	Categorise
Pupils' writing	PW/(pupil's code)	Bar Chart
Pupils' reflective forms	PR/(pupil's code)	Categorise
Photos	OC/(Cycle)/(Number)	Categorise

##### 4.2 Action Plan

I adapted the action research model of Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) -- plan, act, observe, reflect; and then, moving on to plan for the next cycle (Figure 3).

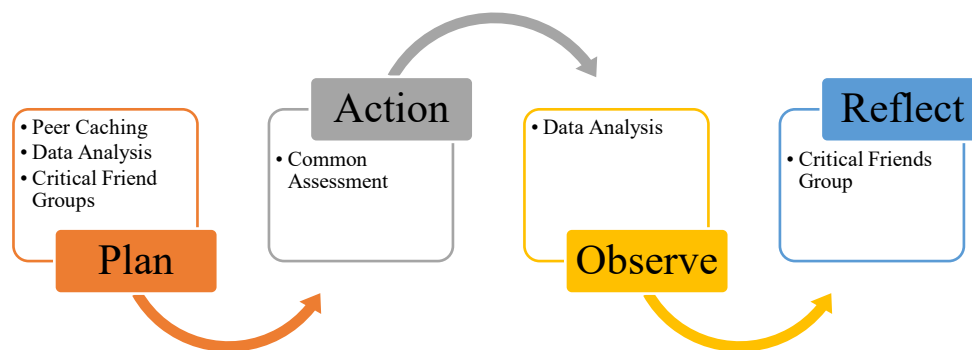
Figure 3: Action Research Steps (Kemmis &amp; McTaggart, 1988)



Source: Reserachgatenet

In each step, PLC strategies were used to determine the most effective way of teaching writing to the pupils. ( Figure 4)

Figure 5: PLC Strategies in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2



## 5. Results and Discussion

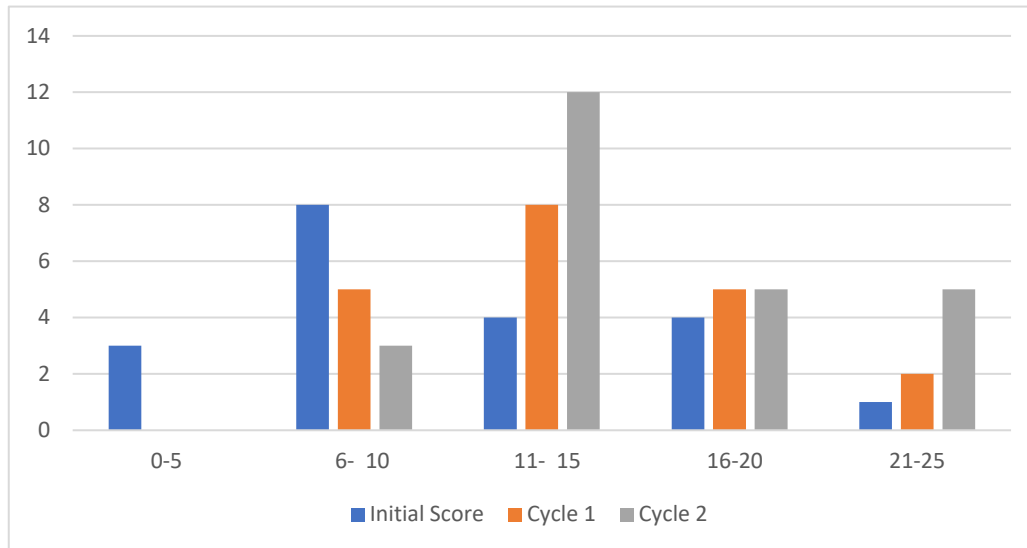
The results were derived from the data collection methods. Based on the design of the lessons, one of the PLC members stated *‘The lesson also designed to meet the needs of the students and that is framed according to what is considered to be best practices in teaching and learning.’* In the pupil’s reflective journal, 12 pupils mentioned that the design of lessons were easy to understand. They enjoyed the process of helping one another in the process writing approach, one of the pupils also claimed that *‘Yes because if it wasn’t for my friends, I wouldn’t had write so well.’* The usage of PowerPoint animation and ClassDojo also gave positive learning impacts to the pupils. In the teacher’s reflective journal, it stated that *‘The PowerPoint animation scaffolded the pupils to understand when and how to use ‘and’ and ‘but’ step by step. Pupils are excited when they see their points were added in ClassDojo.’*

Through the collaboration among the teachers, one of the PLC members expressed that *‘Moreover, teacher could also assess students’ understanding (Performance Level) and create differentiated materials for students to work on’.* Another PLC member also proposed that *‘He should be able to give constructive feedback and suggestions to the teachers on ways they can improve the lesson.’* In the teacher’s reflective journal, it was noted that *‘a Professional*

*Learning Community allows me to collaborate and gain input from the other teachers. We can always improve from time to time to become better teachers.'*

When looking at pupils' writing performance, shows improvement in their performance. The majority of the pupils could follow and perform in the lesson as stated in the teacher's reflective journal *'To my surprise, even the weak pupils were able to complete the writing together with their friends.'*

Figure 4: Pupils' writing performance in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2



The results indicate that the quality teaching and learning process had improved through multiple discussions with the teacher during the peer coaching session. PLC is a powerful strategy to enhance the teaching skills of the teachers based on their learning experiences (Jafar, M. F., Yaakob, M. F. M., Awang, H., Zain, F. M., & Kasim, M., 2022). As such, PLCs play an important role for teachers to share their creativity and critical thinking to produce the best way of teaching (Mustapha et al., 2021). Hence, pupils enjoyed and participated actively in the lessons as it created fun, meaningful, and purposeful lessons, pupil-centered learning, and integration of ICT elements in the lessons.

PLC among school members affected the personality, attitude, and organisational behaviour (Alwi et al., 2021) and promoted successful integration among multicultural members in the school community (Munardji et al., 2020). Through collaboration between teachers, the sharing of teaching experience takes place and that promotes a positive learning environment for the teachers to be clear of their missions and expectations in the class, provide and receive constructive feedbacks from one another and understand the importance of lifelong learners.

The Professional Learning Community also refers to the efforts of committed school leaders and educators who work collaboratively and continuously with the community to achieve better student performance (Hord, 2004; DuFour & Eaker, 2002). Figure 4 shows the increment in the pupils' writing performance. The usage of a writing flow map and process writing approach allowed them to produce better descriptive writing.

However, there were some limitations of this research that should be addressed in further research. The Professional Learning Community should be comprised of more teachers in the school. All lessons conducted should be recorded to be watched after the lessons for video critique sessions to help teachers identify the strengths and weaknesses of the lessons. The

research also needs to be implemented for a longer time to develop a school culture of Professional Learning Community.

## 6. Conclusion

Understanding the core principles of the Professional Learning Community is essential for the professional development of a teacher since it is one of the government policies. The research aimed to implement Professional Learning Community to enhance teaching writing to year 5 pupils. It can be concluded that Professional Learning Community is an effective way to improve the pupils' learning process, create positive impacts through collaboration among teachers and produce a positive outcome in the pupils' writing skills. It is vividly seen the significance of PLC in supporting both teachers and pupils in the teaching and learning process. Based on this conclusion, practitioners should consider empowering Professional Learning Community in their teaching and learning environment to provide a platform for continuous learning as lifelong learners.

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# Pedagogy



# PART-TIME POSTGRADUATE TESL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE ON DISTANCE LEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC: A CASE STUDY

Koet Tian Wei<sup>1</sup> and Azlina Abdul Aziz<sup>2,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

<sup>2</sup>*Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

## Abstract

The COVID-19 outbreak had brought about a profound and unprecedented impact on various countries worldwide. One of the impacts of the pandemic was the closing of educational institutions to stop the virus from spreading. In Malaysia, teachers from primary to tertiary levels were instructed to adopt alternative teaching methods in securing the continuation of teaching and learning processes during the pandemic. However, the sudden transition of the nature of education required teachers to prepare themselves to carry out this emergency pedagogy instantly had posed tremendous challenges for them. To understand how TESL postgraduate students who are also full-time teachers cope with the challenges in response to the disruption of everyday physical class context, this study explored the experiences faced by part-time postgraduate TESL students in UKM who are also in-service teachers on distance teaching and learning during the pandemic. This qualitative case study applied a qualitative survey and a semi-structured interview method. 41 UKM postgraduate TESL students in their second year, who had been experiencing learning and working from home since the lockdown period in March 2020, participated in the surveys, and ten were interviewed via Telegram instant messaging application. The findings were analysed through thematic analysis. The results showed that the shift to distance education had positively and negatively impacted part-time postgraduate students' experiences, and various adaptation strategies were adopted to improve the situations. The findings of the study are relevant to future curriculum planning for postgraduate courses.

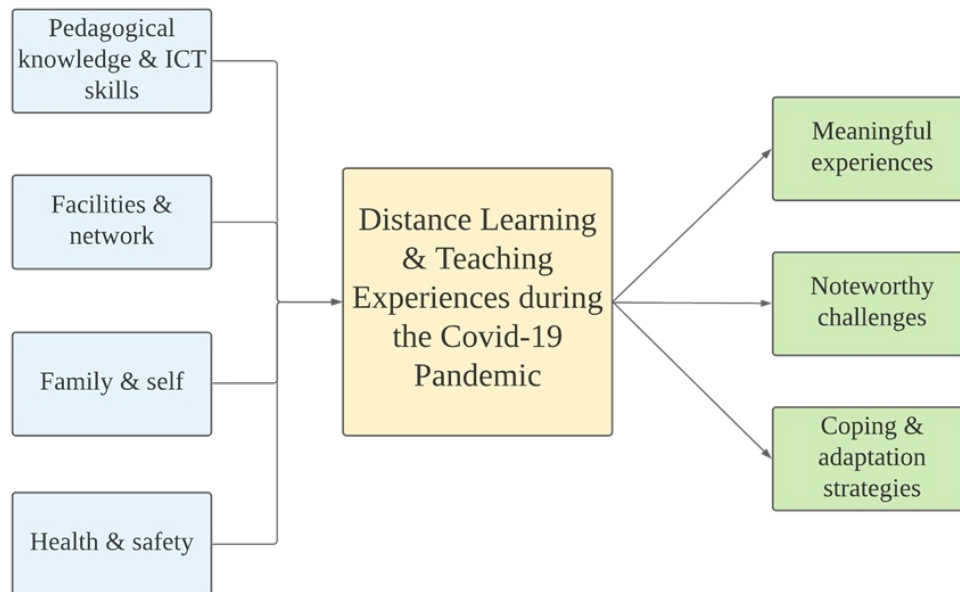
**Keywords:** Covid-19 pandemic, Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), distance education, challenges, teaching and learning experiences.

## 1. Introduction

On January 25, 2020, Malaysia officially recorded patient zero of Covid-19. The number of Covid-19 instances rapidly increased, instilling anxiety and concern among individuals. By March 16, 2020, the total number of cases in Malaysia had risen to an alarming 553, prompting the Malaysian government to issue the MCO, which went into force on March 18, 2020 (WHO 2020). Due to the Covid19 pandemic, the postgraduate TESL students in UKM who had just started their first semester on 14 March 2020, had to change face-to face learning to fully online learning. Both educators and learners faced a variety of unexpected obstacles as they hurried to implement 'quaranteaching' in order to assure the continuance of education. (Pace, et al., 2020). The sudden shift has posed new challenges to all stakeholders in the education field. This study aims to seek answers to the following research questions: (a) What are part-time postgraduate TESL students' experiences on distance learning during the pandemic? and (b) What are the adaptation strategies used by the participants as they cope with the double roles of teaching and learning during the pandemic?

## 2. Related Literature

The conceptual framework for this study is developed by referring to the TPACK Model from the research conducted by Mishra and Koehler (2009). It is a model that helps teachers evaluate how their knowledge domains overlap in order to teach and engage students with technology effectively. It is suitable for the study because the postgraduate students have to adopt technological tools to ensure the continuation of their learning due to nationwide lockdown. Pedagogical knowledge and ICT skills, facilities and network, family and self and health and safety are the aspects investigated in this study. From the students' postgraduate experiences on distance learning during the pandemic, meaningful experiences, noteworthy challenges and coping and adaptation strategies are highlighted.



*Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework for experiences of distance learning during the pandemic.*

Theories related to engaging and meaningful learning are Constructivism, Social-constructivism, and Self-Regulated Theory. Constructivists consider learning as a dynamic process where learners are actively engaged in knowledge production as opposed to passively receiving input from the educators (Flynn et al., 2004; Makulloluwa, 2013). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasised that the interaction between educators and learners of learning and teaching activities in schools plays an important role in meaningful learning and such interactions can be easily conducted through ICT (Wertsch, 1986; Gredler, 1997; Pritchard & Woollard, 2010; Makulloluwa, 2020). Self Regulated Learning theory stresses the autonomy and the students' personal responsibility to take control of their own learning (Wang & Zhang, 2020).

Following the closure of nurseries and kindergartens, public and private primary and secondary schools, training colleges, universities, these institutions were compelled to implement emergency remote teaching (ERT). This drastic measure was questioned as it highlights certain deficiencies in current ERT such as the weakness of online teaching infrastructure, the inexperience of educators to react to MCO, the information gap due to the absence of actual physical interactions, the complex environment at home, and so forth. However, despite the difficulties and constraints, the situation in MCO demanded quick action so that the irrevocable impact of education on learners can be reduced.

### 3. Methods

A qualitative design was adopted for this study. A qualitative survey was conducted followed by a semi-structured interview conducted via the Telegram application. The participants for this study were 41 TESL postgraduate students at UKM. These postgraduate students are local educators who enrolled in 2019 intake and started their semester in March 2020. From there, 10 were selected for a semi-structured Telegram interview to provide in-depth understanding of their learning experiences during the pandemic. The open-ended questionnaires the key areas of family and self, facilities and network, pedagogical knowledge and ICT skills, and health and safety. To answer the second research question of the study, a semi-structured interview is used. The interview questions focussed on meaningful experiences, extraordinary challenges, and coping and adaptation strategies that participants had adopted in their teaching and learning experiences during the pandemic. Data collected from the open-ended qualitative questionnaires was analysed, coded and arranged into themes that arose. The transcription of the interview was reorganised and arranged correctly for data analysis. The data was reviewed to see if there are any evident trends, as well as looking for connections between cases, with the goal of doing a cross-case study of the materials (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014).

### 4. Results and Discussion

Findings from the study illustrated challenges faced by the participants, including insufficiency in technological facilities and network problems, lacking in pedagogical knowledge and ICT skills to conduct and experience distance learning, troubles in juggling demands of work, family, and self when working and studying remotely, personal health and safety issue due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Participants who experienced problems with the Internet connectivity stated that they had to travel far to get better coverage, had to miss class in case of lousy connection due to bad weather, and were repeatedly kicked out of learning platforms. Moreover, ensuring the safety of family members especially those who work as frontliners, completing house chores after long hours of online lessons, disruptions from young children when attending classes and inability to provide enough attention for family are among the critical issues mentioned in the study. Unable to meet their loved ones for months due to coronavirus restrictions have contributed to stressful experiences that sometimes jeopardise the participants' academic and working performances.

On the other hand, in terms of achievement, satisfaction and positive lessons learned in distance learning during the pandemic, findings showed that most participants gained a wealth of pedagogical knowledge and ICT skills with some satisfactions from other aspects such as family and self, health and safety and facilities and network. Findings showed that participants have made various adaptation strategies to improve on their learning and teaching experiences. They learned to understand their own students' learning needs and parental concerns by communicating with them. From there, plans and collaborations were made in order to improve the quality of education during the pandemic. Apart from that, having many backup plans also maximise learning opportunities for the participants themselves and their students. For example, the same homework is also assigned via mobile applications such as Telegram and WhatsApp and on social media such as Facebook and YouTube, on top of being assigned in Google Classroom to expand accessibility of learning resources to their students.

Findings also revealed that some participants had improved relationships with their colleagues, made more professional friends, and had improved on marking skills during distance learning periods. Lastly, findings from interviews reviewed that the source of satisfaction and accomplishment from participants mainly comes from successful adaptation

strategies during distance teaching and learning.

## 5. Conclusion

Gaining insight into a cohort of postgraduate TESL students' positive and negative experiences during the rapidly and constantly changing teaching periods can serve as a valuable reference to future large-scale educational policy planning at the tertiary level. In recent decades, several chances to challenge traditional teaching and learning techniques have remained unchanged for many years until the pandemic hit. We could also ponder which remote learning reflective practices might assist us in improving student engagement and whether meta-connective, potential-driven, and value-creating pedagogy can be given an emphasis in future blended learning environments.

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# DEVELOPING ESL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' TPACK THROUGH VIRTUAL SIMULATION STRATEGY (VSIMS)

<sup>1</sup>Noraini Said and <sup>2</sup>Megawati Soekarno

<sup>1,2</sup>*Faculty of Psychology and Education, Universiti Malaysia Sabah*

[\\*noraini.said@ums.edu.my](mailto:noraini.said@ums.edu.my)

## Abstract

The reality brought upon by the pandemic has forced us, the language instructors, to reevaluate our practice, especially our assessment strategy, to ensure that the actual learning takes place and planned objectives are met. In language education programs, equipping future teachers with appropriate knowledge and skills remains the top priority. In fact, recent literature also highlights the need for teachers to have technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) to cope with the changing demands of online learning. Virtual Simulation Strategy (VSimS) was devised to promote a more profound understanding of content knowledge for courses such as sociolinguistics and other courses requiring heavy reading. VSimS was also targeted at developing 38 ESL pre-service teachers' TPACK via technology use in group simulations in a 14-week project. Supported by socio-constructivism, VSimS enabled students to construct their understanding through interactions among group members and coursemates and translate their understanding into group simulations. Findings from this qualitative study show that most students could give appropriate answers by quoting specific examples from simulations from data gleaned from the summative test. Students were also found to apply various technologies in group simulations skillfully and demonstrate increased engagement and participation based on classroom observations. To conclude, VSimS can be a promising assessment strategy and serve as a catalyst for TPACK development not only for ESL content courses but also for other academic courses.

**Keywords:** simulation, ESL-preservice teachers, TPACK

## 1. Introduction

The quest to develop the optimal learning environment is an ongoing process as educators strive to provide the best learning experience for learners. Recent studies captured language educators' experimentation with varying strategies and technology in the hope of equipping students, particularly pre-service teachers, with technological knowledge and skills for future use (Said et al., 2021; Singh & Kasim, 2019). It is also essential for ESL pre-service teachers to design innovative lessons and update their technological knowledge to enable them to adopt and adapt educational technology in their teaching (Huang, 2021). In the TESL program, Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework is currently used to integrate technology into the academic courses offered. Content knowledge, one of the seven constructs in TPACK, is taught to the pre-service teachers through linguistics and applied to linguistics courses. In most often cases, these content courses require heavy reading and memorization techniques. Challenges surfaced in online lessons as it is difficult for lecturers to gauge students' comprehension or understanding of the reading materials, especially the complex and challenging theories and concepts, including foreign context. Apart from that, the read-and-memorize drill can be mundane and tedious for students and lecturers. The solitary

reading journey embarked on by the student would usually be ended by a test or quiz at the end of the course. Nevertheless, a big question: How much do students understand what they read?

Therefore, researchers in this study proposed an alternative assessment strategy called Virtual Simulation Strategy (VSimS) to address the challenges faced. VSimS essentially uses simulations that depict real-life situations, where students role-play, make decisions and receive feedback on their actions from their coursemates and lecturers. It was devised to promote a more profound understanding of content knowledge for content courses, targeted at developing ESL pre-service teachers' TPACK via technology use in group simulations. VSimS is guided by socio-constructivism, which leverages the meaning-making process undergone by learners through interaction with others. Supported by socio-constructivism, VSimS enables students to construct their understanding through interactions as they prepare for role-playing. Table 1 summarizes the differences between the conventional reading strategies and VSimS.

*Table 1: Comparison of Conventional Reading Task vs. VSimS*

Conventional Reading Comprehension Strategies	Virtual Simulation Strategy (VSimS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Individual-reading</li> <li>❖ Whole class discussion</li> <li>❖ Group Tutorial</li> <li>❖ Quizzes (individual)</li> <li>❖ Group Presentation (confined to textbook information)</li> </ul> <p>**Lack of actual data on students' reading activity and understanding except for scores in quizzes</p>	<p>Social Constructivism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Task specification</li> <li>✓ Individual Reading</li> <li>✓ Students construct meaning through interaction with group members</li> <li>✓ Devise scripts</li> <li>✓ Act out situations (simulations), use real-life background using the online platform</li> <li>✓ Add in the commentary of the simulation</li> <li>✓ Whole class discussion</li> <li>✓ Reconstruct meaning</li> </ul> <p>1. – 40 mins simulation)</p>

To ensure the viability of VSimS, the researchers sought to answer the following questions: How do ESL pre-service teachers perceive their assessment strategies, including VSimS? How does VSimS develop students' TPACK? Moreover, how does VSimS improve understanding of the course?

## 2. Methods

Participants were 38 ESL pre-service teachers enrolled in a sociolinguistic course. The study started at the beginning of the course, which lasted for 14 weeks. The subjects were grouped and assigned reading tasks at the beginning of the semester. Every week, a live 30-minute virtual simulation performed by a group was conducted online, followed by a 20-minute class discussion. Multiple qualitative data sources were obtained to answer the research questions. A course evaluation questionnaire was distributed mainly consisting of open-ended items on students' perceptions of their assessment, including VSimS. Qualitative data were also gleaned from the test papers (summative evaluation) conducted at the end of the course and the lecturers' classroom observation notes. All data were qualitatively analyzed using thematic analysis. One rating item in the questionnaire was quantitatively analyzed.

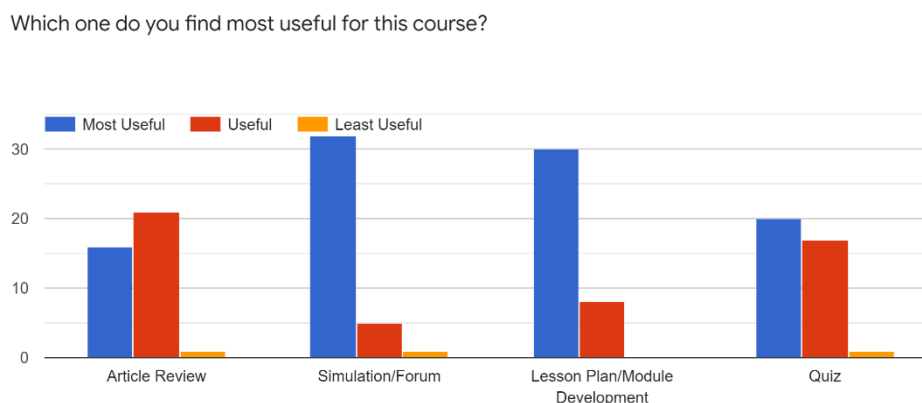


### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 How do ESL pre-service teachers perceive their assessment strategies, including VSimS?

Thirty-two students held favorable attitudes toward simulation (VsimS) compared to the other three strategies by stating VSimS as the most helpful assessment strategy for the course.

*Figure 1: ESL Pre-Service Teachers' Perception of VSimS*



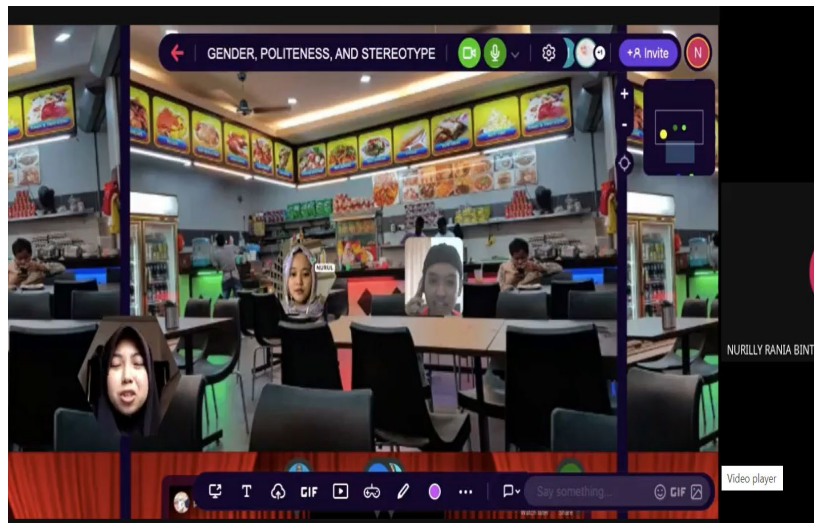
Multiple themes were derived from the qualitative data, such as VSimS helping students to visualize the concept through clear illustrations (20), helping to retain more extended memory of the concepts/theories learned as students acted out the situations (15), promoting fun learning through interaction with others and experimentation with technology (20). The findings suggest that students prefer hands-on experiences like VSimS, which resonates with the current trend in education, which places a high emphasis on experiential learning. In addition, students could also attribute the fun learning a part to the freedom of creativity allowed to them in designing their simulation and the lack of drills which appears to motivate them.

#### 3.2 How does VSimS develop students' TPACK?

Based on the lecturers' observation, students were seen to integrate various technological knowledge and skills in their simulation. For instance, students used different video communication platforms to create rooms as virtual backgrounds to simulate the actual scene. Among them are Here.fm, GatherTown, and Topia. A dynamic PowerPoint presentation was also used on top of pre-existing templates in online meeting platforms. Figure 2 shows a snapshot of a scene during a virtual simulation. It shows a simulation of gender, politeness, and stereotype performed by a couple and a narrator. The narrator explains the setting and background information, and the actors act out their parts.



Figure 2: Virtual Simulation on Sociolinguistic



Lecturers' classroom observation notes also documented that most students demonstrated impressive ability in executing the virtual simulation smoothly, especially in the transition between scenes while using the online meeting platforms. Out of 14 simulations, only one simulation experienced a minor technical glitch due to an unstable internet connection. Lecturers also remarked that most students appeared to have invested much time preparing the simulation and experimented with various technological tools and multimedia to ensure the success of their task. The students also appeared to have grasped a satisfactory level of technological knowledge in accomplishing the assigned task.

Other than that, lecturers also captured better engagement and participation during classes. As each student had to assume a role in the simulation, responsibilities, and tasks were equally shared among group members. These findings show a promising future for using simulation as part of the assessment strategies in an academic course.

### 3.3 How does VSimS improve understanding of the course?

Lecturers' evaluation of a summative test given to students at the end of the course yielded valuable data to answer this question. There were unique patterns in the students' answers given to illustrate particular concepts or theories. 15 out of 35 responses featured specific references to the specific scenes acted out during simulations. The answers were also more descriptive and in-depth, followed by specific examples directly linked to the simulations. Though there was no baseline data to establish the improvement, the lecturers concluded that the students seemed to remember better as they were actively involved in constructing understanding via VsimS.

## 4. Conclusion

The findings strongly support the use of virtual simulation in developing ESL pre-service teachers' TPACK development as it allows students to creatively try out technologies that best fit their purposes. In addition, VSimS can be a promising assessment strategy as it deviates from traditional rote learning, offering an alternative learning experience for prospective teachers. It also holds promise for replication in other academic courses as it seems to have high potential in boosting engagement and participation in an online learning environment.

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# SONGS FOR EFL/ESL CLASS: HOW TO TEACH LISTENING SKILL THROUGH MUSIC

**Zarin Tasnim**

*Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet, Bangladesh*

[tasnim-eng@sust.edu](mailto:tasnim-eng@sust.edu)

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this pedagogical article is to suggest the effective use of songs in ESL (English as a Second Language) or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes focusing on the benefits, challenges, criteria, a model lesson plan, and guidelines so that teachers can teach listening through English songs. This qualitative research, intends to shed a light on designing tasks utilizing songs to improve EFL/ESL learners' listening ability. Songs play significant roles in the arena of foreign language teaching. Various research studies show the effectiveness of English songs in EFL/ESL listening classes. The paper focuses on different aspects of using songs in listening class. Firstly, it draws attention to the advantages of using songs for EFL/ESL listening classes. Secondly, after observing the prevalent EFL/ESL context, a personal experience is mentioned in which a group of 30 undergraduate students was taught to practice listening to an English song. In the next section, certain difficulties in using songs and a list of various factors involved in selecting songs have been elaborated on. In the final part of the paper, a detailed discussion is provided on classroom tasks accompanied by a sample lesson plan for listening class using songs and some practical suggestions for developing the skill. The paper presents an overall idea about the strategies and activities to utilize songs for teaching listening skills to ESL/EFL learners.

**Keywords:** songs, ESL/EFL, listening, learners

## **Introduction**

English listening skills to ESL or EFL learners is a challenging task, especially for those who do not usually get much exposure to the English language regularly. Listening is a primary receptive language skill that needs to be developed among ESL/EFL learners for successful verbal communication. Nevertheless, this skill is often ignored in many ESL or EFL contexts. Audio materials such as recorded speech or conversation, songs, radio broadcasts, audio versions of books, etc. are used as teaching tools for EFL/ESL instruction. At a certain stage, music or songs can help develop listening skills. This pedagogical paper will show how English songs can be helpful to teach and improve the listening skills of ESL/EFL learners.

## **Benefits of songs in the listening session**

Songs provide worthwhile advantages for developing listening skills.

- One of the most important benefits of using songs is that students can find a relaxing classroom ambiance. Songs can remove boredom from the class and thus help learners remain comfortable and stress-free in the learning process.

- Songs express a diverse set of emotions, cultures, and real-life factors. Learners of different ages and tastes can connect themselves with the lyrics and music.
- Songs can help to build learners' enthusiasm and confidence by triggering their emotions. Music functions as a motivating factor for the learners to engage in learning.
- Songs serve as a source of inspiration and academic interest. They make students vocally expressive and encourage them to participate in the class.
- Another advantage of songs is it provides socio-cultural information, which makes language learning contextualized.
- Furthermore, using songs in listening class provides opportunities to practice pronunciation, and grammar and learn new vocabulary. Learners can know different accents, intonation patterns, and appropriate pronunciation of certain sounds and words. Songs can introduce new vocabulary items and grammatical structures.
- Songs develop creativity and analytical ability among the learners for mastering a language.
- Moreover, songs help to build a strong memory of learners. Songs evoke strong emotions and present the language items in a meaningful context, which considerably facilitates their memorization both inside and outside the classroom,

### **Classroom research on listening to songs**

As an ESL teacher, I taught the course titled 'English Language Skills' to a group of 30 English major undergraduate students at a university. I have found that almost all the students in the class hardly had any experience to practice listening to English in their previous academic lives. Under these situations, they could not develop their listening abilities for obvious reasons. It appeared to me as a great concern because despite being English major students, they seemed disinterested in listening to any English text material.

I adopted a qualitative research approach using class observation. I took the risk of choosing an English song for some initial classes because I believe that any musical element can provide a relaxing environment in the class, which helps students to feel motivated in doing the task. The theme of the song I chose for the class was relatable and the music was ear soothing. It was a song titled "don't cry Joni" which was released in 2008. The lyrics of the song and the accent of the singers were lucid. After selecting the song, I tried to use it through the stages of listening.

#### **Pre-listening Stage**

Before making them listen to the song, I activated the 'schema' (background knowledge) of the students related to the subject matter of that particular song. As the theme of the song is love, I wanted to know some of their perceptions about love. Even I asked them to sing a love song in the class and two students seemed enthusiastic to sing. Then I proceeded to the main stage.

#### **While-listening stage**

I played the song and the students were eagerly listening to it. I made them listen to the song four times with pauses and repetitions.

#### **Post-listening stage:**

After finishing listening, I asked students several questions on the song. Most of them answered correctly while very few could not answer as they were not listening attentively. Finally, I showed the lyric video of the song so that they can check their comprehension. I also

included some writing activities, for instance, critically analyzing the protagonist's point of view and the significance of the plot twist in the song. Some grammar exercises were included such as finding synonyms of some words, voice change, and filling the gap with the correct word from the song.

The outcome of the task was beyond my expectation. They got more motivated to practice other types of listening texts on different topics. From then on, I started to prepare listening materials based on their particular interests.

### **Difficulties in using songs**

The following are some of the challenges in using songs for listening class.

**Cultural conflict:** If the selected song conveys culturally inappropriate elements for a particular group of learners, it may cause a negative impression.

**Lack of students' motivation:** Learners' disinterest and lack of motivation can fail to teach listening with songs. If the activities are not absorbing or out of context, they can feel demotivated.

**Large class size:** A large number of students in any listening class causes disorder and mismanagement. Teachers often find it troublesome to conduct language activities with huge groups of students.

**Shortage and inefficiency of sound equipment:** Lack of language laboratories, different audio equipment, and other logistics are among the biggest challenges in the listening class.

**Technical problem:** Even if all types of sound instruments and logistics are available, technical complications can occur which can hamper the teaching with songs in the immediate environment.

**Chaos and disturbance:** During the listening phase, different sounds from outside the classroom can create chaotic and disturbing feelings.

**Short class duration:** If the class hour is too short, it may not bring the desired learning outcomes with a positive effect. Learners may have difficulties completing listening activities due to the time limit.

**The inefficiency of teachers:** If the teachers are not self-motivated to teach using songs, the class will not achieve the intended results. Moreover, the inability to make a well-designed lesson plan, facilitate suitable activities, and reluctance to provide useful suggestions are signs of inefficiencies on the part of teachers.

**Lack of authenticity:** Any song that is inauthentic or unrealistic can hinder the learning process.

These are the difficulties in teaching listening through songs which can be overcome by considering the following criteria.

### **Criteria for selecting songs**

Proper utilization of songs is possible if the selection of songs is based on the following criteria.

**Age:** Learners' age is a vital factor in teaching language skills. For example, very young children, especially those under 12 years, can have difficulty if teachers use songs on such

topics and provide activities that are not suitable for them. On the contrary, adult learners are open to various forms of song and listening activities. Therefore, it is better to teach language skills to the same age groups of learners at a time.

**Level of proficiency:** Songs should be selected according to learners' language proficiency levels. For beginner-level learners, songs of simple and lucid language are more suitable. For intermediate or advanced students, teachers should organize the tasks from songs to stimulate deeper understanding and critical reflection of learning.

**Interests:** Students' specific needs and interests need to be considered in any learning process. If they have a genuine interest in songs, they become confident to learn the skill. Teachers' musical preferences are also important because they can teach the students better if they like the song.

**The number of students:** It is necessary to keep moderate class size to teach language skills through practical tasks. The optimum number should be a maximum of 30 students. A small number of students ensures successful group management and completion of language tasks.

**Socio-cultural background:** Teachers should select songs that can explore topics of cultural diversity and do not conflict with other cultural values and norms of learners.

**Logistic support:** Availability of proper logistic support is one of the major criteria in using songs. Teachers and other concerned personnel must ensure classroom facilities such as computers, loudspeakers, uninterrupted internet connection, headphones, projectors, sound systems, etc. for arranging listening sessions.

**Class duration:** To conduct classroom activities, the duration of class time should be kept in mind. It should not be too long or too short. A listening class of 1.5 hours to 2 hours may be convenient as there are three phases to complete various tasks.

**Clarity of language:** Songs should have clear and comprehensive lyrics, tunes, and music. The diction and the voice of the singer(s) should capture learners' attention.

**Speed and length of the song:** The tempo or speed of the song should be moderate. Slow and simple songs are suitable for teaching beginner-level learners. Moreover, the song should have a suitable length. The ideal duration of the song might be of three to five minutes.

**Vocabulary and grammar:** Songs should contain important grammatical patterns and a variety of vocabulary so that learners can practice grammar and enrich their knowledge of the lexicon.

**Teachers' expertise:** It is the teacher's responsibility to build curiosity among the learners and motivate them to learn the skill differently. A teacher should be technologically competent and should handle the class through group management and useful tasks.

### **Guidelines for teaching listening through songs**

Some practical tips can be provided for teaching and learning listening skills through songs in the most effective ways.

**Learner and context:** ESL/EFL learners feel motivated to learn the skill if teachers select songs by considering their age, socio-cultural background, needs, interests, and language proficiency level, class size, duration, logistic support, etc.

**Variation in the songs:** It is necessary to bring variation in the type of song to sustain students' motivation to learn the skill. Teachers can use different types of songs based on a specific theme.



**Visualizing songs:** Music videos or picturization (if available and culturally appropriate) can help learners absorb the topic well.

**Teaching note-taking skills:** Teachers should instruct the learners to take keynotes from the songs in the while-listening phase.

**Change in the activity pattern:** At the initial listening classes with songs, teachers can provide the lyrics to the students when they finish listening to the full song to crosscheck their comprehension. Learners can be asked to write or verbalize the lyrics after they listen. Thus they will be more attentive to developing the skill.

**Integrating skills:** Teachers should integrate all language skills in the activities by using the song. Learners need to be exposed to more speaking and writing tasks, for example, they can be asked to write a summary of the song and discuss the topic in groups and give a presentation.

**Controlling sound impact:** When using a song for a class, the surrounding environment should be kept in mind. To handle this, teachers should take precautionary steps. For example, they can arrange for a soundproof language lab for listening practice or demand it from the authority. **Classroom management:** The best way to teach listening with the song is to form pairs or small groups of students and give them tasks to complete. Teachers can assign different slots to particular groups of students for attending the class. A well-equipped language lab should accommodate the students and provide headphones to each of them along with a recorder or computer.

The guidelines mentioned above can be useful to reduce the existing difficulties in teaching listening skills with songs.

## Conclusion

Songs play significant roles in the arena of foreign language teaching. Many institutions across the world have already recognized the importance of utilizing songs for teaching language skills to EFL/ESL learners. Though there are many complications in teaching the skill, thoughtful consideration of several factors can help deal with those challenging issues. Teachers should choose suitable songs that comply with students' needs and learning objectives and should design the activities to engage the learners in the most effective ways.

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# TEACHERS AS DESIGNERS: TRANSITION FROM TRADITIONAL TO DIGITAL MEDIA

**Yee Bee Choo<sup>1</sup>, Soo Kum Yoke<sup>2</sup>, Lim Ai Teng<sup>3</sup> and Umairah Najihah Ismail<sup>4</sup>,**

<sup>1</sup> *English Language Department, Institute of Teacher Education Tun Hussein Onn Campus, Johor*

<sup>2</sup> *Academic of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Negeri Sembilan Kampus Rembau*

<sup>3</sup> *SJK (C) Yuk Choi, Lahad Datu, Sabah*

<sup>4</sup> *SK Brickfields 1, Kuala Lumpur*

[\\*g-16407753@moe-dl.edu.my](mailto:g-16407753@moe-dl.edu.my)

## Abstract

Teachers are arguably the most important members of society as they teach children and significantly influence the formation of society and its future. Recent educational developments amidst the pandemic phase, however, have affected the role of teachers towards more digitized teaching and learning environment. Teachers now also have to actively participate in designing materials through digital media. This paper aims to identify the transformation of digital media in education. The study also aimed at looking at the perceptions of teachers towards using digital media and the effects of digital media on teachers. Based on the survey method applied, a quantitative analysis was run descriptively for the study. The survey items included open-ended questions to enable teachers to express their views. The results helped verify the role of teachers as designers in the transition from traditional to digital media. Further, the findings also indicated teachers' positive and negative effects of using digital media. They provided the teachers' views on challenges faced during the online teaching and learning process, suggestions for improving the online teaching and learning experience, and recommendations to the Ministry of Education to improve teachers' online teaching and learning experience.

**Keywords:** teachers' role, designers, traditional media, digital media, learning environments

## 1. Introduction

Recent global issues and changing times have led to the rise of a need for a new approach to learning. With new forms of communication made possible by emerging technologies and the rising expectations of educators and learners to maximize learning potentials, dynamic learning environments have been explored to facilitate future education. Kalantzis and Cope (2010) explained that this has led to multiple changing roles of teachers, including teachers as designers, to fit the pedagogy of the new media age.

Due to the lockdown, schools had to resort to home-based teaching and learning. On March 18, 2020, the education ministry directed all schools to be closed (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 16, 2020). Teachers and students were abruptly introduced to online learning as an alternative to facilitate that closure. This transition foresaw tension and anxiety among teachers, students, and parents. On top of the battle against COVID-19, parents had to cope

with their children's online learning at home. The home-based teaching and learning experience showed that not all parents could deal with the situation amicably (The Star, July 23, 2021; The Star, September 12, 2021; NST, May 21, 2020). Teachers had to move from the face-to-face physical classroom to home-based teaching and learning. The transition meant they had to deal with online teaching, managing the online class, providing a practical learning experience, preparing online materials, and monitoring their student's progress and class participation. Teachers who were knowledge disseminators and facilitators were also starting to adopt the role of lesson designers. Given this, the present study would like to investigate the role of teachers as designers based on the transition from traditional to digital media.

### **1.1.Objectives**

The following objectives were formulated to investigate the role of teachers as designers based on the transition from traditional to digital media.

1. To investigate the transformation of digital media in education
2. To determine teachers' perceptions towards using digital media
3. To examine the effects of digital media on teachers.

## **2. Literature Review**

In recent times, the scene of education has transformed. Teachers use printed media such as textbooks, workbooks, and reference books in a conventional classroom. Digital-based teaching media such as World Wide Web (internet), mobile technologies, film, video games, television, comics, and software are used to facilitate students' learning instead of printed media (Sri Haryati & Dewi Cahyaningrum, 2018).

Digital-based teaching media makes communication available and fun and removes the location barrier for people in different parts of the world (Sri Haryati & Dewi Cahyaningrum, 2018). This is very useful during the COVID-19 pandemic as Home-based teaching and learning replaced going to a physical school. Students from different locations were able to access lessons. Teachers could conduct online classes through *Google Meet* or *Zoom* with the students by sending an invitation link. Teachers could also share a video link or ask students to answer online quizzes or live worksheets without giving students a hard copy. According to Rolf (2021), the act of designing can be done with physical materials such as pens and laptops or mentally. Rolf (2021) believes that teachers design artefacts such as written lesson plans, educational games, and presentations in physical forms and their heads. However, since the development of technology, teachers have been found to use online tools to create learning designs in the form of learning activities, entire lessons, or courses (Rolf, 2021). By integrating technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge (TPACK) in learning design, teachers need to possess the ability to flexibly navigate the spaces defined by the three elements and the complex interactions among these elements in specific contexts (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). However, teachers often lack experience using digital technologies for teaching and learning (Koehler & Mishra, 2009).

According to Yu et al. (2020), the transition from print to digital media had a few drawbacks initially, as it led to anxiety among teachers, students, and parents, as well as disengagement in education, besides psycho-social disadvantages. Tan (2021) further asserted that many students lacked the motivation to study independently through online learning at home. Also, it was found that not all parents could deal with the situation of home-based online learning

(Rajaendram, 2021; Rafidi, 2020). Al-Kumaim et al. (2021) further observed that lack of knowledge in the use of technology due to lack of technical training and technical support among teachers and students has also led to the lack of knowledge and skills in using digital media. Another vital drawback in digital media is the internet connection or good infrastructure to support online teaching and learning, which has been problematic throughout the lockdown, especially in remote areas (Ahmad et al., 2022).

Bearing all this in mind, it would be interesting to find out how the transition from traditional to digital media has affected the role of teachers as designers.

### 3. Methodology

The objectives of the study were to investigate the transformation of digital media in education, determine teachers' perceptions of using digital media and examine the effects of digital media on teachers. In order to do this, the present study uses a quantitative approach by means of an online survey. According to Creswell (2009), survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of a population's trends, attitudes, or opinions by studying a sample of that population, with the intent of generalizing from a sample to a population. A total of 153 samples were derived from this study. The study participants were 91 primary school teachers, 46 secondary school teachers, and 16 lecturers from the pool of teacher contacts among the researchers who agreed to participate. An online survey was carried out using the Google Form platform. There were four sections: Section A - Demographic profile; Section B - The transformation of digital media in education; Section C - Teachers' perception of their roles in utilizing digital media in teaching and learning; and Section D - Effects of digital media on teachers. Distribution was done by sharing the Google Form link with the participants. Data collected after several weeks were tabulated and analyzed descriptively using SPSS v.26.

### 4. Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussions are based on the objectives of the study. The demographic profile of the participants in terms of age, gender, teaching position, location, and years of teaching experience was recorded. The findings show that the majority of participants were aged between 41 to 50 years old (40.5%), followed by those aged between 31 to 40 years old (31.4%), those aged between 51 to 60 years old (19%), and those aged between 21 to 30 years old (9.2%). It was also found that most participants were female (88.9%), with only 11.1 per cent male participants. Based on the teaching position, the majority of participants were primary school teachers (59.5%), followed by secondary school teachers (30.1%) and lecturers (10.5%). Most participants were in the sub-urban location (40.5%), while 36.6 per cent were in the urban location and 22.9 per cent were in the rural location. Most of the participants had 16 to 20 years of experience (22.2%), followed by 11 to 15 years of experience (20.9%) and more than 25 years of experience (20.9%), 6 to 10 years of experience (14.4%), 21 to 25 years of experience (13.1%) and 0 to 5 years of experience (8.5%).

*Table 1: The transformation of digital media in education*

Description	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Prior knowledge of teaching with digital media	3.43	0.930

Experience teaching online before the pandemic	2.42	1.190
Understand why must use digital media	4.25	0.774
Encounter numerous challenges	4.32	0.792
Experience new methods or new applications	4.40	0.746

Table 1 shows the responses to the transformation of digital media in education. The total high mean score indicates the teachers' experience of digital media transformation in education during the Home-based Online Teaching and Learning. They experienced new methods or applications while preparing materials ( $M=4.40$ ;  $SD=0.746$ ). Further, it was found that they encountered numerous challenges in designing their materials ( $M=4.32$ ;  $SD=0.792$ ). The majority of the teachers were found to understand why they had to use digital media ( $M=4.25$ ;  $SD=0.774$ ). However, the findings also indicated that they lacked prior knowledge of teaching with digital media ( $M=3.43$ ;  $SD=0.930$ ), and they lacked experience teaching online before the pandemic ( $M=2.42$ ;  $SD=1.190$ ). These indicate that not everyone has experience in Online Teaching and Learning before the pandemic. Therefore, the transformation of digital media in education, although it was a new experience for teachers, was found to have numerous challenges. Although they understood why they had to use digital media, they lacked the experience and prior knowledge needed to teach digital media.

**Table 2: Teachers' perception of their roles in utilizing digital media in teaching and learning**

Description	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	MOD
I am prepared to design my lessons using digital media.	3.3	7.2	24.8	<b>40.5</b>	24.2	Agree
I like to learn from my colleagues about digital media during lesson preparation.	7	2.6	15	35.9	<b>45.8</b>	Strongly Agree
I like to learn from YouTube video tutorials about digital media while preparing my lesson.	2	4.6	13.7	34.6	<b>45.1</b>	Strongly Agree
I am confident with digital media usage in my teaching and learning.	2.6	7.2	28.8	<b>44.4</b>	17	Agree
I mark pupils' assignments online regularly.	2.6	12.4	29.4	<b>35.9</b>	19.6	Agree
I adapt my lessons according to the pupils' accessibility of digital media.	1.3	2.6	22.2	<b>41.8</b>	32	Agree
I encourage two-way interaction with my pupils during the Online Teaching and Learning.	7	4.6	13.7	39.9	<b>41.2</b>	Strongly Agree
I can share technological skills with my colleagues and pupils.	2	6.5	29.4	<b>34</b>	28.1	Agree

Table 2 shows the teachers' perception of their roles in utilizing digital media in teaching and learning. From the table, teachers mostly agree or strongly agree with their roles in utilizing



digital media in teaching and learning. 40.5 per cent agreed that they were prepared to design their lessons using digital media, while 45.8 per cent strongly agreed to learn from their colleagues about digital media during lesson preparation. Further, 45.1 per cent strongly agreed that they learnt from YouTube video tutorials. 44.4 per cent agreed that they are confident with digital media usage in their teaching and learning, while 35.9 per cent agreed they regularly marked pupils' assignments online. 41.8 per cent agreed they adapted their lessons according to the pupils' accessibility to digital media. In contrast, 41.2 per cent strongly agreed that they encouraged two-way interaction with their pupils during the online teaching and learning. Thirty-four per cent agreed they shared technological skills with their colleagues and pupils. This indicates that the teachers perceived their roles in utilizing digital media as positive as they were either primarily agreeable or enormously agreeable towards the usage for teaching and learning.

*Table 3: Effects of digital media on teachers*

Description	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Saves much time	3.59	1.091
Provides better quality of assessment	3.26	1.087
Provides chances for collaboration	3.80	0.934
Pupils are more focused	2.96	1.146
Motivated me to teach better	3.56	1.012

Table 3 shows the effects of digital media on teachers. The findings show that the teachers agree that digital media saves much time ( $M=3.59$ ;  $SD=1.091$ ), provides a better quality of assessment ( $M=3.26$ ;  $SD=1.087$ ), and provides chances for collaboration ( $M=3.80$ ;  $SD=0.934$ ) and motivated them to teach better ( $M=3.56$ ;  $SD=1.012$ ). However, it was also found that the pupils lacked focus using digital media ( $M=2.96$ ;  $SD=1.146$ ). Thus, this indicates that there were more positive effects found in the use of digital media by teachers.

## 5. Conclusion

The study has thus far considered the transition from traditional to digital media and the role of teachers as designers. From the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the teachers understood the need to use digital media in terms of digital media transformation in education. This showed that they understood the challenges of using digital media in teaching and learning and would experience new methods and applications for their teaching and learning. The findings also showed that in terms of the teachers' perceptions of their roles in utilizing digital media in their teaching and learning, most of them either agreed or strongly agreed with their roles. They were adaptable to the use of digital media for teaching and learning. Furthermore, the results show that digital media positively affected teachers. However, the results also indicate that lack of focus by the pupils in online learning could be a concern.



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# AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELEVANCE BETWEEN DICTATION ACTIVITIES AND SPEECH IMPROVEMENT IN ENGLISH INSTRUCTION FOR JAPANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Hiromi Furutani<sup>1</sup> and Ikuko Motohisa<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Kanto Gakuin University*

<sup>2</sup>*Chiba University*

[\\*furutani@kanto-gakuin.ac.jp](mailto:*furutani@kanto-gakuin.ac.jp)

## Abstract

This study explores whether dictation instruction in listening activities positively affects the development of speaking skills of EFL students at a university in Japan. The qualitative analysis of teaching methods and the data of a few students who received top-level scores in both listening tests and speaking tests are discussed in detail. This approach was conducted to find the objective information from both teachers' and students' points of view. As a result of several analyses, the following elements are shown as effective teaching points. 1) Grammatical instruction, which focused on English features not found in the Japanese language, such as "s" in the third person singular and definite articles, was beneficial. The proper usage of those features was especially shown in the students' final speech, which represents reliable evidence for improving their speaking ability after three months of lessons. (2) In addition, speaking activities in which students record and submit their speech via their smartphones are also practical and helpful. These activities increase students' awareness of their speech errors and promote their willingness to use what they have learned in dictation exercises to speak in their own words. 3) Furthermore, combining dictation and speaking activities improves students' speeches regarding "complexity and accuracy." Compared to the beginning of the semester, the number of accurate compositional sentences increased. This tendency suggests that understanding the details of grammatical rules more clearly by written information, rather than only sound information, contributes to the improvement of Japanese students' English speeches.

**Keywords:** dictation activity, recording speech, language lessons using a smartphone, students' awareness

## 1. Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language often incorporates listening and speaking instruction in addition to grammar instruction to promote the development of communicative competence. However, little research has been conducted on the effects of the balance of items covered in class and instruction on EFL students and their acquisition of language operations. Through the analysis of individual data and instructional methods of the study (Motohisa & Furutani, 2022), this study examines what instruction other than speech practice is a relevant factor in improving the English-speaking ability of Japanese university students.

## 2. Background

Anxiety is one of the most well-studied emotions in second language acquisition as a factor that makes speech difficult (Dewaele, 2014; Dewerym, 2018, Horwitz, 2001, MacIntyre, 2017). Classroom anxiety is a barrier to learning and contributes to stress, embarrassment, and

anxiety in language learning (Arnold, 1999; Oxford, 1999). The research on FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) showed that listening and speaking activities were related to the highest anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). However, Pae (2013) recently pointed out that listening anxiety accounts for the highest degree of anxiety in foreign language learning. A recent study showed that nervousness and embarrassment in the classroom lead to incorrect speaking (Santikarn, 2020). It has also been found that one of the students' anxieties is about speaking English in class or speaking without preparation or with native speakers. (Motohisa & Furutani, 2022). These studies seem to suggest the deep aspects have a relationship between anxiety and the willingness to engage in communication activities.

Motohisa & Furutani (2022) conducted recording assignments using the LINE application on smartphones to give more opportunities to speak and check their utterances with more relaxation and not caring about direct evaluation in the class. As a result, learners' anxiety levels were reduced in two-thirds of the items. In addition, in one of the teacher's classes, speech improvements were seen in the number of words, utterance length, English expression, accuracy, and fluency. However, it did not lead to a level where students have much confidence in speaking English, and it was thought that other influencing factors were also involved. Thus, this study explores whether dictation instruction influences the characteristics of a few students' speeches by using the data from the study (Motohisa & Furutani, 2022). Specifically, this study aimed to explore the relation between the analyzed data of dictation and the speech products into incorporated dictation instruction with the speaking task.

### 3. Research Questions

The research questions are as follows.

Q1: What kinds of dictation instruction incorporated with voice-record speaking tasks improved many students' speeches?

Q2: What grammatical characteristics (accuracy, sentence complexity) did students whose speech scores improved specifically exhibit in terms of speech analysis?

Q3: Looking at the data for students whose speech scores improved, are there similarities in the characteristics of speech growth and awareness of classroom activities, even if there are differences in their original listening proficiency?

### 4. Methods

The classes were divided according to proficiency level, but a distinctive feature of the classes was that there were differences in listening and reading skills within the same class. The text used was English First Hand 2 (Pearson, 2018). The text consists of 12 units, each including a communicative activity task based on a topic, listening, and summarizing role-playing. Details of the teaching procedure were as follows: 1) first speaking test at the beginning of the semester, 2) repeated dictation assignments as part of the listening activities, 3) speaking practice using a mobile application and submission of recorded assignments, and 4) second speaking test at the end of the semester (same format as the first test, but on a different topic).

\*Partly a reanalysis of Motohisa & Furutani's (2022) data.

Picture 1: An example of dictation activities

**[An example of dictation activities focusing on grammatical features]**

Grandma: Have you been **(thinking about the future?)**

Kayla: Yes, Grandma. I want to be really successful **(in business.)**

Grandma: That's good. What kind of business?

Kayla: Probably marketing, advertising — that kind of thing.

Grandma: **(What makes you want to do that?)** Nobody in our family ever went to business school.

Kayla: I think I'd like the competition. You know I like to compete.

Grandma: Have you been **(studying business at the university?)**

Kayla: Sure. I'm taking all the business **(classes)** now. I got everything else **(out of the way)** already.

Grandma: Well, that's good. You are much more **(on track)** than I was **(at your age.)**

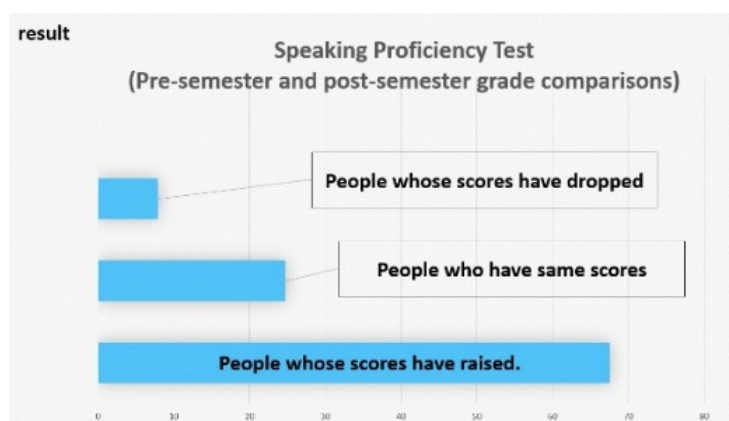
Source: (English Firsthand 2. T113)

In the speaking activity, the teacher focused on feedback or voice check. In the case of Teacher A's class, students worked on their assignments in pairs or in group work, practicing speech exercises mainly from the textbook, followed by individual preparation of recordings, practice, and transmission of recordings. Data were taken from students with good speaking scores and analyzed the content of the first and second tests in terms of whether grammatical errors were improved, speaking time increased, and vocabulary increased. Data were analyzed not only for students whose scores were quite good, but also for students whose scores did not improve very much, to see if there were common features among students' tendency.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The results of incorporating dictation practice into the speaking class, as shown in figure 1, show that 67% of the students increased their speaking scores, indicating the effectiveness of the course.

Figure 1: Results of Speaking Proficiency Test



Source: (Motohisa & Furutani, 2022)

In this study, students whose speaking test scores improved dramatically and those whose speaking test scores did not significantly improve their grammatical accuracy through repetitive dictation instruction. Dictation activities helped students to confirm their uncertain grammatical knowledge, thereby increasing their confidence in their ability to speak.

Regarding research question 1, the dictation activities were conducted so that errors that learners tend to make were recorded, which was especially beneficial to both the learners and trainers. Regarding research question 2, students improved their grammar peculiar to English

(definite article, plural nouns, third person singular "s"), which is not found in Japanese. As for research question 3, regardless of the students' listening level, those students who had a certain level of speaking scores were favorable to the mobile-recorded speech practice. They could listen to the speech objectively and analyze it to improve their speaking skills. The improvement in students' speech length and variety of vocabulary items shows a reduction in their hesitance in speaking English.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study reanalyzed the data used in Motohisa and Furutani (2022) from a different perspective, and new data were combined to examine dictation and speaking instruction methods. The instruction were effective, as many students stated that they felt less anxious and more confident after the end of the semester. The combination of dictation and speaking activities allows learners to receive dual feedback from themselves and the teacher. It also gave the teacher the chance to adjust the instruction based on the characteristics of the student's speech, which lead to benefit both the learner and the teacher. Repetitive practice facilitated the situations the speech to be improved. This study discussed that the teachers' instruction combining two skills fosters a situation where students practice challenging and productive activities to encourage their speaking skills (Choompunuch et al., 2021) and contributes to reducing anxiety and building confidence.

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# YOUNG EFL LEARNERS' SOCIAL SEMIOTIC CHOICES IN LITERACY ACTIVITIES THROUGH ARTS

Wei-Hua Lan

*National Taiwan Normal University*

[lanflora3@gmail.com](mailto:lanflora3@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Literacy practice through arts is a complex process that involves thinking and producing ideas across multiple sign systems. In an EFL classroom, visual arts can be used to develop literacy practice in which assembling different semiotic resources in order to read and produce text is essential. Based on social semiotics theory, the current study collected verbatim data from in-class group reading events in nine weeks and six- to eight-year-old young EFL readers' artworks of the memorable themes in the stories. Oral presentations of their artworks were recorded and analyzed to understand the semiotic recourses they drew on in production. Results show that young readers relied heavily on illustrations and discussions while making sense of the stories. They drew on semiotic resources such as illustrations, feelings, and intertextual texts to produce the artworks after reading. Children's artworks were semiotic texts recognizable and meaning-potential. When they presented the artwork, they shared a joint interpretation with the text they read together and brought their own interpretation into it. In this way, semiotic texts are more easily for young learners to generate. Pedagogical implications are discussed concerning how arts can be integrated into reading and writing lessons in a foreign language.

**Keywords:** social semiotics, literacy practice, arts, EFL reading and writing

## 1. Introduction

Literacy is usually defined as the ability to read and write and show understanding of a printed text. Within the social semiotic construct, Harste (1994, 2000) indicated that experience with various semiotic or communication systems, such as drama, music, and the visual arts, is essential in literacy practice. Social semiotics explores the system, resources, and registers that people put into practical use to make meaning of the world around them. It focuses on the meaning makers, examining social meaning-making practice in different modes and how people assemble different material forms for interpretation and communication. Different definitions of social semiotics have emerged since Michael Halliday's *Language as Social Semiotic* published in 1978.

Hodge and Kress (1988) explored the kinds of semiotic resources people use in meaning-making for communication. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) proposed that a semiotic resource can be the connection between representational resources and what people do with them. Semiotic resources are "the actions, materials and artifacts that we use for communicative purposes with a meaning potential, based on their past uses, and a set of affordances based on their possible uses, and these will be actualized in concrete social contexts where their use is subject to some form of the semiotic regime" (van Leeuwen, 2005, p285). In other words, the meaning of a sign is not static but situated, shaped by the sign maker's choice based on their knowledge and determined under a specific social context. The relation between form and meaning is socially determined and motivated (Kress, 1993). The signs are made and given

meaning based on the interests of the sign makers and their choice of what semiotic resources they choose to use to realize the sign's meaning.

Most of the research conducted with the social semiotic framework was in the first language context. Woodward and Serebrin (1989) explored the dialogic nature of shared book reading between a father and a son. Cowan and Albers (2006) used arts to engage students in more complex literacy practice. Bezemer and Cowan (2020) studied the multimodal features in a picture book for young learners. Kachorsky, Moses, Serafini, and Hoelting (2017) investigated the semiotic resources young readers employed while reading. Taylor (2014) investigated what semiotic modes teenagers were in while reading. Perceiving the value of semiotic resources in children's books and the benefit of using arts, the present study aims to use social semiotics as a framework and art as a means to engage young EFL learners in complex literacy practice in small group in an EFL context. This study aims to describe this pedagogical approach under a social semiotic framework and to demonstrate how young EFL learners' literacy practice can be enriched in an EFL classroom.

## **2. Linking Theory into Practice**

Social semiotics explores how humans signify and shape understanding of the text in context. Under the social semiotic framework, the lesson was designed through three stages of literacy practices to help students perceive and employ available semiotic resources while reading and writing. The present study is situated in an after-school EFL reading program for eight first to third graders in Taiwan. Each student possessed different English reading proficiency. In the following sections, three stages of this literacy activity are presented.

### **2.1. Stage 1. Building a reading context for semiotic thinking**

Social semiotics is not only a theory but can be a methodology (Benzemer & Cowan, 2020) and a pedagogical approach. With the availability of multimodal texts (e.g., English audible books, picturebooks, and leveled readers) in Taiwan, young learners of English can utilize a variety of semiotic resources, such as typographical (e.g., font size), paralinguistic (e.g., exclamation points and question marks), design, and illustrations in the storybook (Kachorsky, Moses, Serafini, and Hoelting, 2017). A children's book, *Magic Tree House*, written by an American author Mary Pope Osborne, was selected as the reading material. The reason for using a series of children's books was that the syntax and lexis were recurring and controlled, which is more accessible to young EFL learners.

Rather than focusing on grammatical features or specific language skills, this group reading session focused on routine literacy activity and fluency training. Before reading each story, the teacher introduced the story and discussed semiotic features such as the cover, title, and illustrations in order to help children see the semiotic resources they could use to make meaning of the story. Each participant got a copy of the book. The group reading session was processed primarily in a Q&A format, and the discussions were in the children's first language, Mandarin Chinese.

### **2.2. Stage 2. Providing a reading-writing experience through arts**

After reading a book from the *Magic Tree House* series, students were asked to draw the two significant characters, Jack and Annie, in a memorable scene and talk about their illustrations. Each illustration was displaced, and each student was able to talk about their inspiration for their artworks in class. After the students shared with the whole class, they were encouraged to write down their ideas in a short paragraph in order to make a short video presentation about their artwork.

### **2.3. Stage 3. Individualizing the writing process**

Learning to write well is one of the most challenging areas in English as a Foreign

Language. In stage 1, reading was semiotically positioned in a social context where the text, text talk in their first language, and the illustrations they created became valuable semiotic resources for young learners to explore. When the children moved to the writing stage, they were empowered to utilize and assess these signs to create their own piece of writing. After they wrote about their artwork, each student had a chance to talk to the teacher individually about their ideas and revise their writing.

### 3. Methodology

The in-class reading discussions in the first stage were videotaped. Their artworks in the second stage were gathered along with their presentation videos in the third stage. The collected data were analyzed and triangulated to understand what social semiotic resources these young learners utilized in the literacy activities.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The children demonstrated their ability to utilize different semiotic resources. While reading the story, they sounded each word out from the text to figure out the main characters' tones; they read with imagination to visualize the plot; they read with feelings; they read with questions to express opinions; and they read with ideas across different texts. Like Kachorsky et al.'s (2017) finding, the in-class reading session data analysis revealed that the children relied heavily on illustrative semiotic resources. The uniqueness finding of the present study was that the L1 verbal signs generated through group discussion became a powerful social semiotic resource for text comprehension and ideas generating.

#### 4.1. Relived the reading experience through arts

After they finished reading the first book, they submitted their favorite Jack and Annie portraits. They were able to relive their reading experience, recalling their favorite Jack and Annie dialogues that best represented who they were. One child recorded her favorite scene in front of a tall oak tree on an outing, whereas another child expressed how he envied Jack and Annie's journey to travel through time. One child found a resemblance between her and Annie, whereas one child talked about the importance of being responsible like Jack. A child drew all the stuff Jack carried in his backpack to show how much he loved reading. She drew an awkward facial expression to show how Jack was annoyed by Annie's imagination and enthusiasm (See Figure 1). The child resembled Jack as Mr. Clever, a character in another series of children's books, and Annie as Mr. Brave. She demonstrated her ability to read intertextually.

Figure 1 :Jack and Annie

Jack is careful, and he thinks a lot. He will write down anything in his notebook. Annie likes to talk to animals. I think Jack is more like Mr. Clever. Annie is like. Mr. Brave. And I think I am more like Annie.



Another child portrayed Annie with her own favorite skirts, and Jack dressed in colors that matched his sister's outfit. This child is a timid person, so when asked to do the video presentation, she hid beneath the table to avoid the camera. Turning her shyness into creativity,

she cut down her drawing and created a puppet show to reproduce the conversations between the characters. She jotted down two classic lines from the first page of the story “Jack likes real things!” and “Annie likes pretend stuff!” (See Figure 2). She relived her reading experience through language and drama (Cowan & Albers, 2006).



Figure 2: Drawing and Drama

They are very different. When Annie said, “Help! A monster!” Jack will say, “Yeah, sure. A real monster in Frog Creek Pennsylvania.”



#### 4.2. Expressed ideas and feelings through words

Most of the children struggled to revise their oral presentation notes into a piece of writing. They had been preparing for writing through reading, discussing, drawing, and expressing their ideas in videos. Through individual discussion with the teacher, they gradually improved the way they construct ideas. One child was able to rearrange her ideas with the teacher's help, and another child could generate more words in the description. Peer review might be an alternative social semiotic resource in their future writing practices.

#### 5. Conclusion

Under the social semiotic framework, learners' choices of semiotic resources make the meaning-making process evident. In an ESL/EFL classroom, mediating effects such as the help of a teacher/peer and using their first language in a discussion can be crucial social semiotic resources in one's meaning-making process of the target text. Empower them to relive their reading experience and pull together a piece of thought in written language, arts such as drawings, drama, or even songs can be used in a foreign language classroom. Through multiple sign systems, we empower students with the ability to utilize different semiotic tools to read, write, and partake in complex literacy practices.

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# USING AI-BASED CHATBOTS FOR WRITTEN ENGLISH CONVERSATION PRACTICE IN AN EFL CLASSROOM

Angelina Kovalyova

<sup>1</sup>*Tsukuba University*

[\\*angelina.kivalyova@gmail.com](mailto:angelina.kivalyova@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Chatbots are software applications designed to conduct a conversation with humans (Coniam, 2014). The use of chatbots in education is still in its early stages as the natural language processing ability of chatbots is rather low (Fryer et al., 2020). However, the potential of stress-free conversation practice for EFL learners is huge. Thus, a study was conducted to assess the capabilities and limitations of modern chatbots for the purpose of English conversation practice in the EFL context. Specifically, 69 Japanese university students were asked to converse in English with selected chatbots for 15 minutes during 7 classes. 24 of the students conversed with the chatbot called Replika, 24 students conversed with Cleverbot, and 21 student chatted with Koddy. Before the conversations, the participants were asked to watch videos and study related vocabulary from the platform English Central to provide scaffolding for conversation practice. The participants also completed a Chatbot Usability Questionnaire (CUQ) (Holmes et al., 2019) before and after the experiment and provided personal feedback after the experiment describing their overall satisfaction with the chatbot, their self-assessment in terms of English proficiency and confidence growth, and the helpfulness of a scaffolding activity before the conversations with chatbots. Overall, this research clarifies the issues present in modern chatbots but allows us to see the potential to be used in an EFL classroom despite the limitations of chatbots.

**Keywords:** chatbot, mobile-assisted language learning, conversation practice, writing

## 1. Introduction

Chatbots are software applications designed to conduct a conversation with humans (Coniam, 2014). Considering their purpose and the degree of anxiety Japanese students, who are English language learners (ELL), experience during English conversations with real people (Doyon, 2000; Cutrone, 2009; Matsutani, 2021), chatbots may serve as a practical solution to provide Japanese ELL with stress-free English conversation practice to help them develop confidence. The use of chatbots in education is still at its early stages as the natural language processing ability of chatbots is rather low (Fryer et al., 2020) and there are few studies that have explored effective learning designs for chatbots (Hwang & Chang, 2021). Thus, the purpose of this study is assess chatbots usability in an English language classroom and observe participants' impression of using a chatbot for language practice through a usability questionnaire:

RQ1: Is there a significant difference between Replika, Cleverbot, and Koddy overall based on Chatbot Usability Questionnaire (CUQ)?

RQ2: How do the three chatbots perform in terms of EFL-related features of CUQ?



## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Participants

The participants in this study were 69 undergraduate Japanese university students (36 males and 33 females) who were attending an English conversation class at a university in Japan. All participants were native Japanese speakers and their reported English proficiency was of predominantly pre-intermediate level (TOEIC scores - 225-545 (A2):  $n=64$ , 550-780 (B1):  $n=5$ ). The participants were split into three groups, with 24 participants using Replika chatbot, 24 participants practicing with Cleverbot, and 21 participant conversing with Koddy. None of the participants has ever had experience using the chatbots.

### 2.2 Treatment

Before the written interaction with the chatbots, the participants were asked to watch a video and study related vocabulary from the platform English Central to provide scaffolding for written conversation practice. Then they had 15 minutes to practice written conversation with a chatbot. Such activity was repeated 6 times through an academic semester. The participants also completed a Chatbot Usability Questionnaire (CUQ) (Holmes et al., 2019) before and after the experiment, the results of which represent the "expectations" and the "impressions" of using the chatbots.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The overall CUQ scores show a positive usability trend for the chatbot Replika since it was evaluated higher post-experiment (mean score going from 52.79 ( $SD=5.86$ ) to 57.58 ( $SD=9.41$ )). Unlike Replika, the results of CUQ show a negative usability trend for the chatbots Cleverbot and Koddy (mean CUQ score going from 53.96 ( $SD=8.24$ ) to 48.21 ( $SD=9.98$ ) for Cleverbot and from 57.57 ( $SD=8.47$ ) to 41.14 ( $SD=8.46$ ) for Koddy).

The result of a two-way repeated ANOVA test on the CUQ items showed a significant difference between the three chatbots in terms of their usability,  $F(2,134) = 4.55$ ,  $p=.012$  (Table 1). A Tukey post-hoc multiple comparisons analysis, comparing pairs of chatbots, confirmed the finding, revealing the biggest difference between the usability evaluation of Replika and Koddy  $F(2,134) = 4.55$ ,  $p=.011$  (Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Two-Way Repeated ANOVA with Tukey Post-Hoc Multiple Comparisons for the Three Chatbot Applications in Pre- and Post- experiment CUQ

Application	$n$	Pre-experiment	Post-experiment	$F(2,134)$	$p$ -adjusted
		$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$		
Replika	24	52.79 (5.86)	57.58 (9.41)	4.55	.012*
Cleverbot	24	53.96 (8.24)	48.21 (9.98)		
Koddy	21	57.57 (8.47)	41.14 (8.46)		
Replika-Cleverbot					.08
Koddy-Cleverbot					.66
Replika-Koddy					.011*

Note. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

Further analysis of 8 chatbot usability features showed some trends across different features. Specifically, it is interesting to look at the three usability features relevant to EFL context, such as "understanding of input", "appropriacy of chatbot's responses", and "error handling". A pairwise t-test, analyzing each feature of each pair of chatbots, shows the highest disparity between Replika and Koddy in "understanding of human input" ( $p=1.4e-14$ ) and "appropriacy



of chatbot's responses" ( $p=6.7e-07$ ) (Table 2). This suggests that applications differ the most in how well they understand and handle human communication.

*Table 2: Pairwise T-test Comparisons of CUQ Usability Features in Post-experiment CUQ Between the Three Chatbot Applications with Bonferroni Adjustment of p-value. N=69*

CUQ Feature	Replika-Cleverbot p-adjusted	Koddy-Cleverbot p-adjusted	Replika-Koddy p-adjusted
Understanding of input	.0004***	3.9e-06***	1.4e-14***
Appropriacy of chatbot's responses	.005**	.055	6.7e-07***
Error handling	.001**	.11	3.3e-07***

*Note.* \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

Overall, the results offer some insight into the usability of chatbots in an EFL classroom and their current state based on the CUQ. According to the findings, the applications differ in their ability to understand input and to provide appropriate responses, with Replika taking the lead.

The findings provide some points for discussion. For one, despite Replika leading in the comparison, it should be noted that Replika still does not provide a trouble-free written conversation experience. A closer look at the written conversations still shows occasional breakdown in communication. In addition, as the comparison of the three chatbots showed, each chatbot shows a different degree of success in communication. Thus, each application needs to be evaluated individually if one plans to use them in a classroom. Despite these shortcomings, chatbots have the potential to offer a communication environment for language learners, and with the increasing success in natural language processing (NLP) these chatbots can learn to understand human conversation better.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study attempts to compare three AI-based chatbots (Replika, Cleverbot, and Koddy) using a Chatbot Usability Questionnaire (CUQ). The questionnaire, administered before and after the written conversation practice with the chatbots, translates the expectations and the impressions of chatbot use based on the answers of 69 Japanese university students who are English language learners. The results of the study suggest that one of the applications, Replika, handles conversation better, compared to the other two applications, especially when it comes to its ability to understand input. Further research is needed to analyze the exact conversation elements that allow Replika to provide better written conversation practice.

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# RESEARCH ON THE STATUS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WITH SPECIAL CHILDREN IN CHINA

Zeng Shulan<sup>1\*</sup>, Shen Renhong<sup>2</sup>, Hu Jie<sup>3</sup> and Xiu Yunhui<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Universiti Malaysia Sabah*

<sup>2</sup>*Chongqing Normal University*

<sup>3</sup>*Guizhou University of Engineering Science*

[\\*499781205@qq.com](mailto:*499781205@qq.com)

## ABSTRACT

This study used the "Social Support Scale" to investigate 683 special families in 6 provinces and cities of Guangdong, Zhejiang, Sichuan, Liaoning, Chongqing, and Hunan to understand the current situation of social support in families of special groups. The research shows: (1) The level of social support obtained by families with special children is relatively low; (2) There are significant differences in social support in the region where the family is located, parents' educational level, family monthly income, family shape, children's age and degree of disability; (3) There were no significant differences in social support among family residence (urban and rural), parental age, child gender, and disability type.

**Keywords:** social support, family, special children

## 1.Introduction

In a narrow sense, children with special needs refer to children with disabilities (Liu Chunling&Jiang Qindi,2018). They have a certain organization, function loss or disorder of the mental, physical, human structure with the disability to engage in certain activities in whole or in part, including intellectual disability, mental disability, visual disability, hearing disability, etc. Children with special needs need a long time or a certain period of time of continuous and uninterrupted care, education and rehabilitation in all aspects of physical and mental development, learning and life, which has caused some strong needs of families, such as vocational skills improvement, personal psychological counseling services (Zhen Xiaomeng&Li Min,2011), social resources (Su Xueyun, Wu Zexiao&Fang Junming,2014), and so on. With the emergence of needs, people actively seek assistance from people, organization and things in the external environment, accept and use these material assistance or psychological support to solve problems (Lin Yongsheng,2007), and we call these assistance as social support(SS). When social support cannot meet the needs, parents of special children will have psychological problems (Lecavalier L, Leone S & Wiltz,2006; Duarte CS, Bordin IA, Yazigi L&Mooney J,2005;Hastings RP,2003), increasing the pressure faced by the family. There are some studies to confirm that the pressure faced by families with special children is significantly higher than that of families with normal children ( Qin Xiuqun, Su Xiaoyin & Gao Lingling,2008), but the higher the level of social support the family receives, the more positive the way of coping with pressure (Tang Yuehong,2014), and the less pressure it feels, the better the happiness. Therefore, social support is crucial for families with special children [Liu Baiqiao,2017]. But, how about the social support's situation of the family with special

children? How to improve it to get a better living of happiness? For this, it will investigate the current situation of various types of family social support for children with special needs in 6 provinces and cities of Chongqing, Zhejiang, Liaoning, Hunan, Sichuan, and Guangdong, and explore its influencing factors.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1 Research objects

The subjects of this study were 683 parents of children with special needs from 6 provinces and cities of Chongqing, Guangdong, Sichuan, Zhejiang, Liaoning, and Hunan. The research population is special, so the method of target sampling is used. The sample basically covers children's families with different types of disabilities, different levels of disabilities, and different economic levels, so it has a good representative. The basic information of parents and children's information are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Basic information of the subjects (N=683)

	Items	Number (people)	Percentage (%)		Items	Number (people)	Percentage (%)
Parent's age	Under 35	213	31.19	Type of Disability	Intellectual disability	245	35.87
	36-44 years old	326	47.73		Autism	384	56.22
	Over 45	144	21.08		Others	54	7.91
Education level	High school and below	433	63.40	Child's age	0-7 years old	171	25.04
	College and above	250	36.60		8-18 years old	512	74.96
Employment status	Working	428	62.66	Child gender	Male	483	70.72
	No job	255	37.34		Female	200	29.28
family form	Core	346	50.66	Monthly household income	< RMB 6000	507	74.23
	Non-core	337	49.34		≥ RMB 6000	176	25.77
Province and city	Chongqing	103	15.08	Residence	Urban	421	61.64
	Guangdong	276	40.41		Rural	262	38.36
	Sichuan	106	15.52	Level of disability	Mild	90	13.18
	Zhejiang	81	11.86		Moderate	294	43.04
	Liaoning	53	7.76		Severe and above	299	43.78
	Hunan	64	9.37				

### 2.2 Research instrument

The measurement of this study used Zhang Meiyun's revised social support scale (Zhang Meiyun & Lin Hongchi, 2007). The scale has two sub-scales: type of social support and source of social support. Among them, there are 14 items in the type of social support, including three dimensions of emotion support, instrument support and information support, and the internal consistency is 0.86-0.93; there are 19 items in the source of social support, including informal and formal social support, and its internal consistency is 0.79-0.85 (Zeng Shulan, 2017). Type of support score is 1 (none), 2 (occasional), 3 (a lot), 4 (very much) based on level of support, and source of support is 1 (no help at all), 2 (somewhat helpful), 3 (general), 4 (helpful), 5 (very helpful). Emotion support means to be happy and confided from other people, including positive emotions such as security and trust. Instrumental support represents assistance of materials, finance and household affair, etc. Informative support means information such as guidance, advice, or feedback received that is helpful in solving problems. Informal social

support refers to support from non-governmental persons inside and outside the family, such as friends, family, etc. Formal social support refers to support from government, such as school teachers, rehabilitation personnel, doctors, disabled people's federations and other government officials.

### 2.3 Research procedure

Questionnaires are distributed to special education school and rehabilitation organization of six provinces and cities in Guangdong, Sichuan, Hunan, Zhejiang, Liaoning, and Chongqing, then eliminated 703 pieces based on the criteria of regular answers, missing or wrong answers, and a total of 683 valid questionnaires were obtained. After entering the relevant data, SPSS21.0 was used to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, descriptive analysis of the social support status, independent sample T- test and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the influencing factors of family social support for special children.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Reliability test

The a-coefficient created by L.J.Cronbach is used to test reliability. See Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability of the family social support scale for children with special needs

Reliability indicator	Emotional support	Instrument support	Information support	Type of SS	Informal SS	Formal SS	Source of SS
a-coefficient	0.79	0.91	0.89	0.92	0.91	0.86	0.92

According to the table 2, the overall coefficient of social support sources is 0.92, and the coefficients of the two dimensions are 0.86 and 0.91 respectively; the overall coefficient of social support types is 0.92, and the coefficients of the three dimensions are between 0.79-0.91. All reliability coefficients meet the measurement requirements, so the social support scale has high reliability.

### 3.2 Validity test

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to test the relationship between social support type and dimensions and between dimensions, social sources and dimensions and between dimensions. See the table 3,4.

Table 3: The correlation coefficient of each dimension and the overall type of family social support for special children

Items	1	2	3	4
1.Emotion support	1			
2.Instrument support	0.63**	1.00		
3.Information support	0.48**	0.61**	1.00	
4.Overall	0.80**	0.94**	0.77**	1.00

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*<0.01, \*\*\*<0.001

As shown in Table 3, the relationship between each dimension of social support type and the total score of the type is higher than the relationship between each dimension. Therefore, the validity of the social support type scale is good.

**Table 4: The correlation coefficient of each dimension and the overall source of family social support for special children**

Items	1	2	3
<b>1. Informal support</b>	1.00		
<b>2. Formal support</b>	0.57**	1.00	
<b>3. Overall</b>	0.95**	0.81**	1

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $< 0.01$ , \*\*\* $< 0.001$

As shown in Table 4, the relationship between each dimension of social support source and the overall of the source is higher than the relationship between each dimension. Therefore, the source of social support has good validity. The overall situation and influencing factors of family social support for special children. In order to realize the current situation of social support in families of special children, the social support scale is adopted to investigate 683 parents of special children. Parents of special children answered according to the description of the items. The higher the score, the higher the level of social support they received. The specific results are as follows:

### 3.3.1. Overall status of social support for families with special children

#### Types of social support

**Table 5: Types of social support in families of special children (N=683)**

Dimension	M	SD	Maximum value	Minimum value
<b>Emotion support</b>	2.29	0.62	4.00	1.00
<b>Instrument support</b>	1.93	0.66	4.00	1.00
<b>Information support</b>	1.92	0.71	4.00	1.00
<b>Overall</b>	2.03	0.57	4.00	1.00

Note: M is the mean, SD is the standard deviation.

It can be seen from Table 5 that among the types of social support obtained by families with special children, only emotion support is above 2 (occasionally), and both instrument support and information support are below 2; social support is generally at the level of “occasional”.

#### Sources of social support

**Table 6: Sources of social support in families of special children (N=683)**

Dimension	M	SD	Maximum value	Minimum value
<b>Formal support</b>	2.65	0.99	5.00	1.00
<b>Informal support</b>	2.60	0.81	5.00	1.00
<b>Overall</b>	2.61	0.78	5.00	1.00

Note: M is the mean, SD is the standard deviation.

It can be seen from Table 6 that the formal social support and informal social support obtained by families with special children are above 2 (some help) and tend to be 3 (general); the source of social support is generally at the level of “some help”.

### 3.3.2. The main influencing factors of family social support for special children

#### Parents' educational level

**Table 7: Influence of parental education level on family social support for special children (N=683)**

Items	High school and below (N=433)		College and above (N=250)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Emotion Support	2.26	0.63	2.35	0.60	-2.00*	0.046
Instrument support	1.87	0.63	2.03	0.69	-3.06**	0.002
Type of social support	1.99	0.56	2.11	0.58	-2.81**	0.005
Formal social support	2.56	0.99	2.82	0.97	-3.29**	0.001

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*<0.01, \*\*\*<0.001.

As shown in Table 7, the emotion support, instrument support, social support type and formal social support obtained by parents with education level of college or above were significantly higher than those of parents with high school and below.

#### Monthly household income

**Table 8: Influence of monthly family income on family social support for special children (N=683)**

Items	<RMB 6000 (N=507)		≥RMB 6000 (N=176)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Emotion Support	2.26	0.63	2.39	0.58	-2.52*	0.012
Instrument support	1.88	0.65	2.06	0.67	-3.07**	0.002
Type of social support	1.99	0.57	2.14	0.56	-2.93**	0.003

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*<0.01, \*\*\*<0.001.

As shown in Table 8, the types of emotion support, instrument support, and social support obtained by parents with a monthly family income of more than 6,000 yuan are significantly higher than parents with less than 6,000 yuan of monthly family income.

#### Family form

**Table 9: Influence of family form on family social support for special children (N=683)**

Items	core (N=346)		Non-core (N=337)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Instrument support	1.83	0.64	2.04	0.66	-4.19**	0.000
Type of social support	1.98	0.57	2.09	0.57	-2.64**	0.009

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*<0.01, \*\*\*<0.001.

As shown in Table 9, the instrumental support and type of social support received by non-core families were significantly higher than those obtained by core families.



## Age of children

**Table 10: Influence of age of children on family social support for special children (N=683)**

Items	Preschool-aged children (N=171)		School-aged children (N=512)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Formal social support	2.801	0.936	2.605	0.999	2.261**	0.024

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*<0.01, \*\*\*<0.001.

As shown in Table 10, families of preschool-aged children received significantly higher formal support than families of school-aged children.

## Degree of disability

**Table 11: Influence of age of children on family social support for special children (N=683)**

Items	M	SD	F	p	Multiple comparisons (LSD)			
					(I)	(J)	Mean difference(I-J)	p
Source of social support	2.61	0.78	8.61	0.000	Severe and very severe	Mild	-0.28**	0.003
						Moderate	-0.23***	0.000
Informal social support	2.60	0.81	6.70	0.001		Mild	-0.26**	0.007
						Moderate	-0.22**	0.001
Formal social support	2.65	0.99	7.24	0.001		Mild	-0.32**	0.006
						Moderate	-0.27**	0.001

\* p < 0.05 \*\* p<0.01 \*\*\* p<0.001

As shown in Table 11, there are significant differences in the degree of disability in the source of social support, formal social support and informal social support for special children's families. Multiple post-hoc comparisons found that the social support scores of families with severe and very severe children were significantly lower than those of mild-to-moderate families on the above dimensions.

## Area

**Table 12: Influence of area of residence on family social support for special children (N=683)**

Items	M	SD	F	p	Multiple comparisons (LSD)			
					(I)	(J)	mean difference(I-J)	p
Source of social support	2.61	0.78	2.74	0.019	Chongqing	Guangdong	-0.19*	0.032
						Sichuan	-0.28**	0.008
						Zhejiang	-0.24*	0.036
						Liaoning	-0.40**	0.002
					Liaoning	Hunan	0.33*	0.020
Informal social support	2.60	0.81	2.51	0.029	Liaoning	Chongqing	0.46**	0.001
						Guangdong	0.31*	0.011
						Sichuan	0.28*	0.041
						Hunan	0.38*	0.012
Formal social support	2.65	0.99	3.47	0.004	Sichuan	Hunan	0.46**	0.003
						Guangdong	0.22*	0.048
						Chongqing	0.51***	0.000
					Chongqing	Guangdong	-0.29*	0.011

\* p < 0.05 \*\* p<0.01 \*\*\* p<0.001

As shown in Table 12, there are significant differences in sources of social support across regions. Multiple post-hoc comparisons found that in terms of social support sources, Chongqing was significantly lower than Guangdong, Sichuan, Zhejiang, and Liaoning, and Liaoning was significantly higher than Hunan; in terms of formal social support, Sichuan was significantly higher than Hunan, Guangdong, and Chongqing, and Guangdong was significantly higher. In Chongqing; in terms of informal social support, Liaoning is significantly higher than Chongqing, Guangdong, Sichuan and Hunan.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Analysis of the status quo of social support for families with special children

This study found that the source of social support for special children's families ( $M=2.61$ ) and the scores of each dimension (formal support  $M=2.65$ , informal support  $M=2.60$ ) were all more than 2.5, indicating that they have all aspects from the government, family, etc. After receiving help, the level of formal social support is slightly higher than that of informal social support. This is different from previous research conclusions. For example, Li Xuehui and Zhao Kang found that the source of social support obtained by families of autistic children is mainly informal social support (Li Xuehui & Zhao Kang, 2019). The possible reasons are as follows:

First, the state has promulgated a series of policies and regulations with guarantee and operable, which has expanded the state's support for special groups. Take education as an example: the disability-friendly services in the "Special Education Promotion Plan (2014-2016)—rehabilitation and assistance projects" for poor and autistic children, assistance device service projects for the disabled, and rehabilitation and assistance projects for deaf children (cochlear implants). The programs enable each child to receive appropriate services.

Secondly, the support from family members and friends is more of a personal concern. The amount of support has a great relationship with the environment in which the individual lives, and the level of support is unstable. The support given by the government is not only a right, but also a kind of public care has better stability and guarantee in a certain period of time. At the same time, the transparency of information and the improvement of people's awareness of rights have further promoted the empowerment and empowerment of families. Therefore, formal social support is slightly higher than informal social support. With the promulgation and implementation of the Second Special Education Enhancement Plan (2017-2020), formal social support will reach a new height in both breadth and depth.

Among the types of social support, the overall social support ( $M=2.03$ ) obtained by the family is not very much, and it is in the "occasional" obtaining stage, in which emotional support ( $M=2.29$ ) is obtained the most, and tool and information support ( $M<2$ ) is less. Therefore, the support that families receive in the type of social support is insufficient, which is consistent with the conclusion of previous research (Ru Gao Hui & Siriguleng, 2017). Among the types of social support, the existing social support can no longer meet the growing needs of families with special children. As we all know, families need to spend more time, energy and money to raise children with special needs, and they have greater needs for relevant professional information (Chen Yaohong, 2007), emotional (Liu Huili & Zou Guangwan, 2015), economic (Zhao Cong, 2016) and other aspects. These needs will increase with the empowerment and empowerment of households, so even though the state's support system is improving, it still cannot meet their needs (Liu Huili & Zou Guangwan, 2015). For example, in 2015, the "two subsidy systems for the disabled" proposed in the "Opinions of the State Council on Comprehensively Establishing the Living Subsidy System for the Disabled with Difficulties

and the Nursing Subsidy System for the Severely Disabled” enabled provinces and cities to start subsidizing the disabled and severely disabled people. . In 2019, Ruyuan’s standard of living subsidy for disabled persons with difficulties was 165 yuan per person per month, and the standard of nursing subsidies for severely disabled persons was 220 yuan per person per month(Huang Yuanmei,2019). However, the amount of these subsidies is far from the actual cost (the overall cost of autism is between 30,000 and 50,000 per year) (Tang Jun,2019). At present, only 2.92% of people in society are very aware of autism (Tang Jun,2019), so they will receive more emotional support from families of children of the same type than family members and friends (Cai Zhuoni & Yang Feiran,2011). As children grow up, the professional information they need will also vary. In particular, the vocational education of the disabled in my country is still at a relatively weak stage, which further increases the demand for professional information.

Therefore, the level of social support for families with special children in my country is not high enough to meet the current family needs, but the level of formal social support from the government and other departments has increased, indicating that relevant national policies are playing a positive role.

## **4.2 Analysis of Influencing Factors of Family Social Support for Special Children**

### **4.2.1 Parental education level**

This study found that the emotional support, instrumental support, type support and formal support obtained by parents with education level of college or above were significantly higher than those of parents with high school and below. This is consistent with the research conclusion of Wang Jianjian and Halina , thus affecting the breadth and strength of parents’ access to social support (Wang Jianjian & Ha Lina,2018). The educational level of parents will affect the income and social capital of the entire family (Xiong Nina , Yang Li, Yu Yang, Hou Jiaxun, Li Jia, Li Yuanyuan, Liu Hairong, Zhang Yin & Jiao Zhenggang,2010). The higher the education level of the parents, the better the family economic conditions, the more resources in all aspects of the family, the wider the channels for parents to know about support information, and the more able to make full use of the support (Tian Boqiong, Zeng Shulan, Lu Xiuli & Shen Renhong,2018). Therefore, educational level significantly affects the level of social support a family receives.

### **4.2.2 Household income**

This study found that the emotional support, tool support, and type support obtained by parents with a monthly family income of more than RMB 6,000 were significantly higher than Parents whose monthly income are less than RMB 6,000. This is consistent with previous research findings that the higher the socioeconomic status of the family, the more social support parents of children with special needs receive (Huang Jingjing & Liu Yanhong,2006; Zhu Nan, Peng Panpan & Zou Rong,2015). Household income is related to the socioeconomic status of the household, which reflects the differences in the resources households acquire (Matthews K A& Gallo L C,2011). The better the family economic conditions, the higher the overall level of family social support (Wang Sibian,2018). Therefore, family income can significantly affect the degree of family access to social support.

### **4.2.3 Family Form**

This study found that non-core families received significantly higher instrumental support and type support than nuclear families. This is somewhat different from previous research

conclusions. Wang Jianjian and Halina's research shows that the social utilization of core families is higher than that of extended families (Wang Jianjian & Ha Lina, 2018). The possible reasons are as follows: Families with special children have considerable demands for economic support and spiritual support (Gu Changfen, Chen Yaohong & Wang Rui, 2010), but community support and social support are very weak (Guo Dehua, 2011), and most of their support comes from family members, social relations, etc. (Gu Changfen, Chen Yaohong & Wang Rui, 2010) twenty one]. Therefore, families with special children may obtain more relevant support from within the family. Core families have fewer family members than non-core families, so they receive significantly less social support than non-nuclear families. Therefore, family shape can significantly affect the acquisition of social support.

#### **4.2.4 The age of the child**

This study found that families of preschool children received significantly more formal support than families of school-age children. The possible reasons are as follows: First, children with special needs will increase behavioral problems with age, such as behavioral problems in adolescence. At present, this teaching is rarely involved. At the same time, influenced by traditional thinking, parents are also ashamed to explain or teach their children the correct solution. This exacerbates the problematic behavior, but there is no way around it. Second, vocational education for children with special needs is still very weak, and most of them are spontaneous social organizations of parents (Dong Xin, 2016). Children's vocational education and future employment are more dependent on parents' own resources to solve. So they receive significantly less formal support than families with preschoolers.

#### **4.2.5 Degree of disability**

This study found that the source of family social support, formal social support, and informal social support of severe and very severe children were significantly lower than those of families with mild to moderate children. The possible reasons are as follows: First, severe and very severe children need special care and cannot go to school. They can only learn through home delivery or distance education. Compared with school education, home delivery or distance education is far from meeting their learning needs. Second, the level of impediment can affect communication, and effective communication can raise family expectations so that family members can actively seek support to solve problems. Severe and very severe children require more from others and little feedback, which lowers family expectations and prevents them from actively seeking social support. At the same time, caring for such groups requires more time, effort and expense. Therefore, families with severe and very severe children need in-depth social support.

#### **4.2.6 Area**

This study found that in terms of sources of social support, families with special children in Chongqing were significantly lower than those in Guangdong, Sichuan, Zhejiang, and Liaoning, and those in Liaoning were significantly higher than those in Hunan; in terms of formal social support, Sichuan was significantly higher than Hunan, Guangdong, and Chongqing. , Guangdong is significantly higher than Chongqing; in terms of informal social support, Liaoning is significantly higher than Chongqing, Guangdong, Sichuan and Hunan. The possible reasons are as follows: Different provinces and cities have different investment in special education according to their own economic and construction development plans, leading to differences. For example, as of the end of 2016, the number of rehabilitation institutions in Chongqing (China Disabled Persons' Federation, 2016), the number of persons serving disabled children and certified disabled persons, the number of persons serving in the special lottery public welfare fund for the disabled, the number of special education general

high school classes (departments), the number of disabled persons The number of secondary vocational schools for people is lower than that in Sichuan(China Disabled Persons' Federation,2016), Guangdong, Zhejiang(China Disabled Persons' Federation,2016), and Liaoning(China Disabled Persons' Federation,2016), so the level of social support from the Chongqing regional government and other departments is low. Sichuan(China Disabled Persons' Federation,2016) has a higher number of disabled children and certified disabled persons than Hunan(China Disabled Persons' Federation,2016), Guangdong(China Disabled Persons' Federation,2016), and Chongqing(China Disabled Persons' Federation,2016), so the level of formal social support is higher. In terms of publicity, the number of Braille and Braille audiobook reading rooms in public libraries in Liaoning Province(China Disabled Persons' Federation,2016), the number of weekly cultural activities for the disabled, and the number of cultural and artistic competitions and exhibitions for the disabled are higher than those in Chongqing(China Disabled Persons' Federation,2016) and Guangdong(China Disabled Persons' Federation,2016)., Sichuan(China Disabled Persons' Federation,2016). Hunan(China Disabled Persons' Federation,2016), the public has obtained more relevant information, has a higher degree of correct understanding of children with special needs, and can obtain more support from family members and friends. Therefore, the informal social support obtained by the Liaoning region is relatively high.

## 5. Research conclusions

On the whole, the level of social support for families with special children in my country is not high and cannot meet the current family needs, but the level of formal social support from the government and other departments has increased, indicating that the relevant national policies are playing a positive role, which is conducive to improving the quality of life of families with special children. At the same time, the degree of social support has significant differences in parental education level, family income, region, family shape, children's age and degree of handicap; while there is no significant difference in social support in parental age, child's gender, handicap type, and place of residence. Therefore, when building a social support system in a family of special children, it is necessary to focus on the family environment and the age and degree of disability of the child.

There are two main deficiencies in this study. One is that only one member of the family has been investigated, which may make the information incomplete; the other is that there is no data to confirm the final direction of social support. Does increasing social support improve quality of life? Or boost other dependent variables? Therefore, future research will be improved from the following aspects: First, the comprehensiveness of social support system evaluation. As a subjective variable, family members have different feelings, so it is necessary to supplement other family members' views on social support. Only by fully understanding the existing social support of the family can we provide more reasonable and applicable social support. Secondly, it is necessary to explore the correlation between social support and other variables to enrich and gradually improve the theory of social support.

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# A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF FLA: IMPLICATION FOR PEDAGOGY

Tan Ben Dan<sup>1</sup> and Noraini Binti Said<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Faculty of Psychology and Education, University Malaysia Sabah*

<sup>2</sup>*Faculty of Psychology and Education, University Malaysia Sabah*

[tandandancy123@sina.com](mailto:tandandancy123@sina.com)

## Abstract

In this paper, a systematic literature review is conducted to analyse data on English speaking anxiety in foreign languages from 2020 to 2022. The goal is to examine the focus and characteristics of researches done on English speaking anxiety. 85,017 research articles were initially yielded from two databases (Scopus and Science Direct) using the specific queries on ESL and speaking anxiety. However, eventually only seven relevant articles focusing on English speaking anxiety were selected for review to achieve this goal after exclusion and inclusion criteria were applied in the screening processes. The study found that, in terms of research participants, the studies on English speaking anxiety typically selected college students as the main study subjects and the main method of English speaking anxiety is mixed method. With the development of the internet, computer-aided education is increasingly incorporated into teaching practice. For example, researchers have used computer tools, such as Popsispeak, videoblogs, ASR technology, and presentations to explore how to alleviate anxiety in speaking English. The veracity and completeness of the results were limited by the fact that only 7 articles from two databases of Sabah University of Malaysia were analysed in this system review. Future researchers can use more specific queries to identify research articles on English speaking anxiety in order to obtain more comprehensive research data.

**Keywords:** English Speaking Anxiety, Systematic review

## 1.Introduction

English is the main foreign language that students learn in China and is a second language for most Chinese in addition to their mother tongue, Chinese. Therefore, for Chinese students, the "foreign language anxiety" mentioned in this article is "English anxiety," "Foreign language speaking anxiety" is "English speaking anxiety."

As language acquisition theory has evolved, an increasing number of researchers have concluded that language acquisition is a complex process involving learner cognition and emotion. Starting in the 1970s, by conducting extensive studies of the emotional factors affecting learners, language researchers almost unanimously agree that anxiety can significantly affect a learner's ability to pick up a foreign language. According to Naser Oteir & Nijr Al-Otaibi (2019), language anxiety has negative effects on foreign language learning. Hanifa (2018) points out that of the various emotional factors found to have an effect, anxiety is the crucial one affecting student's speaking performance. Rajitha & Alamelu (2020) argue that one of the most difficult problems in the teaching and learning process is speaking

nervousness in English. Similarly, Akramy (2020) defines speaking as an interactive skill may create more aspects of anxieties while being used by the learners. Liu (2020) highlights that as a language subject, the ultimate aim of English is communication, but in China, education of English has been difficult to break through the bottleneck of “dumb English”. Students are always too nervous and anxious to express their opinions fluently when they are faced with real communication. In English class, many students are more afraid of “speaking” English than completing exercises involving listening, reading, or writing. Specifically, when communicating verbally, they experience a range of feelings, including nervousness and anxiety. Excessive verbal anxiety can affect the output of speaking English and negatively impact English learning. With this in mind, it is crucial to help students analyse the causes of speaking anxiety in English classrooms. Based on this understanding, measures can be devised to alleviate the anxiety students feel when speaking English.

## **2. Significance of Study**

The significance of this study lies in the fact that the systematic and comprehensive analysis of English speaking anxiety will enable readers to understand the achievements made in this field more comprehensively, will give rise to new ideas and inspire researchers and users, and provide more theoretical support for the study of English speaking anxiety in China, so as to promote the Chinese study of English speaking anxiety.

## **3. Research Questions**

This paper identifies one major research questions: What are the characteristics of speaking anxiety research in terms of methodology and focus?

## **4. Methodology**

The systematic literature review employed in this paper highlights specific problems by selecting and evaluating literature using standardized protocols and innovating on the basis of the qualitative evaluation of existing research results. To do so, Scopus and Science Direct were used to search for related articles, specifically using the keywords "speaking anxiety" or "English speaking anxiety." The documents were retrieved on March 22, 2022. The relevant literature was then compiled, read, and analysed in an objective manner. A total of seven thematically appropriate target document after exclusion and inclusion criteria were applied in the screening processes.

## **5. Findings and Discussion**

The studies on English speaking anxiety typically selected college students as their subjects. There is very little research investigating English speaking anxiety in primary and middle school students; as such, it is necessary to broaden the research to further enrich the theory and practice related to this topic. Only by extending the speaking anxiety research on other English learners, it can be more accurately and comprehensively identified the differences in English learning between different groups. This in turn will promote the development of second language acquisition and foreign language teaching.

The main method of English speaking anxiety studies is mixed method. Compared with quantitative or qualitative research, the mixed method is a methodological tool that focuses more on the practical value of research and develops the advantages of qualitative and

quantitative research methods. In recent years, the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods has become increasingly popular among researchers, as based on the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, researchers can obtain more comprehensive datasets than simply quantitative or qualitative research. The mixed method is not new, it will continue to be a research orientation and trend for social researchers.

In the research content, the most studied area is how to alleviate English speaking anxiety using computer-mediated aids. With the development of the internet, computer-aided education is becoming increasingly integrated into teaching practice. In the reviewed literature, the researchers used various computer tools, such as popspeak, videoblogs, ASR technology, presentations, mini-speech, and scaffolded feedback. The research proves that they can effectively alleviate students' English speaking anxiety. Although these computer tools help teachers solve some problems, they also have many shortcomings, such as a lack of awareness of students' speaking ability and their inability to provide personalized support to learners. Therefore, these systems need to be further improved and refined.

Based on the above results, this paper puts forward the following suggestions: firstly, to improve online teaching techniques to ensure that in the implementation of the teaching process, computer-aided education can provide personalised support according to their English level. Secondly, English teachers should pay more attention to primary and middle school students' English speaking anxiety. Thirdly, in future studies on English speaking anxiety, mixed methods can still be used as the main research methods. Finally, the classroom teaching methods of English teachers can be further studied. The classroom regulation of teachers is also one of the indispensable ways to relieve students' speaking anxiety. Teachers can effectively reduce students' English speaking anxiety by adopting reasonable and effective teaching methods.

## 6.Limitations

The present systematic analysis of the seven papers collected between 2020 and March 2022 using Scopus and Science Direct, databases subscribed to by University Sabah, Malaysia, has limitations in terms of the veracity and completeness of its results. Therefore, future researchers can draw on a broader range of databases to collect articles related to English speaking anxiety to obtain more comprehensive study results.

## 7.Conclusion

Through a systematic analysis of seven papers from Scopus and Science Direct, databases of University Sabah, the main findings done on English speaking anxiety summarised in this paper will provide some theoretical support for education and further researchers. Guo (2021) points out in her paper that English speaking anxiety among middle school students is a major problem that cannot be ignored in China. Based on the systematic review mentioned above, a mixed method research should be adopted to further study English speaking anxiety among Chinese middle school students in order to enrich the research scope of student speaking anxiety theory among students and provide more theoretical support for the teaching of English speaking skills in China.

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# THINK LIKE A TOASTMASTER: A PRACTICAL APPROACH IN OVERCOMING SPEECH ANXIETY AMONG SPM 2021 CANDIDATES

Nur Atiqah Ismail

*SM Sains Kota Tinggi*

[atiqah@sakti.edu.my](mailto:atiqah@sakti.edu.my)

## Abstract

This paper examines the use of adapted Toastmasters' approach in overcoming speech anxiety among SPM 2021 English 1119 candidates. COVID-19 pandemic has pushed students to become accustomed to online learning. However, due to lack of face-to-face interaction during online learning, many students developed speech anxiety as soon as physical classes were permitted in October 2021. This could be detrimental especially to SPM 2021 candidates as they were required to sit for English 1119/3 Speaking paper in only five months after the school reopened. Therefore, there was an urgent need for an intervention plan for teaching speaking skill – hence the adapted Toastmasters' approach was introduced in the speaking classes. A typical Toastmasters meeting comprises 10 roles altogether. However, for the practical purpose in a classroom setting and for focusing on overcoming students' anxiety, a few of the roles in the Toastmasters' meeting were either completely excluded or introduced at later sessions. There were 15 sessions of adapted Toastmasters' approach conducted in a span of 15 weeks from January to March 2022 in speaking-focused classes. Pre-test and post-test marks were compared to measure the effectiveness of this approach. A questionnaire was distributed to 23 students who participated in this study. The findings indicate that students perceive the adapted Toastmasters approach in speaking classes as useful in overcoming speech anxiety and rebuilding their confidence to speak in English – particularly in sitting for their SPM 1119/3 (Speaking) paper. The paper concludes with a discussion on the pedagogical implications of the findings.

**Keywords:** toastmaster, speech, anxiety, SPM, speaking

## 1. Introduction

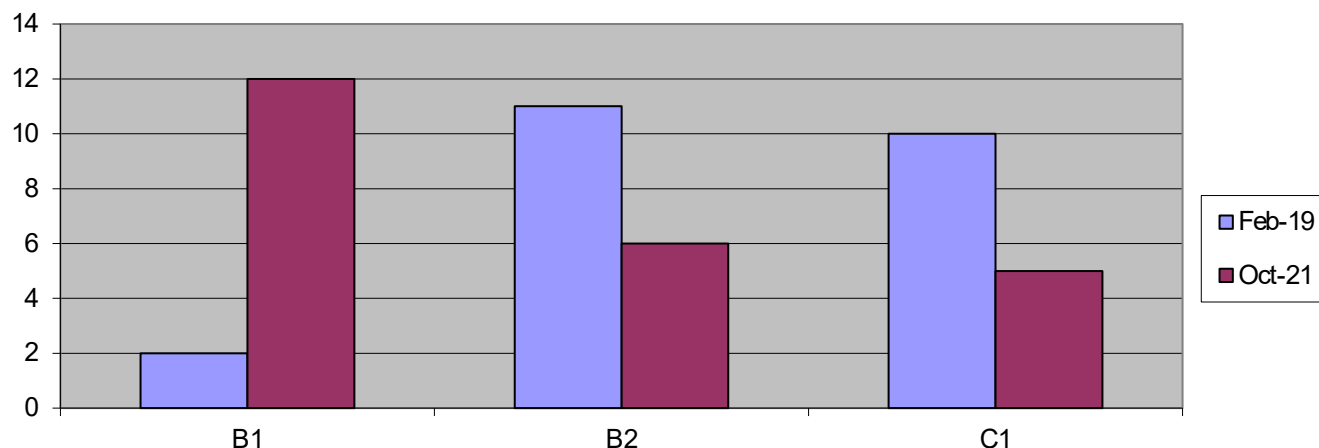
Teaching speaking skill has never been straightforward. It requires context and competence; as it goes beyond forming grammatically correct sentences. Besides that, speaking also covers broad areas of mechanics, functions, pragmatics and social interaction (KÜRÜM, 2016). As if those are not intimidating enough, speaking skill is now formally assessed in SPM English 1119 (Paper 3), starting from 2021. In other words, with the current CEFR-based syllabus, 17-year-olds who are at their most self-conscious stage face heightened affective filter (Uquillas, 2021) and are expected to produce fluent, accurate and appropriate spoken discourse in their second language (L2) despite spending most of their upper secondary years of learning online, from home.

### 1.1 Prolonged Online Learning and Speech Anxiety

There are many promises when it comes to learning online, however, improving speaking skills during face-to-face interaction is not one of these. There have been studies that show that online learning only exacerbates pre-existing speech anxiety that students might have experienced before learning online (Rahmawati, et al., 2021) and unfortunately this has been the case for

the 23 subjects of this study. They have shown significant regression in terms of their CEFR level for speaking once they resumed their face-to-face learning after almost two years of online learning despite the best effort of having continuous speaking practice during online learning.

Figure 1: The regression of students' CEFR level for speaking



From Figure 1, it is clear that the regression of most of the subjects saturated to B1 level compared to previous two years when most were at B2 level.

Table 1: CEFR speaking skills descriptor

B1	<b>Independent User</b>	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
B2		Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
C1	<b>Proficient User</b>	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.



C2		<p>Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read.</p> <p>Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation.</p> <p>Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.</p>
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*Source: Instructions for speaking examiners, Lembaga Peperiksaan Malaysia*

Based on Table 1, it is difficult to ignore the fact that due to exacerbated speech anxiety, students somehow lost their spontaneity and fluency in speech, making it difficult for them to reach higher level of speaking skills. This is definitely frustrating as most students in the sample group have quite good command of English. Therefore, specific intervention needs to come at play in addressing speech anxiety.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Typical Toastmasters' Meeting

*Table 2: Roles in Toastmasters' meeting*

<i>Roles</i>	<i>Description of Role</i>
1. Sergeant-at-Arms	Serves as a master host and arranges room and equipment for each meeting
2. Toastmasters of the Day	Act as the host and conduct the entire meeting. Introduce participants and each session Master. Give concluding remarks at the end of the meeting.
3. Joke Master	Tell a one-minute memorised humorous story.
4. Master of Table Topics	Prepares and issues a topic and randomly selects meeting attendees who then respond to the topic in an impromptu manner. Collects and calculates voting for the Best Table Topic Speaker of the Week.
5. Prepared Speech Speaker	Presents a prepared speech on a given topic.
6. General Evaluator	Gives an oral evaluation of one of the prepared speech.
7. Speech Evaluator	Gives an oral evaluation of one of the prepared speeches.
8. Timer	Explains the timing rules and keeps track of time for each participant throughout the meeting.
9. 'Ah' Counter	Notes words and sounds that speakers use as a pause filter during the meeting.
10. Grammarian/Word master	Shares new words, phrases or grammar rules with students and encourages students to use them during the meeting

*Source: Yu-Chih, 2008*

Essentially, the meeting flows are as follows: (1) Introduction Session—Sergeant-at-Arms calls meeting to order (30 seconds); (2) Rules Session—Timer reports the time requirement for each session (1 minute); (3) Joke Session—Joke Master invites 3 or 4 students to tell a joke (7 minutes); (4) Prepared Speech Session—each speaker presents a prepared speech for 4 or 5 minutes (17 minutes); (5) Table Topics Session—the Master of Table Topics invites 3 or 4

speakers to present impromptu speeches (9 minutes); and (6) Evaluation Session—members consider three speech evaluations, the ‘Ah’ Counter’s report, the Grammarian/Word Master’s report, the Timer’s report, the Master of Table Topics’ report, and the General Evaluator’s report (10 minutes). Figure 2 illustrates the Toastmasters meeting procedures and the interactions among the different roles.

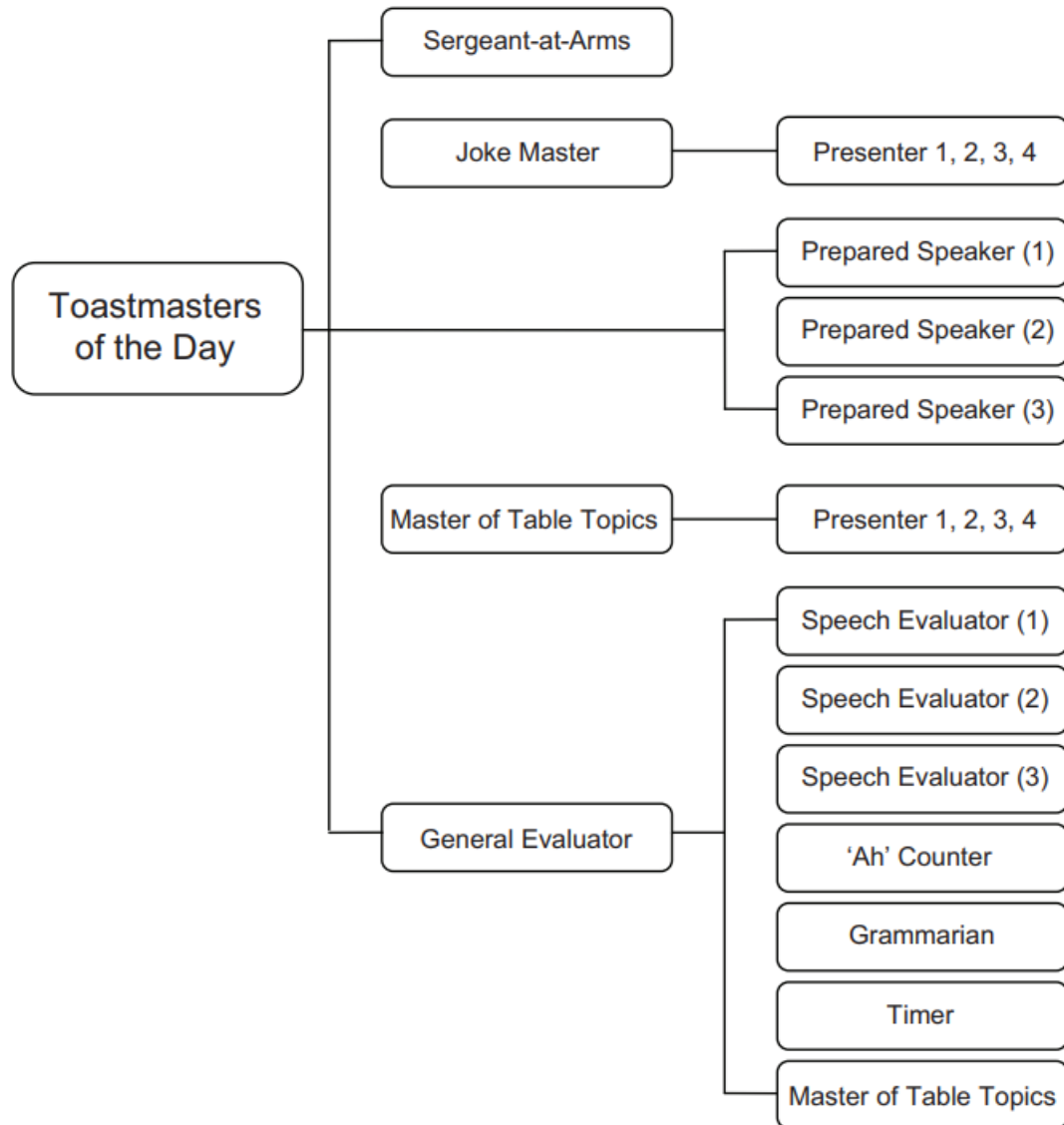


Figure 2: Toastmasters Meeting Procedure

Before implementing a Toastmasters meeting in speaking-focused lessons, the teacher prepared the students on the roles and the meeting procedure. Handouts were distributed to present the details of each role and how a meeting should proceed. The meetings were conducted for one and a half hours in 15 consecutive weeks. In these meetings every student was given the opportunity to experience different roles.

## 2.2 Using Toastmasters’ Meeting as Intervention

The study was conducted at SM Sains Kota Tinggi in speaking-focused intervention lessons on a weekly basis throughout Term 3 of 2021 (January – March 2022). At the end of the term, each participant was interviewed. The study addressed the following questions:

1. How has the Toastmasters' approach helped you overcome your speech anxiety?
2. In what way has the Toastmasters' approach helped you improve your spoken discourse?

The 23 subjects were SPM 2021 candidates of SM Sains Kota Tinggi. This study aimed to overcome their speech anxiety and required them to give a number of both prepared and spontaneous oral presentations. During each weekly speaking-focused lessons, participants played the various roles prescribed in the Toastmasters Meetings. In order to find answers to the aforementioned questions, a few elements of Toastmasters' roles were adapted. The following is the adapted structures of Toastmasters' meeting in the span of 15 weeks:

### 2.2.1 Week 1-5

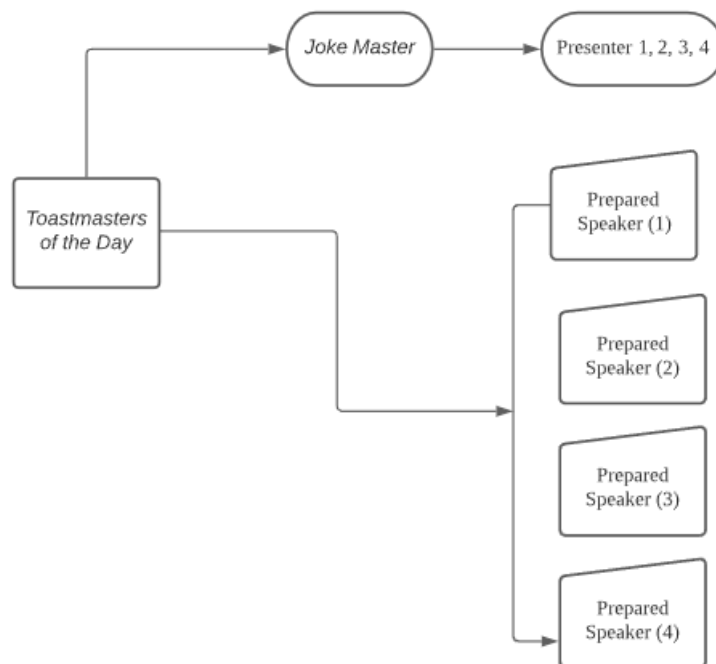


Figure 3: Toastmasters Meeting Procedure Week 1- 5

For Week 1-5, Figure 3 shows the roles in the Toastmasters Meeting were reduced to only three roles, namely, Toastmasters of the Day, Joke Master and Prepared Speakers. As this was still in the early process where students were newly out from their online mode of learning, it was deemed necessary for students to have some sort of familiarity of speaking face-to-face rather than pushing for fluency and spontaneity right away. Therefore, during these weeks, students were only expected to prepare and memorise jokes (assigned to students who were already at B2 to C1 level) as well as prepare 1 minute speeches (assigned to students who were then at B1 level). The Toastmasters Meeting at this point was mainly to lower students' affective filter which simultaneously helped in reducing their speech anxiety (Uquillas, 2021).

### 2.2.2 Week 6-10

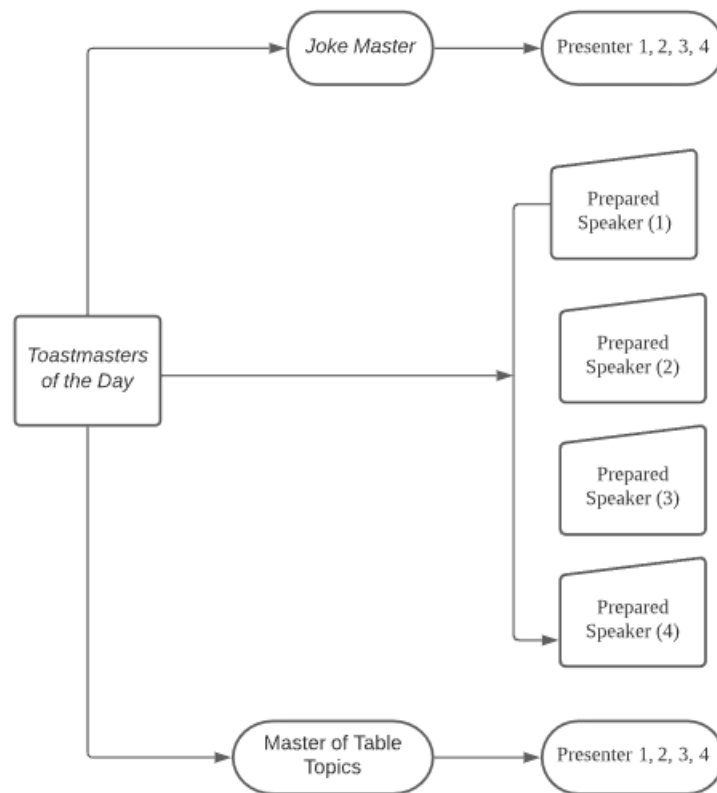


Figure 4: Toastmasters Meeting Procedure Week 6-10

For Week 6-10, Figure 4 shows that one more role was added to the previous three roles, that is, Master of Table Topics. As students were getting used to Toastmasters' meeting structures and becoming more comfortable with it, the students were deemed ready to dip their toes in impromptu speech through the use of Table Topics. Table Topics® is a long-standing Toastmasters tradition intended for speakers to develop their ability to organize their thoughts quickly and respond to an impromptu question or topic (Toastmasters International, 2022). Consequently during these weeks, students were expected to deliver one or two impromptu speeches (assigned to students who were already at B2 to C1 level) as well as prepare 1 minute speeches (assigned to students who were at B1 level), where students took turns in terms of experiencing different roles. The goal of Toastmasters Meeting at this stage was to ensure that all 23 students had the opportunity to deliver their impromptu speeches.

### 2.2.3 Week 11-15

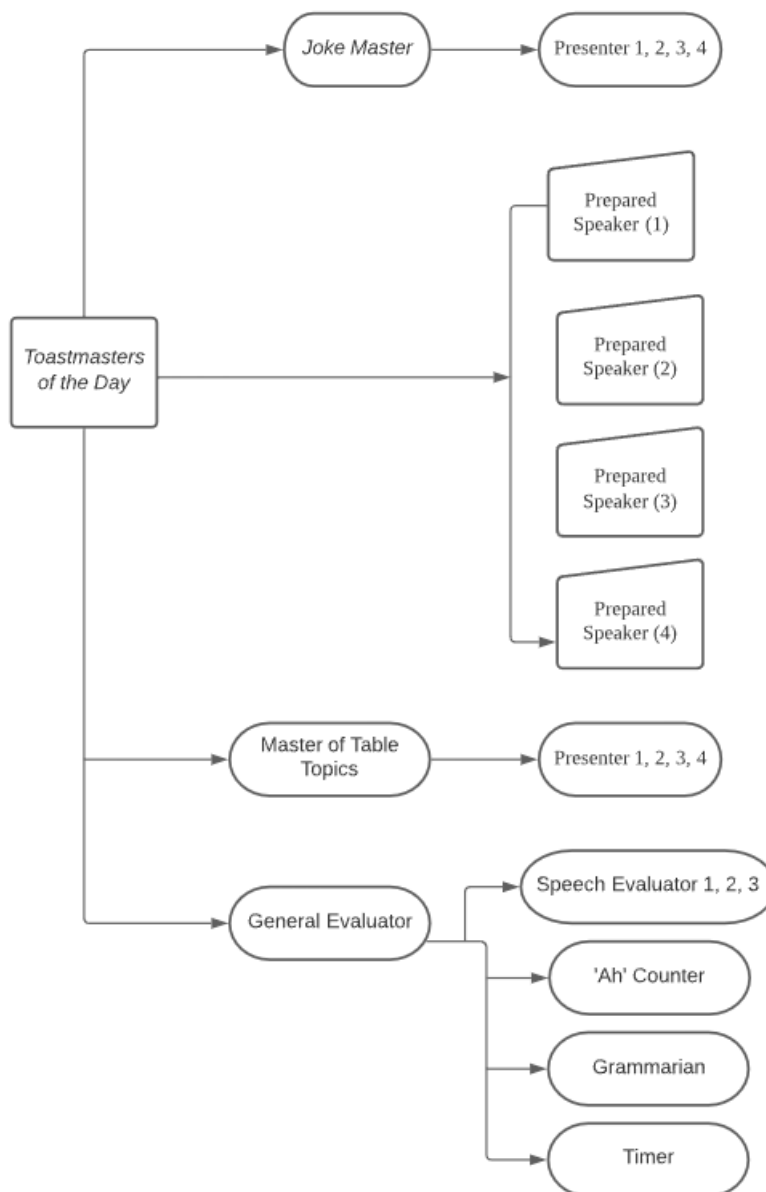


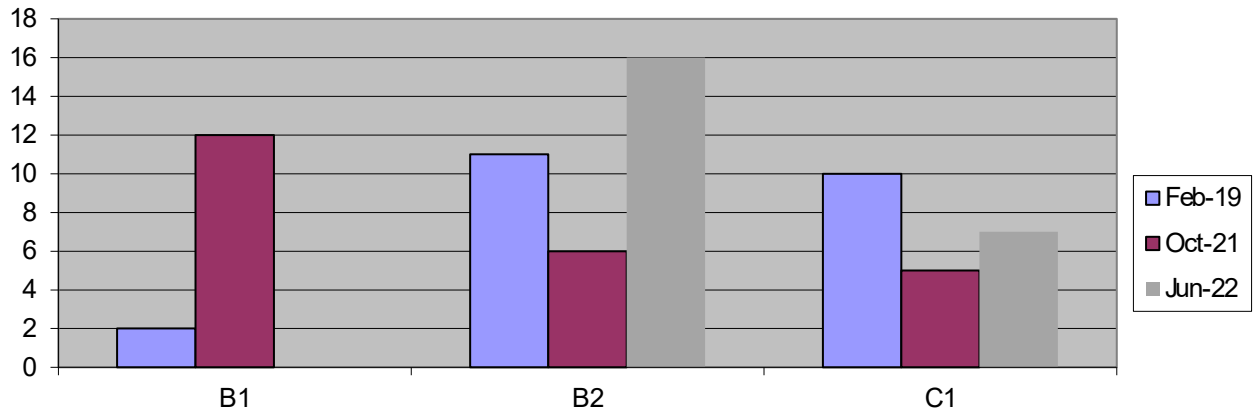
Figure 3: Toastmasters Meeting Procedure Week 11-15

As for Week 11-15, in Figure 5, the role of Evaluators was added in the final weeks of Toastmasters Meeting. For Week 11 and 12, the teacher assumed all the roles that a General Evaluator entails. However, as the weeks progressed, students who were already at B2 to C1 level were given the autonomy to fill in the seats of evaluators. These final weeks were crucial as it helped the students to give their spoken discourse a little finesse, especially through the use of 'Ah' counter role and 'Grammarian' role. The role of 'Ah' counter is to make the speakers aware of the number of overused words and filler sounds used as a crutch in their speeches. As for the 'Grammarian' role, it helped the students to become aware of any incorrect and unique grammar used. The role of 'Timer' in these final weeks was also critical in getting the speakers to speak within the time limit given so as to prepare students to get their points across adequately during the time-sensitive SPM Speaking Test.

### 3.Results and Discussion

The following is the result of this study as students' CEFR level in speaking was compared from February 2019 to June 2022 (the subjects' actual SPM result for speaking).

Figure 6: The comparison of CEFR level in Speaking (Feb 2019 – June 2022)



From Figure 6, it is clear that the 15-week intervention speaking programme using the adapted Toastmasters Meeting structure in speaking-focused lessons improved all 23 subjects' performance in 2021 SPM Speaking Test tremendously. The regress were eradicated and remedied, so much so that none of the subjects was at B1 level in their 2021 SPM-CEFR (Speaking). In fact, most students were now at B2 level, the number of students who achieved C1 level had also increased.

From the interviews, more than 70 percent of the students felt that the meetings were enjoyable and useful in alleviating their speech anxiety. They believed the meetings helped them feel confident when speaking in public, they saw speaking as fun activity, and listened to others' fascinating experiences. Krashen (1985) in his Affective Filter Hypothesis argues that a student who is unmotivated, tense or bored will have low level of language acquisition. Thus, the students' positive perception on Toastmasters meetings would help them acquire speaking skills and improve their ability to use the language.

Additionally, more than 65 percent of students felt that the meetings were helpful in getting them to organise their thoughts promptly based on any given topic. Subsequently, it helped students to develop spontaneity and fluency in the most natural way possible. They also felt that the role of 'Ah' counter and 'Grammarian' has been exceptionally helpful in pointing out the areas of language that they need to work on in order to have smooth spoken discourse. In other words, feedback from their peers has proven to be impactful and beneficial in improving their communicative skills.

### 4.Conclusion

The addition of speaking test as a part of SPM 1119 component has caused a lot of anxiety among Malaysian teachers and students (Tee, 2021). Moreover, the implementation of this testing component was at a time when Malaysian education paradigm was shifting at substantial acceleration in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Simultaneously, as teachers were tasked with insurmountable challenge of preparing students for the speaking test, the students themselves were grappling with overwhelming feeling of anxiety in reverting the medium of communication from online to face-to-face. Therefore, there was an urgent need for a reformed way of teaching speaking skills in the classroom.

The Toastmasters meetings are an effective addition to the repertoire of teaching speaking skills

in English language. With proper planning, it has the potential of making speaking lessons genuinely meaningful and engaging for both teachers and students alike (Rifah & Sabilah, 2022). It allows room for students to take ownership of their own learning and gives room for teachers to approach speaking skills in a less apprehensive way through the use of humour and shared personal experiences. Students find the Toastmasters experience as fun, enjoyable and interesting, which brings a remarkable change in their attitudes of learning speaking skills, hence thoroughly rectify any speech anxiety that they may have developed due to living in isolation for a long period of time during the pandemic. Further, there is still room for further research and improvement of such activity.

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# DIGITAL COMPETENCE IN EXPLORING SIMULATED MICRO-TEACHING ACTIVITIES IN A VIRTUAL CLASSROOM TO ENHANCE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT SKILLS: PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT TEACHERS ON THE USAGE OF THE ENGAGEVR PLATFORM

Thivilojana Perinpasingam<sup>1</sup>, Charles Sharma Naidu<sup>2,\*</sup> and Faisal Athar Mohd Fadzil<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences & Leisure Management,  
Taylor's University, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> VORTEX (Virtual Online Future Technology and Extended Reality), The Design School,  
Faculty of Innovation and Technology, Taylor's University

<sup>3</sup> VORTEX, The Design School, Faculty of Innovation and Technology, Taylor's University,  
Malaysia

\* Thivilojana.Perinpasingam@taylors.edu.my

## Abstract

Immersive learning is an innovative pedagogical approach that uses online Virtual Reality platforms such as EngageVR as a medium that provides an immersive virtual learning environment for teacher education programs. According to Yun, Park, and Ryu (2019), Virtual Reality (VR) is acknowledged as an admirable instructional tool. This real-time immersive training experience enables virtual presence as avatars in virtual classroom settings and allows for life-like responsive engagements. While Shift 1 of the Malaysian Educational Blueprint 2013-2025 and the international trend on education for UN Strategic Development Goals (SDG 4) and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) echo that the virtual simulated classroom settings are especially needed for teacher training to prepare future-ready teachers to fulfill the demand for highly skilled new graduates to meet the needs of the relevant global education trends which is moving towards digital education, especially in a hybrid and remote teaching and learning classrooms. During the VR classroom simulation sessions that were conducted, data were collected from surveys done by the students who participated in the EngageVR platform remotely to analyse their experiences during the virtual reality classroom simulation sessions on classroom management skills. This study affirms that the dynamic of microteaching using the EngageVR platform has enabled pre-service teachers to acquire first-hand exposure to handling students in a virtual learning environment that is less challenging, prior to experiencing and managing diverse learners in a real classroom at a private higher learning institution in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Immersive Learning, Virtual Classroom and Teacher Training

## 1.Introduction

Virtual Reality or VR technologies refers to a specific segment or classification of technological applications that utilize computer programming, modeling, and design simulation to create an interactive virtual environment that is potentially similar or different from the real world or current realities (McGovern, Moreira, & Luna-Nevarez, (2020). In this study, an online Virtual Reality platform called EngageVR, is used as a medium that provides an immersive virtual learning environment for teacher education programs, particularly at private higher learning institutions in Malaysia. This simulation tool was introduced as an

instructional approach to enhance classroom management skills among pre-service teachers at a private higher learning institution. As part of Goal 4 (Education for All) of the UN Strategic Development Goals, educational systems are globally aiming to provide greater access to quality education. This goal has been formally recognized at the macro-level as part of Shift 1 of the Malaysian Educational Blueprint 2013-2025. In line with these aspirations, several programmatic initiatives have been undertaken (Ministry of Education, 2015) to improve teacher training and pedagogical development and innovation over the last two decades specifically for primary school teachers, who remain one of the vulnerable groups in the country, especially during the recent Covid -19 pandemic.

## **2. Related Literature**

According to Nissim & Weissblueth (2017), Virtual Reality provides a platform for trainee teachers to increase their efficacy level, and interest to become creative teachers as they explore in a simulated environment. Despite these initiatives such as teacher training and providing ICT resources and support in schools, digitalization of education continues to be the way forward however research related to the effectiveness of simulated teaching tools among teacher trainees continues to lag.

Furthermore, with the Covid-19 pandemic disrupting education systems worldwide forcing schools and higher learning institutions to close and shift to remote and hybrid teaching and learning approaches, there is a great urgency to produce an alternative pre-service teacher training solution. This digital solution needs to address the need for effective Virtual Reality pedagogy development to comprehend the impact of this innovation in the classroom by focusing on pre-service teacher's- perception and assessment of performance by taking into consideration investigating the effectiveness of integrating VR in classroom settings, finding out whether its usage can improve the intended performance and understanding, and to investigate ways this target population is able to reach more effective pedagogical intervention when using this simulated tool to manage a classroom with diverse learners.

Moreover, DeSantis (2018) emphasizes that the involvement of classroom instructions in a virtual world brings about a great potential in promoting learning and ultimately overcoming challenges related to classroom management issues like handling difficult or problematic students. Therefore, the focus of this project is to contribute new knowledge related to the virtual learning environment and the stages involved in developing a novice education innovation integrating a virtual learning approach to assist pre-service teachers to improve classroom management approaches using EngageVR which supports a simulated learning environment.

## **3. Methodology**

This study was carried out using a Design, Development Research (DDR) method. The focus area for this study is on the evaluation process involved in the integration of EngageVR in a teacher education programme as cited by Perinpasingam (2018). Data were collected from open-ended surveys done by the students. This study was conducted among 30 student-teachers from an undergraduate programme at a private higher learning institution in Malaysia. The data were gathered to analyse the student's perception of using EngageVR platform in their education program for the improvement of the micro-teaching activities as well as to analyze the usefulness of integrating EngageVR as a teaching tool to improve learner participation and presence also collaboration in a simulated virtual classroom environment. Most of the

participants agreed that Engage VR promotes an active learning experience and assists in the advanced knowledge needed on classroom management skills in a virtual setting prior to meeting students in a real classroom environment.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Overall, the findings from this study suggest that the Virtual Reality classroom enhances visual learning that brings about immersive learning in a virtual classroom setting that promotes virtual dialogues that increased motivation and creative implementations of classroom management skills. As suggested by Muñoz-Saavedra, Miró-Amarante, & Domínguez-Morales (2020), they claimed that Virtual Learning has the potential to transform the way a learner relates to the subject matter as it removes boundaries and promotes collaboration which advocates active engagement among the learners in the virtual environment.

#### 5. Conclusion

VR supplementation allows for seamless integration within the current educational setup as it primarily becomes an additional medium for learning. Therefore, the initial goal of progressing into Virtual Classroom settings which have brought about creative presentations of classroom management skills and increased motivation among pre-service teachers as avatars that have allowed traditional educational systems to retain their merits and could potentially elevate themselves through VR supplementation. (Klein, 2022).

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# EMPOWERING SELF AND PEER-ASSESSMENT IN ASSESSING SPEAKING SKILLS

**Chua Wei Chuan**

*Sabak Bernam Integrated Boarding School*

[chuaweichuan@sbpisb.edu.my](mailto:chuaweichuan@sbpisb.edu.my)

## **Abstract**

Assessing speaking skills is always perceived as a responsibility of a teacher. Considering that pupils are aspired to be active learners, they should also be entrusted to assess their own speaking skills. Thus, this action research was conducted to improve the practitioner's practice in assessing speaking skills via self and peer-assessment by Form 5 pupils. Pupils assessed their speaking performance based on the simplified version of the performance levels for speaking skills in the Standards-Based Curriculum and Assessment Document (DSKP). This action research employed McNiff and Whitehead's (2006) action research model focusing on the following actions: observe, reflect, act, evaluate and modify. The data was then collected qualitatively via student observation as well as pupils' insight and quantitatively by gathering the performance levels awarded by the pupils themselves. Analysis of the collected data was done in a descriptive and narrative manner to explain how introducing self and peer assessment among pupils can improve the practice of assessing speaking. The practitioner learnt that pupils were more able to express their ideas and thoughts in the target language if the assessor is their peer. By referring to the descriptors of the speaking skills when assessing, pupils can achieve a higher performance standard as they are aware of the criteria pertaining to speaking. Hence, assessing speaking should be regarded as a shared responsibility of both the teacher and the pupils.

**Keywords:** speaking, action research, self-assessment, peer-assessment, DSKP

## **1. Introduction**

The well-being of pupils depends on the correlation between the three components: curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment (Senin, 2018). In order to have an effective teaching and learning process, the curriculum must be unpacked by the teachers and the pedagogy needs to be student-centered in order to meet the needs of the era. In the context of assessment, the Ministry of Education Malaysia has introduced classroom-based assessment (CBA) as a mechanism for teachers to assess the performance of pupils in the class. Assessment as learning can be conducted via self-assessment and peer-assessment (Curriculum Development Division (CDD), 2019).

Speaking as a productive skill is suitable to be assessed via CBA considering that pupils require ample time to improve their speaking performance and CBA emphasises formative assessment that is conducted in a continuous manner (CDD, 2019). In the Malaysia context, teachers are always the individuals assessing the speaking performance of pupils in class. The role of pupils in assessing speaking is always belittled but assessment should be considered as a shared responsibility between teachers and pupils. Besides, it is common for pupils to experience test anxiety when they are assessed by an authority figure (Sarason & Sarason, 1990).

The pupils in the practitioner's class are often stressed to speak in English when the practitioner is assessing the pupil's speaking performance hence hindering the pupils to showcase their true performance in the target language. Thus, this action research was conducted to improve the practitioner's practice in assessing speaking skills via self and peer- assessment by pupils. Self and peer-assessment in speaking were performed based on the simplified version of the descriptors in the learning standards as stated in the DSKP.

## 2. Related Literature

### 2.1 Assessment as Learning

Assessment as learning happens when pupils reflect upon their own learning progress and evaluate their own performance via self-assessment and peer-assessment (CDD, 2019). Pupils assess their own work based on a set of criteria and they can ascertain their strengths and weaknesses in the subject matter through self-reflection (CDD, 2019). As for peer assessment, it gives pupils motivation to learn as they feel a sense of belonging pertaining to assessment when they are assessing their peers' performance in the subject matter by giving verbal or written comments (CDD, 2019).

### 2.2 DSKP

DSKP outlines the Performance Standards that the pupils are expected to achieve in terms of performance levels based on the Learning Standards set (CDD, 2020). The Performance Standards allow pupils to perform self-reflection and decide by themselves the following course of action to improve their own performance (CDD, 2020). A sample of Performance Standards for Speaking is shown below (Figure 1).

*Table 1: Extract of Performance Standards for Speaking Form 5*

**Performance Standards Guide for Speaking Skills**

PERFORMANCE LEVEL	DESCRIPTORS FOR SPEAKING SKILLS
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can display minimal ability to ask about and communicate information with a lot of support.</li> <li>Can display minimal ability to manage interaction and use registers with a lot of support.</li> <li>Can display minimal ability to explain a point of view, feelings, plans and ambitions with a lot of support.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can display some ability to ask about and communicate information with a lot of support.</li> <li>Can display some ability to manage interaction and use registers with a lot of support.</li> <li>Can display some ability to explain a point of view, feelings, plans and ambitions with a lot of support.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can ask about and communicate information adequately.</li> <li>Can manage interaction by paraphrasing and rephrasing as well as use registers appropriately.</li> <li>Can explain and justify a point of view, feelings, plans and ambitions.</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can ask about and communicate information by providing some relevant details.</li> <li>Can manage interaction by paraphrasing and rephrasing as well as use registers appropriately by sustaining communication occasionally</li> <li>Can explain and justify a point of view, feelings, plans and ambitions by sustaining communication occasionally.</li> </ul>

*Source: Bahasa Inggeris Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran Tingkatan 5*

As such, the Performance Standards in the DSKP should be shared with the pupils in class so that they know what the teachers expect from them (ELTC, 2022). However, from the practitioner's point of view, the words used in the DSKP are quite professional and deemed uncomprehensible by the pupils since the DSKP is originally meant for teachers to use as guidance when planning their lessons.

### **2.3 Test Anxiety**

Test anxiety involves learners being worried and emotionally disturbed when a test is being administered to them and the situation per se depends on the personal interpretation of the individuals (Sarasan & Sarasan, 1990). The practitioner's pupils learn English as a second language but most of them do not have enough opportunity to converse in the target language outside the classroom. Hence, they perceive themselves as not being fluent or competent in conversing English.

Test anxiety likely arises when individuals encounter situations involving authority figures or situations that require verbal skills (Sarasan & Sarasan, 1990). Pupils experiencing test anxiety when speaking English can be attributed to several reasons: fear of making mistakes, fear of speaking in front of the class, and fear of being ridiculed by others (Marzuki, 2022). In the classroom setting, learners who learn English as a second language are likely to be stressed when they are required to speak the target language in front of a teacher who owns authority.

### **3. Methods**

This action research employed the McNiff and Whitehead's (2006) action research model focusing on the following actions: observe, reflect, act, evaluate and modify. Two Form 5 classes taught by the practitioner which are 5 Taufiq and 5 Rahmah were chosen as the focus group. In the first stage, the practitioner observed the behaviour of pupils when they participated in speaking tasks in class for 2 months. The practitioner noticed that pupils were quite stressed when the practitioner asked them to stand up to provide their views on a certain topic. During group discussions, pupils tend to startle or hesitate when the practitioner approached them to listen to their discussion, but the situation returned to normal when the practitioner was away.

Upon reflection, the practitioner felt that the authority figure of a teacher might intimidate the pupils during their speaking tasks since pupils tend to think that they need to perform their best in front of a teacher, and failing to do so might exert stress on them. Thus, the practitioner introduced the self and peer-assessment technique when conducting speaking activities for the Form 5 pupils. Firstly, the practitioner simplified the descriptors in the Performance Standards for the speaking skills in the DSKP for Form 5 English. Next, by the end of a speaking task, pupils were asked to assess their performance via either self-assessment or peer-assessment depending on the Learning Standards by filling up the self or peer evaluation form as follows.



Table 2: Self-Evaluation Form

**Self-Evaluation**

Name:

2.1.4 Explain and justify own point of view

PL1	PL2	PL3	PL4	PL5	PL6
I can explain my point of view minimally with a lot of help given.	I can explain some parts about my point of view minimally with a lot of help given.	I can explain and justify my point of view before the time limit given.	I can explain and justify my point of view within the time given with hesitation.	I can explain and justify my point of view within the time given with a little hesitation.	I can explain and justify my point of view within the time given with a no hesitation.

Table 3: Peer-Evaluation Form

**Peer-Evaluation**

Candidate:

Accessor:

2.1.1 Explain information from visuals

PL1	PL2	PL3	PL4	PL5	PL6
I can explain information from visuals minimally with a lot of help given.	I can explain some information from visuals with a lot of help given.	I can explain information from visuals adequately.	I can explain information from visuals by providing some elaboration.	I can explain information from visuals by providing a lot of elaboration.	I can explain information from visuals by providing a lot of elaboration easily.

For peer assessment, pupils informed their peers of the performance levels awarded and give verbal comments on how their speaking performance was. After that, the self and peer-evaluation forms were collected by the practitioner to be recorded for CBA.

After conducting self and peer-assessment for 2 months, pupils were asked about how they felt about the approaches via Google Form. Throughout the 2 months, the practitioner also observed the behaviour and performance of pupils during the speaking activities as well as the performance levels obtained by the pupils. The pupils' opinion would then be considered to improvise how self and peer-assessment are conducted in the future lessons.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Self-assessment received mixed responses from the pupils. Half of the pupils felt that self-assessment is a good way for them to know their strengths and weaknesses and thus improve on them. However, the other half found it to be inaccurate as they were indecisive to place themselves in the correct band based on the descriptors. Some were already nervous when speaking and they did not know what they were talking about nor know how to evaluate themselves. The others stated that the tendency to cheat to get a higher band exists.

To address the issue, group work for pupils can be a solution. Group work allows learners to communicate meaningfully in their second language and the pupils can receive feedback from each other (Zulfikar, 2022). Interaction with peers promotes language learning (O'Donnell &

Hmelo-Silver, 2013) and tasks can be completed by pupils in a less intimidating setting (Zulfikar & Aulia, 2020). In addition, the need to cultivate a positive and supportive environment that allows learners to use the second language is essential (Zukfikar, 2022).

Peer-assessment was found to be favoured by the pupils because they felt that they can express their ideas better in a real communicative setting while being evaluated by an external party without the element of bias. Feedback from peers was useful for the pupils and they were more confident in speaking if the understanding was confirmed at the discourse level. A sample of self-evaluation and peer-evaluation forms is shown below.

Table 4: Self-Evaluation Form After Being Filled

Name: [REDACTED] 2.1.1  
 2.1.1 Explain information on familiar topics from visuals 7/7/2022

PL1	PL2	PL3	PL4	PL5	PL6
I can explain information from visuals minimally with a lot of help given.	I can explain some information from visuals with a lot of help given.	I can explain information from visuals adequately.	I can explain information from visuals by providing some elaboration.	I can explain information from visuals by providing a lot of elaboration.	I can explain information from visuals by providing a lot of elaboration easily.

Table 5: Peer-Evaluation Form After Being Filled

Presenter: [REDACTED] 2.3.1  
 Assessors: [REDACTED] 9/5/2022

PL1	PL2	PL3	PL4	PL5	PL6
I can participate in the discussion minimally with a lot of support given.	I can somehow participate in the discussion with a lot of support given.	I can participate in the discussion.	I can participate in the discussion by sustaining the discussion occasionally.	I can participate in the discussion by sustaining the discussion most of the time.	I can participate in the discussion by sustaining the discussion naturally.

Based on the practitioner's observation, pupils participated actively in group discussions and they were not as stressed as compared when the practitioner was watching them speaking. Pupils were also found to be encouraging each other to speak more in order to achieve a higher performance level as the descriptors given served as a guideline for them.

“...If we can show this (Year 4 DSKP) to the students and say these are the things that you should be able to do in Year 4, then I think that with that awareness, self-assessed learning can take place, student-driven learning can take place ...” (ELTC, 2022, 32:47).

The performance levels of pupils were also consistent with the performance level given by the practitioner via professional judgment.

Upon reflection, the practitioner felt that the role as a facilitator was carried out well during the self and peer-assessment session by pupils. The practitioner could facilitate the speaking lesson better by focusing on all groups' presentations. When the practitioner was the one assessing

the pupils, the practitioner could only assess a limited number of pupils at a time leaving the other pupils behind. Sometimes, the practitioner did not really know whether all the pupils had fully achieved the speaking learning objectives since not all of them were assessed by the practitioner. In the current setting, the practitioner could observe the behaviour of all pupils at the same time and give immediate feedback when necessary.

## 5. Conclusion

Peer assessment was found to be a great tool for pupils to assess speaking skills but pupils were still not convinced about practising self-assessment considering that the role of assessment has been dominated by the teacher so far leaving the pupils unconfident about themselves in the context of assessment although the descriptors were given. As a suggestion, peer-assessment and self-assessment could be conducted concurrently in the future to illustrate the performance of pupils from various perspectives. The practitioner could also play the role as a silent examiner by watching the performance of pupils from one group to another in a random manner. In that way, pupils have the chance to be assessed by professionals but in a less frequent order.

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# LEARNING OUTCOMES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS THROUGH ENGLISH PRESENTATIONS

Fumiya Shinozaki<sup>1</sup>, Mami Sakashita<sup>2, \*</sup> and Yuya Owaki<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Osaka Kyoiku University*

<sup>2</sup>*Shijo Elementary School*

<sup>3</sup>*Hojo Junior High School*

[\\*fshino@cc.osaka-kyoiku.ac.jp](mailto:fshino@cc.osaka-kyoiku.ac.jp)

## Abstract

The present study is a case study with the purpose of analysing what university students learn through English presentation activities and from what perspectives. The research objectives were as followed (1) to identify any differences in viewpoints to reflect on themselves, and (2) to investigate any differences among the students in the transition of the contents of their reflective comments. Four students in the course participated in the research. Reflective texts written after each class were analysed. As the result of the correspondence analysis, it was found that each participant's comments contained similarities and differences, perhaps depending on their background. Every single comment was judged whether it contained positive, neutral, or negative emotions. The answer to the research questions is that the analyses actually indicated the differences in learning viewpoints with distinct content transitions of the reflective comments. In other words, the present study, which refers to each learner's background, has shown a possibility that university students learn differently and different aspects despite the fact that the course offered them the same English presentation activities. In conclusion, it is important for course instructors to note that keeping what individual students will learn in mind is valuable when structuring a course.

**Keywords:** English presentation, university, individual, text mining

## 1.Introduction

According to research conducted by Lee and Park (2008), 92% of the students felt that presentation activities on various topics were interesting and conducive to learning English. Exposure to a variety of topics seems advantageous. Riadil (2020) conducted a survey, clarifying that oral presentations contributed not only to learn English but also to develop communication strategies. Although previous research has looked into students' learning as a whole, there are not many practical studies focusing on the learning of an individual. Thus, it is beneficial to analyse students' learning by referring to their background.

The present study is a case study with the purpose of analysing what university students learn through English presentation activities and in what perspectives. The research questions were as followed (1) Are there any differences in viewpoints to reflect on themselves? and (2) Are there any differences among the students in the transition of the contents of their reflective comments?

## 2.Methods

### Participants

The participants were four third-year university students at a national university in Japan (Student A to Student D). Based on the studies by Simona (2015) and Asnur (2017), a questionnaire was conducted at the beginning of the course in order to confirm the present status of each participant.

On the whole, Student A had plenty of experience speaking in front of people but was not good at speaking English or speaking English in public. As opposed to speaking in Japanese, he struggled to communicate content and lacked knowledge of vocabulary and grammar.

Student B was similar to Student A in that he had quite a few opportunities to speak in public. However, regardless of language, he had trouble responding fluently. A factor that caused tension when speaking English in public was the anxiety that came from wondering whether his word choice would correspond to his actual intention.

Student C was different in that he enjoyed speaking in public regardless of language. However, he evaluated himself as a poor English speaker and was basically not good at speaking in public regardless of the language. In addition, he had fewer opportunities to speak in public compared to Student A and Student B. The lack of practising and using English would cause him tension when speaking English in public.

Speaking Japanese or English made little difference to Student D. This meant that while she was good at speeches and presentations, she felt nervous when speaking in public and was poor at responding smoothly. This was not due to the language but due to the activities themselves.

### Class

The English presentation course began in April and ended in July of 2021. There were 15 classes during the semester (once a week). Each class was 90 minutes long. The objectives were for the students (1) to be able to read and understand an outline of a subject and summarize it in English, (2) to collaborate with others to create and deliver a presentation, and (3) to understand the content of others' presentations and to be able to ask questions and make comments in English. Two classes were allotted for one three-minute presentation activity. Approximately half of the presentation was about the content of the article and the other half was about their own opinions on the topic. The topics of the presentations were all related to education and assigned by the teacher. Due to the prevention measures of spreading COVID-19, the first eight classes were conducted online.

## 3.Analyses

Text mining was conducted on all the reflective comments that each participant had written after every class except for the fourteenth class. A qualitative analysis software KH Coder (Higuchi, 2021) was employed to conduct correspondence analysis, and another software MAXQDA (VERBI GmbH, 2021) was utilized to categorize the texts. There were six kinds of codes: English, presentation, slide, content, collaborative learning (CL), and active learning (AL). Each node was judged whether it denoted positive, neutral, or negative.

## 4.Results and Discussion

Figure 1 suggests that Student A and D are projecting themselves with similar perspectives.

Although the perspectives of the comments are similar, Student A tended to write negative comments in the first half, but more positive comments in the second half, while Student D was more negative overall (Table 1 and Figure 2). There is a possibility that Student A felt that English itself was a challenge, yet gradually learned more about English and how to give English presentations through the activity. On the contrary, the students did not speak in front of a large number of people, but just gave presentations in a small group and made video presentations. Therefore, Student D's emotions did not change greatly and tended to only state facts rather than her emotions. In addition, one of the characteristics of Student D was that there were many descriptions indicating that she learned from the contents of the articles read in the course. Regardless of whether the articles were written in Japanese or English, it seems that she had the opportunity to learn something through language during each class.

Students B and C appear somewhat distant from Students A and D. Student B had numerous opportunities to speak in front of others but did not have the opportunity to give a presentation in English. As a result, the word “first” appeared frequently in his comments, suggesting that the course was the first time to learn English expressions used in presentations and to experience giving English presentations. Student C, on the other hand, did not have many opportunities to speak in front of others and was not good at English, so he learned about expressing his opinions in English, as represented by the word “opinion” contained in his comments.

Figure 1: Results of correspondence analysis

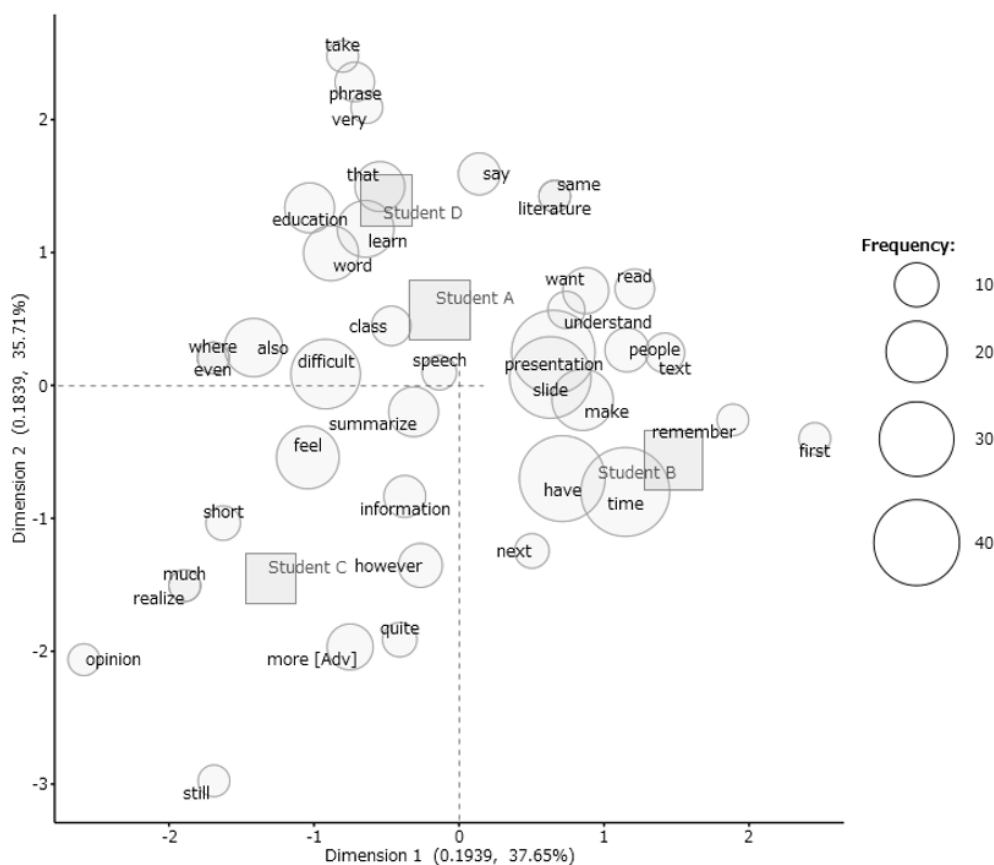


Table 1: Categories of each participant's reflective comments

Student A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
English														-	



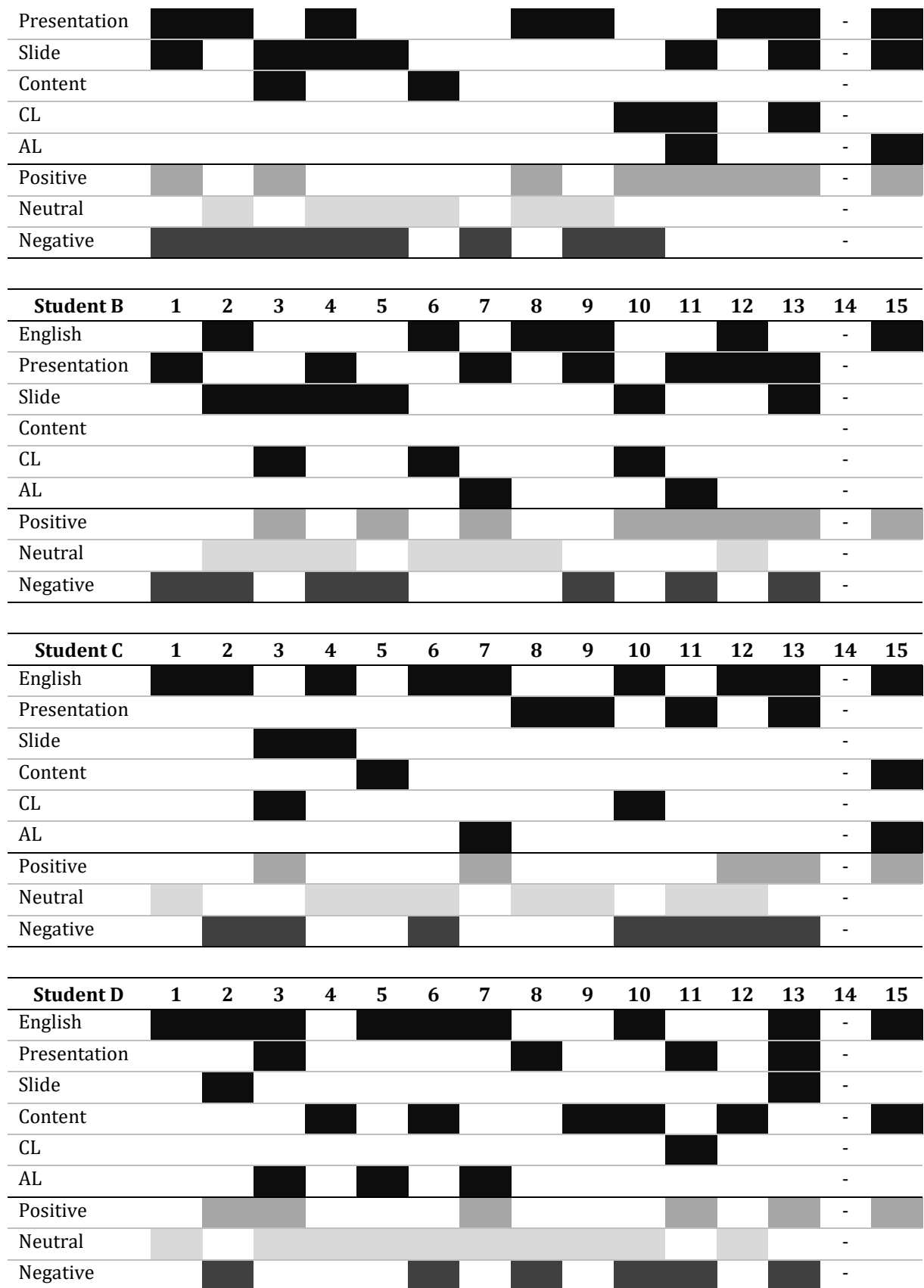


Figure 2: Comparison of the emotional transitions of each participant

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Student A															
Student B															
Student C															
Student D															

## 5. Conclusion

Thus, the answer to RQ (1) is that there were common points, but the focus was often different. The answer to RQ (2) is that even if the viewpoints were similar, how they reflected themselves was different. The present study has shown the possibility that university students learn differently and in different aspects despite the fact that the course offered them the same English presentation activities to develop English and 21st-century skills. Keeping what individual students will learn in mind is valuable when structuring a course.

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# COLLABORATIVE STORY MAPPING: IMPROVING PRIMARY PUPILS' UNDERSTANDING OF NARRATIVE TEXT

Ho Yeh Xiang<sup>1</sup>, Yee Bee Choo<sup>2,\*</sup> and Kek Siew Yan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*SJKC Chern Hwa Bukit Pasir*

<sup>2</sup>*IPG Kampus Tun Hussein Onn*

<sup>3</sup>*LSJKC Chern Hwa Bukit Pasir*

## Abstract

Comprehension, or extracting meaning from what a person read, is the ultimate goal of reading. The process of comprehension is both interactive and strategic. However, most pupils lack understanding in narrative texts. This study aimed at improving primary pupils understanding of narrative text through collaborative story mapping strategic. Story mapping is a strategy that uses a graphic organizer to help pupils learn the elements of a book or story. This collaborative strategic included group discussion, 5W1H and story mapping. By identifying story characters, plot, setting, problem and solution, students read the narrative text carefully. A class of Year 4 pupils from a primary school in Batu Pahat, Johor were involved as the participants of this research. In this action research, observations, pre and post-tests were used as the research instruments. The collected data were analysed qualitatively. The findings show that there was improvement in pupils' understanding of narrative text from pre-test to post-test. The participants also made fewer errors in answering comprehension questions and were able to arrange the story in correct sequence. The implication is for English language teachers to use story mapping as a strategy in the classroom.

**Keywords:** collaborative strategic, group discussion, narrative text, story mapping

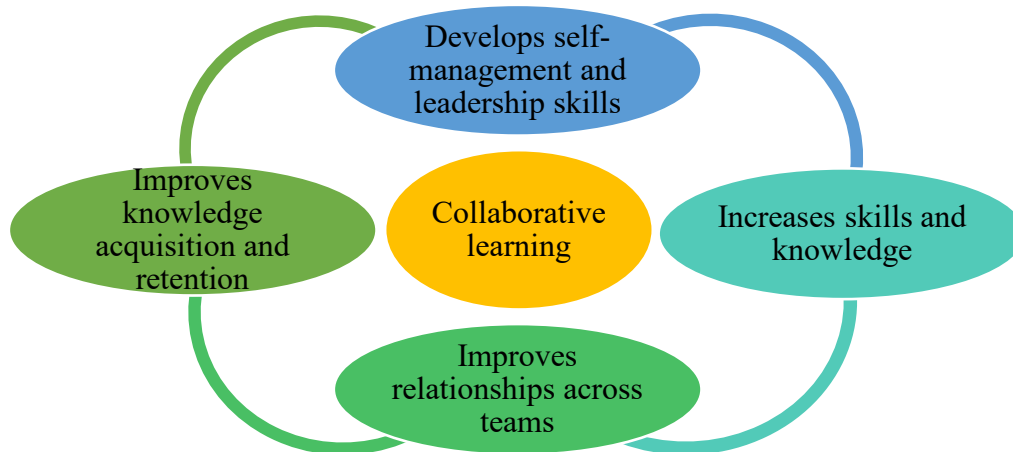
## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is an intellectual work that aims to understand the text. It is an interactive process that arises from the relation between the reader and the text, thus, leads to the understanding of the meaning and the main ideas of that text. Comprehension is the main aim of reading, through an attempt to group the major ideas in the text and to find the analytical methods that help achieve that goal. In this sense, there are two kinds of concentration on reading. First: reading for getting new data, ideas, knowledge, details, and new vocabulary which might stem from pupils' culture. Second: reading for understanding which consist of scanning, skimming, reading to learn, reading for general notion, reading for critical evaluation, and reading for combining information (Carrell & Grabe, 2010). These types include scanning which is a reading skill that requires recognition of several visual forms such as word, phrase, or number. Reading for understanding is a process that requires a visual and semantic operation in addition to focusing on the text outline. Meanwhile, reading to learn does not only require outlining the text but also elaborating on other various parts of information upon various groups of data (Carver, 1992). There are many difficulties that pupils may encounter in reading such as unfamiliar vocabulary, unfamiliar content, sentence pattern, background knowledge and inappropriate or different structure patterns in addition to inadequate reading strategies which help in comprehending the text.

Reading comprehension is concerned with the ability to pay attention to written information, which can sometimes be a difficult process for readers (Carver, 1992). In order to help readers to encounter the difficulties in understanding and identifying the story grammars, a collaborative learning session may be approached to neutralise it. Collaborative learning is the educational approach of using groups to enhance learning through working together. Groups of two or more learners work together to solve problems, complete tasks, or learn new concepts. This approach actively engages learners to process and synthesize information and concepts, rather than using rote memorization of facts and figures.

Learners work with each other on projects, where they must collaborate as a group to understand the concepts being presented to them. Through defending their positions, reframing ideas, listening to other viewpoints and articulating their points, learners will gain a more complete understanding as a group than they could as individuals. Collaborative learning may lead to advantages below:

*Figure 1: Advantages of Collaborative Learning*



## DEMOGRAPHY

### SJK (C) CHERN HWA, BUKIT PASIR, BATU PAHAT, JOHOR



Type of School	: Elementary
Location	: Bukit Pasir, Mukim Simpang Kanan, Batu Pahat. Johor
Number of enrolled pupils	: 568 pupils (42 receive special education)
Headmistress's name	: Madam Kek Siew Yan
Number of Teachers	: 41 teachers. The majority of teachers are Chinese.
Number of classrooms	: 23 classes including 5 are special education classes.
Infrastructure	: library, multipurpose hall, smart-classes, science lab, ICT room, music room, RBT room, art and craft room, canteen, toilets

## 2. RESEARCH FOCUS - IMPLEMENTATION OF STUDY

Theoretically, scholars like Oakhill & Elbro (2014) believe that reading comprehension is a complex process which requires the organization of prior cognitive skills and abilities. Besides, when readers are not able to understand the whole text, they will encounter difficulties in decoding words in such text. Reading comprehension generally depends on comprehending the target language. This requires comprehending words, sentences, contexts of the text. Yet, comprehension typically requires the previous knowledge of incorporating these words and sentences within understanding of the context and the meaning of the text.

In additions, Treheane & Doctorow (2005) explain that other problems influence learners' reading comprehension skills. Such problems are learners' reading situations, helpful teaching on comprehension style, text type, and being aware of several reading comprehension strategies.

Childs (2008) believes that focusing on wide reading materials and depending on background knowledge and comprehension were the main two elements that are connected with thinking, which means thinking mechanism and authentic interest in reading comprehension are the best principles for learners' success and achievement. Due to the range of general knowledge and analytical skills, these lead to acquiring the ability to comprehend well.

My study issue is helping pupils in improving their understanding of narrative text through collaborative story mapping strategic, which happen to be one of the most common and frequent problem in reading among pupils in my class. From my observation from the learning activities and student's work, it seems that most of the students are facing difficulties in understanding and identify the main information and story grammar of the narrative texts individually. Thus, they are not able to answer related comprehension questions correctly, as well as students can't arrange the sequence of the story line correctly.

Story mapping is an interesting strategy that uses a graphic organizer to help students learn the elements of a book or story. By identifying story characters, plot, setting, problem and solution, students read carefully to learn the details. It may improve students' comprehension and provide students with a framework for identifying the elements of a story. Moreover, story mapping may help students of varying abilities organize information and ideas efficiently. In my strategic, pupils need to discuss the main components of a story after reading and watching the video clip about the story. Then, they are provided with a blank story map organizer in each

group and model how to complete it. As students read, they have to complete the story map with guidance through 5W1H questions. After reading, they should fill in any missing parts.

Based on my interview with some English teachers and pupils, pupils have exposure of the narrative texts. This can be seen through Student's Workbook and Student's Book. However, they can't really understand the texts and identify the storyline of the texts correctly. This is because some of the pupils are weak in English and know fewer vocabularies. Some of them can't even read the texts probably. With those problems, pupils are not able to fully understand and identify the story grammar of the text.

Therefore, it is important for me to plan an effective teaching strategic to facilitate pupils understanding of the narrative texts. In order to keep thing interactive and interesting, facilitator (teacher) keeps approach to all groups and give encouragement and guidance to keep the discussion carried on and interesting.

### **3.OBSERVATION**

I have decided to focus in this problem after I check their exercise books. I started to identify the issues through their Student's Workbook. Student's workbook is the best tool to check pupil's learning weakness and strength. I took their student's workbook as one of my supportive evidence to go on with my research. Exercises helps a teacher to identify pupil weakness in individually and reflects the pupil's understanding level toward the text.

Besides, I also check pupil's assessment sheets to make sure they have the problem. Sometimes checking pupil's exercise workbook could not be very concrete evidence since some factors such as copying answers from friends or done by tuition teachers. That's also a chance to pupil to do last minute works. Therefore, I use assessment sheets as my next evidence. Throughout the checking, I'm able to identify pupils reading weaknesses and problems and plan an strategic and materials to help the pupils in improving their understanding of the narrative texts.

### **4.OBJECTIVE OF STUDY**

The main objective of this research is to find out the effectiveness of collaboration story mapping strategy in helping pupils to identify the story grammar of the narrative text.

Specific objectives of this research are as below:

- a) To enhance pupils reading skill in identify the story grammar of narrative text through collaboration story mapping strategy.
- b) To elevate the creativity and innovation of teachers in producing teaching aids for their teaching.

### **5.SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This study investigated the effectiveness of collaborative story mapping strategic to help Year 4 pupils in identifying the story grammar of a narrative text. It covered the sample of Year 4 Cerdik pupils from SJKC Chern Hwa Bukit Pasir who were taught through collaborative story mapping strategic. During the learning session, pupils were divided into small groups, which include good and weak pupils. The strategic was suitable for narrative type of text, like story.

## 6. METODOLOGY

I have applied several methods for data collection throughout the research.

### 6.1 Observation

I have observed the Year 4 Cerdik pupils' leaning behaviour and attitude during the English lesson. I found that most of the pupils have difficulty in identifying the story grammar of the text by themselves, since they encounter in reading such as unfamiliar vocabulary, unfamiliar content, sentence pattern, background knowledge and inappropriate or different structure patterns in addition to inadequate reading strategies, which help in comprehending the text.

### 6.2 Pre and post test

Pre-test was carried out on pupils' ability on identifying story grammar of the narrative text through comprehension questions before applying the collaborative story mapping strategic. The findings showed that most of them were weak in identifying the story grammar of a narrative text.

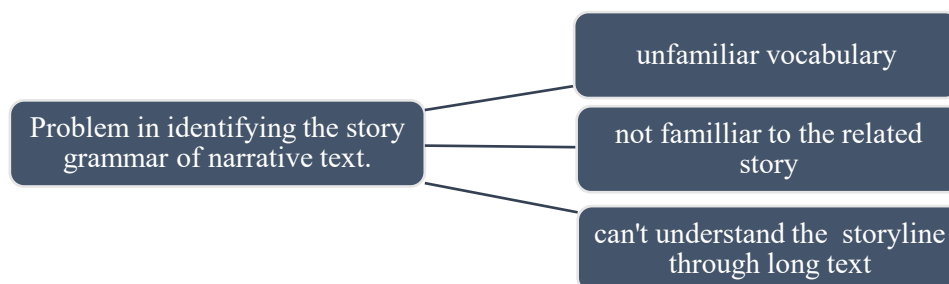
### 6.3 Examining through exercise in Student's Workbook

Pupils were given task to answer the comprehension questions, which related to the narrative text in small group. The findings showed most of the group were not able to find out the story grammar by simply reading the story and answer the comprehension questions correctly.

## 7. DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

### 7.1 Observation - Examining through exercise in Student's Workbook

Before the strategic was carried out, I had identified the problem that lying among the sample pupils of Year 4 Cerdik in identifying the story grammar of a narrative text as follow:



Graph 1 : Problem in identifying the story grammar of narrative text.

Based on my observation, most of the pupils in the class can't understand most of the vocabulary in the text. Since then, they can't think and related the text contents to each other, especially long text. At the end, they can't answer the comprehension questions and remain silent during discussion session.

Through the examination of exercise in student's workbook, majority pupils can't fully understand the story grammar of the narrative text, hence can't answer the comprehensive questions correctly. The pupils were confused to the sequences of the story events as well as the story grammar like setting, characters in the story, important events and theme of the story.



<p><b>1 Read the text in the Student's Book and answer the questions.</b></p> <p>1. What does Charlie do after school? <i>He goes to school, then he goes home and he goes to bed.</i></p> <p>2. What is his mum doing in the kitchen? <i>His mum is making a chocolate cake.</i></p> <p>3. What is Charlie's birthday surprise? <i>His mum is making a chocolate cake.</i></p> <p><b>2 How does Charlie feel? Look and write.</b> (angry, happy, scared, hungry)</p> <p>1. <i>hungry</i> 2. <i>scared</i> 3. <i>angry</i> 4. <i>happy</i></p> <p><b>3 Put in order (1-8).</b></p> <p>a. Charlie's friends come for his birthday party. (4)</p> <p>b. Someone touches Charlie's shoulder. (2)</p> <p>c. Charlie goes home after school. (1)</p> <p>d. Charlie sees Bruce Chang. (3)</p> <p>e. Charlie does jobs around the house. (5)</p> <p>f. Charlie does a karate move. (6)</p> <p>g. Charlie's mum makes a chocolate cake. (7)</p> <p>h. Charlie runs into his bedroom to see his surprise. (8)</p> <p><b>4 What do you think? Answer the questions.</b></p> <p>1. Did you like the story? <i>Yes, I did.</i></p> <p>2. What was the best part? <i>When Charlie goes to Charlie's house.</i></p> <p>3. Who was your favourite character? <i>Charlie.</i></p>	<p><b>1 Read the text in the Student's Book and answer the questions.</b></p> <p>1. What does Charlie do after school? <i>Charlie goes to school, then he goes home and he goes to bed.</i></p> <p>2. What is his mum doing in the kitchen? <i>Charlie's mum is making a chocolate cake.</i></p> <p>3. What is Charlie's birthday surprise? <i>Charlie's mum is making a chocolate cake.</i></p> <p><b>2 How does Charlie feel? Look and write.</b> (angry, happy, scared, hungry)</p> <p>1. <i>hungry</i> 2. <i>scared</i> 3. <i>angry</i> 4. <i>happy</i></p> <p><b>3 Put in order (1-8).</b></p> <p>a. Charlie's friends come for his birthday party. (4)</p> <p>b. Someone touches Charlie's shoulder. (2)</p> <p>c. Charlie goes home after school. (1)</p> <p>d. Charlie sees Bruce Chang. (3)</p> <p>e. Charlie does jobs around the house. (5)</p> <p>f. Charlie does a karate move. (6)</p> <p>g. Charlie's mum makes a chocolate cake. (7)</p> <p>h. Charlie runs into his bedroom to see his surprise. (8)</p> <p><b>4 What do you think? Answer the questions.</b></p> <p>1. Did you like the story? <i>Yes, I did.</i></p> <p>2. What was the best part? <i>When Charlie goes to Charlie's house.</i></p> <p>3. Who was your favourite character? <i>Charlie.</i></p>
<p>The pupil can't arrange the sentences according to the storyline correctly due to the pupil didn't understand the story content and the sequence well enough.</p>	<p>The pupil can arrange some sentences according to the story and answer the some comprehensive questions correctly with guidance.</p>

Table 1: Pupils workbook exercises and their problems in answering the comprehensive questions.

## 7.2 Pre and post test

Before the strategic was carried out, a pre-test on pupils' skills on identifying the story grammar of the narrative text was carried out. The results showed that most of them were unable to fully understand the narrative text and list out the story grammar of the test. Through the exercise sheet given, most of them get confused to the arrangement of the text and can't answer the comprehension questions correctly. Facilitator needs to give more guidance and explain the storyline again to the pupils. This indicated those pupils' skills on understanding the content of the narrative test needed to be developed.

Group \ Test result	Comprehensive questions (7 questions)	
	Pre-test	Post-test
1	4	7
2	4	7
3	5	7
4	5	7
5	6	7
6	5	7

8.

Table 2 : The result of pre and post-test on comprehensive questions.

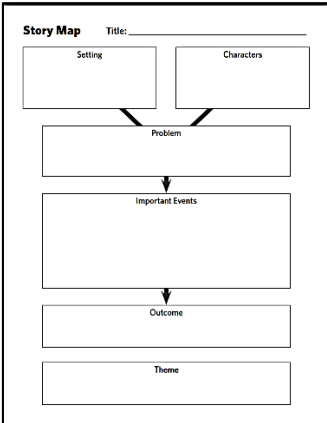
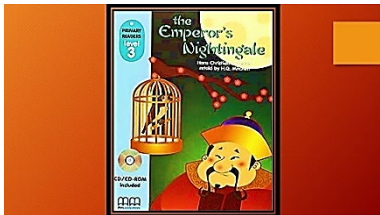

Group \ Test result	Rearrange the story sequence (8 Sentences)	
	Pre-test	Post-test





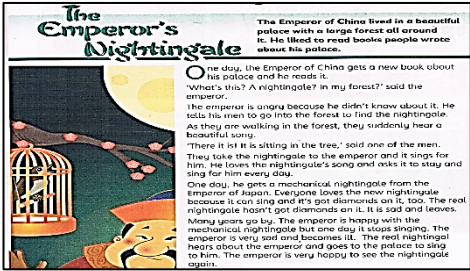


1	6	8
2	6	8
3	5	8
4	4	6
5	5	7
6	6	8


Table 3: The result of pre and post-test on story sequence arrangement.

## 8.PROCEDURES / METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION


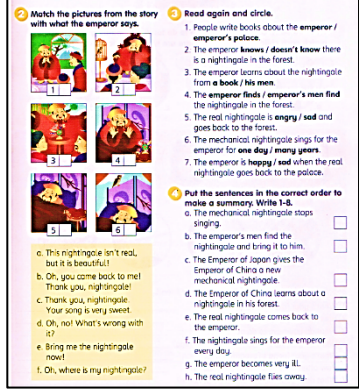
This research was carried out through collaborative between teacher and pupils as well as group discussion ( 4 - 5 pupils in a group) in class. The procedures of the learning activity were as the table below:

Steps and definition	Details
<p><b>Story Map</b> Title: _____</p>  <p>Step 1 : Introduce the story and get to know the vocabulary in the story.</p>	<p>Teacher presents the picture of the story and ask pupils to guess the content of the story using the café discussion mode. After that, teacher presents the vocabularies of the story one by one and guide pupils to get to know the vocabularies.</p>  <p>Picture 1: Slide 1 - The picture of the story</p>  <p>Picture 2: Slide 2 - Vocabulary</p>
<p>Step 2: Movie time</p>	<p>After review the vocabulary of the story, teacher guide pupils to watch the video clip of the story. Firstly, teacher guide pupils to give attention about the story using 5W1H question.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When did the story take place?</li> <li>Where did the story take place?</li> </ol>

Steps and definition	Details
	<p>c. How many characters found in the story?</p> <p>d. What's happened between the characters?</p> <p>e. What is the theme or moral value of the story?</p>  <p>Picture 3: Slide 3 - Video clip of the story</p> <p>Then, all pupils watch the video clip twice in their own discussion group and take note about the important information of the story.</p>
<p>Step 3: Text reading session</p>  	<p>Teacher shows the story text through PowerPoint slide and guide the pupils to read the text correctly. During the reading session, teacher kindly remind pupils that they have to pay attention to the story contents.</p>  <p>Picture 4: Slide 4 - Text of the story</p>
<p>Step 4: Collaborative Story Mapping</p>  	<p>Teacher distribute the story map chart to each group. Then, pupils are guided to understand the story map chart and look for specific information according to the story read by using 5W1S questions. Pupils were given 20 minutes to complete the story map in their own discussion group. In the meantime, teacher is walk around the class and give proper guidance to the pupils discussion group if needed. Teacher joins pupils group discussion and facilitate pupils to find out the information through the story. The good pupils in each group will guide the weak pupil to understand the story and the questions.</p>

Steps and definition	Details
	 <p>Picture 5: Slide 5- - Text of the story</p> <p>After the discussion, teacher review the specific information through Power Point slides together with all discussion group. The pupils present their discussion results at their discussion group. At the same time, pupils from other group give opinions to the presenting group. Teacher gives courage and opinions to the discussion. Through the 5W1H questions to guide pupils to look for specific information within text may help pupils to get to know the story deeply.</p>
Step 5: Retelling the story	<p>Each group are asked to retelling the story according to the story map. Teacher give advises and courage to the group, as well as make discussion with the presenting group in order to help them in editing their story map. Finally, teacher guides pupils to review the theme of the story.</p>



Steps and definition	Details
<p>Step 6: Post-test</p> 	<p>An assessment sheet is given to each group of pupils. Pupils have to finish the assessment sheet in group.</p> <p>Teacher gives instructions about the activity and give guidance to each group. After that, the assessment sheets will be analysed to check for the effectiveness of the strategy used.</p>  <p>Picture 6: Assessment sheet</p>

## 9. CONCLUSION

The qualitative inquiry through observation and questionnaire and the quantitative approach through exercise sheet, pre-test and post-test revealed that the collaboration story mapping strategic is able to help pupils in understanding and identifying the story grammar of a narrative text. Pupils are able to discuss with each other in small group and everyone are able to share their opinions and ideas in order to complete the story map with necessary guidance.


However, as effective as the strategy going on, more guidance and efforts are required to help the pupils who are weak in English, know fewer vocabulary as well as can't read English-based text in understanding the whole story grammar of a narrative text.

The main factor that leads the success of the strategy among the pupils is it focuses on pupils to get involved directly into the learning activity and discussion in between teacher-pupils and among themselves. It makes the learning activity more interesting and entertaining. Besides, it facilitate pupils to complete the story map according to the narrative texts through a systematic 5W1H questioning process and it helps pupils to raise their awareness of the elements the author uses to construct the story.

As its prior purpose which is identifying story grammar of narrative text, I wanted to improve on that aspect. In future, I want to go for longer and more complicated narrative texts. After adaptation, it can be modified and used in another type of comprehension - expository texts. This Collaborative Story Mapping strategy can also used for other primary classes. In future, I will use the strategy for equip more primary year classes and more complicated texts.

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# **Creativity in Language Learning**



# CREATIVE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS: ENHANCING READING SKILLS THROUGH IMMERSIVE READER TOOL AS AN ONLINE ENGLISH LEARNING MATERIAL DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Deebamalar A/P Pandi

*Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Pulau Ketam*

[deeba.malar@yahoo.com](mailto:deeba.malar@yahoo.com)

## Abstract

This study was carried out to enhance reading skills among Form 5 pupils of SMK Pulau Ketam during online learning in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose and objective of this study are to enhance pupils' reading comprehension and fluency and to increase their confidence to read at higher levels. In addition, this study also aimed to identify the effectiveness of using an immersive reader tool to increase reading skill proficiency levels. Observation and analysis of documents were used as the research methods. Participants consisted of sixteen pupils from 5 Satria. Data were analyzed using descriptive analysis and reported in percentages. The results of the post-test are that the immersive reader tool has helped pupils to read with fluency and to answer comprehension questions.

**Keywords:** *reading skill, reading comprehension, an immersive reader*

## 1. Introduction

Generally, nowadays students are not interested in reading materials, especially English. This situation occurs among students from rural schools. My school is the only rural secondary school in Selangor. Here, their social economic activities are fishing, processing salty fish and prawns and managing seafood restaurants. People here are 98% Chinese, and they speak only Mandarin. So, it is difficult for them to learn other languages fast like the students who live in the town area because they use only Mandarin in their daily routine. The teachers must take extra efforts to teach the students.

A new English SPM format was introduced starting in the year 2021. The English paper consists of 4 skills tests. Reading is in paper 1 and it carries 25% out of the total score. The idea is to help my students to read and understand the reading text so that they can score the reading paper better and this will help them to pass their English in SPM. However, I realized that they could read English text well, but they do not understand the meaning of the text because they read it according to syllables. I did ask them to use a dictionary to find meaning for difficult words, but they were not interested.

Based on my observation, SPM candidates for this current year are weaker in the English subject as compared to the year before. I did a pre-test by giving them a past year reading exam paper and the scores were extremely low. I took some time to talk to the students regarding this matter and most of them responded that they wanted to learn English but they are unable to understand the text that are given to them. Hence, the activity becomes boring and they are not motivated to read any English text by using the dictionary.

Then, I took the effort to do action plans to enhance their reading skills and I found a reading tool called Immersive Reader. Instantly, I decided to give it a try. Immersive Reader is a free program that uses proven ways to help people of all ages to improve their reading and writing skills. Immersive Reader can help English language learners to enhance their reading comprehension and fluency. It can help emerging readers gain confidence as they learn to read

at higher levels, as well as provide text decoding solutions for children with learning disabilities.

### **1.1 Research Focus**

My research focuses on the issues faced by 16 pupils (who are the research participants in this study) who had problems with reading as elected by their English teachers. The 16 pupils had a variety of problems. However, what is significant is that they have problems in reading and pronouncing words containing closed syllables accurately and fluently. During the reading process, all 16 pupils spell the word in the text before reading the word. However, the pupils still spell the word wrongly. This leads to a longer time to acquire the reading process. At the same time, they do not understand certain meanings of the words in the text.

### **1.2 Objectives**

The purpose of this study are:

1. To enhance reading comprehension and fluency among form 5 Satria pupils
2. To increase students' confidence to read at higher levels

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1 Research Participants**

The study involved 16 pupils from the 5 Satria class. All 16 pupils had problems pronouncing certain words and understanding the reading material. All 16 pupils had problems spelling words containing syllables words and understanding the meaning of the text, so this causes their reading time to be longer.

### **2.2 Data Analysis**

The data is presented using percentages, bar graphs and tables. This action plan was carried out in the past 3 months by giving six types of reading text referring to the latest form 5 English format. The researcher took a week to guide the students on how to use the immersive reader tool. Once the pupils are familiar to use the tool, then the researcher will send reading material using the Microsoft OneNote link to the students' mobile phones. After the pupils completed their six-reading text using the immersive tool then a post-test will be carried out to know the outcome results.

### **2.3 Instruments**

This study is quantitative research, using action research as the method to solve the problem encountered by the pupils. The student's level of proficiency in reading is tested with a pre-test. Based on the results of the pre-test, the pupils' scores are gathered. The items included in the pre-test are derived from *Modul Pintas Lembaga Peperiksaan*. After carrying out the pre-test, I used the immersive reader tool to motivate the pupil to read the text fluently.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

The 16 pupils were given a test using 'Modul Pintas' prepared by the education department at the beginning of the year. The results are recorded as pre-test results. Table 1 is the results of the pre-test for reading skills.

Table 1: Pre-test Overall Results.

Score range	Number of Pupils	Remarks
0 – 5	1	12 pupil is focused pupils to score higher.
6 – 10	4	
11 – 15	7	
16 – 20	4	
21 - 25	-	Target score to pass English reading paper.

The total score for reading skills is 25%. The score has been divided into five rankings. The number of pupils whose score range from 0 to 5 is only 1 pupil, the score ranges from 6 to 10 is 4 pupils, the score range from 11 to 15 is 7 pupils, the score range from 16 to 20 is 4 pupils and none score from 21 to 25. This clearly shows that 12 pupils scored below 15%. The research will be focusing on these pupils to help them to score more than 20%.

Based on the data from the pre-test the researcher carries out a questionnaire to gain information about their motivation toward reading. The questionnaire was given using Google Forms and the link was sent to their WhatsApp. The result from the questionnaire shows that most of the pupils are not motivated in reading. They think reading is a boring activity.

### 3.1 Problem Overview

Table 2: Reading Test Paper Information

PART	CRITERIA
<b>1</b> 8 questions with 3 options answers	On daily life encounters
<b>2</b> 10 questions with 4 option answers	On a reading text
<b>3</b> 8 questions with 4 option answers	A longer reading text
<b>4</b> 6 questions	On matching the correct sentence meaning of each word
<b>5</b> 8 questions	On information transfer from a text

### 3.2 Problem Overview Analysis

Table 3: Analysis of Reading Test Paper with Pre-test Results

PART	CRITERIA	NUMBER OF PUPILS (Score below than 3 marks)	REMARKS
<b>1</b> 8 questions with 3 options answers	On daily life encounters	4	Part 2,3 and 4 is reading text. <i>(Reading tool and motivation need)</i>
<b>2</b> 10 questions with 4 option answers	On a reading text	8	
<b>3</b> 8 questions with 4 option answers	A longer reading text	6	
<b>4</b> 6 questions	On matching the correct sentence meaning of each word	14	
<b>5</b> 8 questions	On information transfer from a text	3	

### 3.3 Action

*Table 4: Steps and Activity*

STEPS	ACTIVITY
1	• introduce to pupils about immersive reader and guide on how to use the tool.
2	• send six reading text separately in their WhatsApp group and the pupils will read before the lesson using immersive reader tool.
3	• discuss comprehension questions in class and pupils will answer by using previous reading knowledge.
4	• carry out post-test reading test paper

At the same time, the immersive reader tool allows us to...

- a) change font size, text spacing, and background colour.
- b) split up words into syllables.
- c) highlight verbs, nouns, adjectives, and sub-clauses.
- d) choose between two fonts optimised to help with reading.
- e) read out text aloud and change the speed of reading.

### 3.4 Results after Implementation

*Table 5: Student's Pre-test and Post-test outcomes*

Score range	Number of Pupils	
	Pre-Test	Post-Test
0 – 5	1	-
6 – 10	4	-
11 – 15	7	4
16 – 20	4	11
21 – 25	-	1

Students' achievement from pre-test to post-test showed a very good improvement. From here I realized that the students can really read if we use the immersive reader tool. The finding shows that most of the students have increased their self-confidence, memory and understanding of what they have learnt. Besides that, the environment of teaching and learning becomes more cheerful and interesting by caring out such activities.

At its core, Microsoft Immersive Reader reads texts aloud to students while simultaneously highlighting the word being read. This allows the text to become accessible to students of different ages and abilities, and also helps emerging readers learn to recognize new words. The results clearly show that by using immersive reader tools, students can improve their reading proficiency. Besides that, it helps the students to read independently.

## 4. Conclusion

The immersive reader tool is an interactive reading comprehension and learning tool. This tool makes the text more accessible to learners of all ages and abilities. Using Microsoft Immersive Reader, you can have text read aloud at different speeds and by different voices, change text size, font, and spacing, highlight specific parts of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs), break apart words by syllables, translate text to more than 80 languages, hear audio recordings of the words spoken in different languages, and see words represented as pictures.

Immersive Reader can be accessed through Microsoft Tools (e.g., Word, OneNote, Edge) and you can try it out for free on the Learning Tools page of the Microsoft website. Immersive Reader can also be accessed through Flipgrid. This tool can be beneficial for students who are learning English as well as students with disabilities.

## 5. Acknowledgement

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# **LUMOS-EXPRESS: A WRITING TOOL TO IMPROVE ESL LEARNERS' MOTIVATION IN DESCRIPTIVE WRITING**

**Samantha Elesha Salambau<sup>1</sup>, Belinda Lai<sup>2</sup> and Melor Md Yunus<sup>3</sup>**

*<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

*[samanthaelesha@gmail.com](mailto:samanthaelesha@gmail.com)*

## **Abstract**

Creating art through technology is gratitude. Using both art and technology in writing is creating a creative fusion. Generally, Malaysian schools teach English as a second language. Therefore, it is crucial for students to be competent in the language to cope with the globalisation era. This refers to the ability to master all the four skills, Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. However, the mastery in Writing has always been an obstacle for students. Hence, this experimental study attempts to investigate the use of pictures through technology to motivate writing. This research involved 10 students where 5 were from an urban school in Johor Bahru and 5 were from a rural school in Baram. The instruments used were the analysis of the documents, interviews and field notes to explore students' motivation towards descriptive writing. The result showed positive result from the participants. They also agreed that teachers should incorporate technology and visual in writing.

Keywords: English Language, writing, pictures, motivation, technology

## **1. Introduction**

According to the official Malaysian education system, the English Language in Malaysia is taught in Primary and Secondary schools for a total of 11 years accumulatively. Acquiring the target language is no doubt vital as to enable the citizens to compete globally. It is clearly portrayed in the English Language Education Reform: The Roadmap that the biggest stakeholders, the children of the country, need to be fluent in English as they are the ones who hold the country's future growth and prosperity (English Language Education Reform in Malaysia: The Roadmap 2015-2025, 2015). In the Malaysian education system, English language learning takes place in classrooms formally. Jeon-Ellis, Debski and Wigglesworth (2005) state that classroom is a social environment where students share their past experiences and build relationships while participating and taking part in activities that best fulfil their social needs. Acquiring all the four skills namely, Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing is a must for one to be a competent user of the language. According to previous research, among the four skills, writing is the hardest skill to master. Walsh (2010) as cited in Klimova (2013) explains that writing is crucial due to its extensive use in tertiary education and in the work environment. If students do not know how to express themselves in writing, they would not be able to communicate well with professors, employers, peers, or just about anyone else. Much of professional communication is done in writing: proposals, memos, reports, applications, preliminary interviews, e-mails, and more are part of the daily life of a college student or successful graduate.

### 1.1 Statement of Problem

In relation to this matter, it is apparent that crucial factor contributing to poor competency among students is writing as it is the most difficult skill to master. Despite being teachable, the writing skills require immense complementary skills. As cited in Jalaluddin, Yunus and Yamat (2018) in the book, *ESL Writing: A Perspective on Self-Efficacy, Learning and Teaching*, Kellogg (1999) emphasised that writing is equivalent to thinking and requires mindfulness and purposeful involvement. In regards of this view, it is no surprise that second language learners struggle with writing. Malaysian graduates underperforming in universities and in the job market is caused by subpar language mastery (Yamat, Fisher, & Kili, 2014) as cited in Jalaluddin, Yunus & Yamat (2018). Samuel & Zaitun Bakar (2008) as cited in Jalaluddin, Yunus & Yamat (2018) in the book, *ESL Writing: A Perspective on Self-Efficacy, Learning and Teaching*, state that, in Malaysia, the 2005 School Certificate Examination Report on English Language 2 revealed that the majority of the learners had yet to master writing skills in English at the required level.

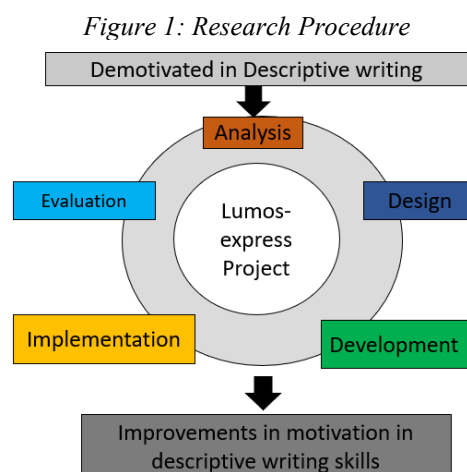
### 1.2 Significance of Study

Writing, as a skill itself, offers the students the opportunity to simultaneously cope with other vital facilities that can help them succeed in their academics, career, and also in other relevant aspects of their lives. Thus, various techniques have been conducted in the formal classroom to help improve the writing skills among second language learners. One of the techniques is known as Lumos-Express, which is the use of visuals in the form of pictures, as stimulus to enhance descriptive writing skills. Therefore, the significance of this study is to explore the use of pictures as a stimulus to enhance students' descriptive writing skills.

### 1.3 Research Question

1. How does Lumos-Express help in improving descriptive writing skills among primary school learners?

## 2. METHODOLOGY



This research procedure was based on the ADDIE model of instructional system design developed by B. Seel and Z. Glasgow (Wiphasith et al., 2016). ADDIE model is one of the



instructional design applications used by many researchers to develop software or applications related to the field of education. This model covers the phases of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. Figure 1 illustrates the phases of the ADDIE process starting from analysis to evaluation. The first phase is the analysis. At this phase, the first factor for analysis is the learner. The researcher investigated ESL learners' existing knowledge about descriptive writing and problems faced by students to overcome their problems in writing. The research was conducted at two schools; a rural school in Baram, Sarawak and an urban school in Johor Bahru. The students were selected and divided into two levels, averaged and advanced students. The reason for this was to see the enhancement the students acquired in their writing skills based on their levels of competency. The students were given a topic and they would have to write unguided. This was to see their level of competency in descriptive writing. The products were kept as records for document analysis.

## 2. Findings and Discussion

The findings were fascinating considering this was the first time any of the students were introduced to the use of technology and visuals in writing. The objective of this project was to observe the improvements in the students' descriptive writing skills and to explore the technique of using technology and pictures in enhancing descriptive writing skills. A free writing entry using the Tayasui Sketches application started the Lumos-Express project. This particular entry was used as a tool to compare the end product.

How does Lumos-Express technique improve primary ESL descriptive writing skills? It portrays the students' descriptive product of the entries as a tool for language learning. The key aspect here was that making descriptive writing a very essential but an engaging task that involved many aspects of language learning as language is acquired through exploring and experiencing. The first aspect was where the Tayasui Sketches application was used as a manner for exploration that aroused the students' interests. The application enabled the students to have free choices, since the students were given the chances of autonomy in the topics they explored. In a way, the use of pictures and technology were deemed as a way to experience the process of writing. According to their end product, the learners experienced the need to source information on the topic and the autonomy in learning made the process an engaging task for them, especially when it comes to choosing the pictures to use. The aspect of using decorating tools in their writing was the motivator in the writing process. Throughout the writing process, learners learned to improve their sentences through trial and error which involved the process of constructive criticism by the teacher. They explored the language needed to improve their writing through creativity and art in order to produce one of their own. Improvements can be seen in terms of the word counts and designs of their entries in the students' essays.

In content, previously, most of the students faced difficulties in expressing their ideas. They could not state their idea in English and write relevant supporting ideas. However, by using pictures, students can create their meaningful ideas or content within their written text. They could state their idea in English and write relevant supporting ideas.

The ideation and purpose of Lumos-Express project as a writing tool to motivate learners to write can be seen in the learners' end products. This application becomes a space for creativity where learners have autonomy in their learning. The aspects of learner's autonomy encouraged the intrinsically advanced group of learners to manipulate the application to show their ability. In short, the application became a medium for these learners as a place to express not only their creative sides, but also their ability to describe photos using words.

The task was purposely created to elicit the response on the students' interest where they were given the autonomy to express themselves. Nonetheless, it seemed that 2 students

did not perform well in writing despite the task being easy. Thus, constructive criticism was given to the students for the next lesson to boost their motivation. The respondent's view on Lumos-Express project using the Tayasui Sketches application portrayed a positive reception from the learners. The aspects of autonomy in learning, freedom of creativity and inclusion of technology contributed to this reception. The learners were aware of the opportunities and discoveries from the application which contributed to the aspect of motivation in their writing. This was where the researchers could see the average learners become one step better while the advanced become a better version of a motivated writer.

Writing is not an easy task especially when it comes to second language learners. Motivation must be inculcated and the use of the technology in this research had filled in the gap of achieving and imprinting motivation in these learners so they would be intrigued to write. The intriguing discovery of this research is that, when it comes to technology, being technology savvy is not necessarily a must, as skills and tools can be learned. Most learners nowadays have been using mobile devices like tablets and smartphones since young. Therefore, it is logical to align today's lessons with the familiar way that learners are used to when it comes to learning. One of the vital findings of this research is that, it is one thing to expose learners to technology and a whole different thing to integrate technology and use it to mould creativity. Learners from various walks of life were able to experience these elements in this Lumos-Express project.

### 3. Conclusion

The findings from the document analysis, observations and interviews revealed that Lumos-Express received positive feedbacks from the learners. Document analysis and observations enabled the researchers to see and experience the learners' journey throughout the whole process. The interviews enabled the researchers to elicit their perspectives on Lumos-Express. After triangulating these three instruments, it was found that Lumos-Express does motivate these learners to write. Within the 8 weeks of the implementation, the increase in motivation can be observed. This proves that using Tayasui Sketches application in Lumos-Express as a writing tool is a good technique to motivate students in writing.

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# FACING THE CHALLENGES OF APPLYING THE PROJECT-BASED LEARNING APPROACH IN A FULLY ONLINE SPEAKING CLASS

Noorhayati Saharuddin

<sup>1</sup>*Universiti Kuala Lumpur-Malaysian Institute of Chemical & Bioengineering Technology*

[\\*noorhayatis@unikl.edu.my](mailto:*noorhayatis@unikl.edu.my)

## Abstract

Learning in seclusion during lockdowns is not helpful for English language speaking lessons as they require much interaction. One of the approaches to encourage student engagement and interaction in a lesson is the use of Project-Based Learning (PBL). In a regular face-to-face class, it is relatively easy to monitor students' engagement in learning; however, the application of this approach could be challenging in a full-online speaking class. This study aimed to observe students' participation and performance during meetings and discussions to carry out a project and to obtain students' feedback on their motivation and challenges faced in completing the project and participating in online discussions. The subjects of this study were a small group of bachelor's degree students in their first semester who had to study entirely online during a lockdown due to the pandemic. This study employed a qualitative approach using Action Research. Data was collected via the assessment of mock meetings, observation of informal discussions online, and a survey at the end of the project to confirm the data obtained from the observations. Generally, similar studies showed positive outcomes for students' motivation to learn and improve speaking skills. However, initial results indicate a few more challenges to overcome in ensuring the success of the PBL project. There is no guarantee that there will be no more lockdowns in the future; thus, further studies on effective online learning need to continue.

**Keywords:** project-based learning, online learning, speaking skills

## 1. Introduction

Due to COVID-19, countries worldwide had a lockdown beginning in 2020. By April that year, half of the world's population was immobilised and stuck at home. The lockdown had caused a very long seclusion period for many people around the globe, forcing work and study to be done online – the change was too sudden. Research on learning in seclusion found concerns over students' mental health (Balta-Salvador et al., 2021). Stress, anxiety, depression (Aslan et al., 2020; Saravanan et al., 2020; Son et al., 2020), fear, worry, and boredom (Aristovnik et al., 2020; Son et al., 2020) were among the negative feelings that were intensified while studying during the lockdown.

Studying in seclusion significantly reduces interaction among students and lecturers. The isolation is definitely not helpful for English language speaking lessons as they require much interaction. Learning at home without knowing your classmates makes speaking up during online classes awkward.

One of the approaches to encourage student engagement and interaction in a lesson is the use of Project-Based Learning (PBL). The primary purpose of PBL is to provide the platform for students to engage in real-life communication and to give them the opportunities to enhance their interpersonal skills enabling them to interact with people around them and beyond their



circle (Riswandi, 2018). In a regular face-to-face class, it is relatively easy to monitor students' engagement in learning; however, the application of this approach could be more challenging in a full-online speaking class.

Unfortunately, at Universiti Kuala Lumpur-Malaysian Institute of Chemical & Bioengineering Technology (UniKL-MICET), online learning had to continue somewhat longer than at other UniKL campuses as there was an internal spread of COVID-19 positive cases. It would have been easier to get students to record their speech to submit as an assignment for an English-speaking class; however, it would only increase students' negative feelings. Therefore, to have a better learning experience, the PBL approach was adopted. With the advice from the Department of Health, teaching and learning were conducted entirely online again in mid-2021.

The PBL project chosen for the English-speaking class was called *Patriotism Awareness Project*. Two tasks were to be completed: (1) to produce a video with a patriotism theme and (2) to conduct an online video viewing and quiz for specified schools.

## 1.1 Objectives

This study aimed to:

- (1) to observe students' participation and performance during meetings and discussions in carrying out the *Patriotism Awareness Project*
- (2) to obtain students' feedback on their motivation and challenges faced in completing the project and participating in online discussions.

## 2. Related Literature

Online learning is the best solution for teaching and learning activities during the lockdown. Without this platform, all learning activities could have been halted. While some research (Yanti, 2021; Warikar et al., 2021) found positive outcomes in online learning, others differ. Mahyood (2020) found that most of his subjects (EFL students at Taibah University) were not satisfied with continuing online learning due to technical problems with the online platform and lack of communication with lecturers and fellow students. This was also echoed by Bich and Lian (2021), in which 35 major English freshmen of Ho Chi Minh City Open University felt hostile towards online speaking skills as they felt it was hard to improve their speaking skills. This is due to insufficient communication activities and various technical problems during the online lessons. Sri Ariani and Tawali (2021) further listed problems with students comprehending materials given by lecturers and students' methods in doing tasks and assignments as challenges in online speaking classes.

Apart from technological issues, among the complaints of students learning speaking skills is the lack of communication. Therefore, an appropriate approach to teaching speaking skills needs to be employed. One such approach that involves meaningful two-way communication is PBL.

PBL allows "students to design, plan, and carry out an extended project that produces a publicly exhibited output such as a product, publication, or presentation" (Patton 2012). By designing and planning their projects, students will have more ownership of the project, thus increasing their motivation (Shin, 2018; Izzah & Diana, 2021) to ensure its success. Students must also communicate authentically with their teammates and all parties involved in their project (Fragoulis, 2009). Apart from communicating skills, students also need to utilise other skills

like critical thinking and interpersonal skills (Fauziati, 2014; Shin, 2018; Izzah & Diana, 2021). However, Izzah & Diana (2021) listed time management and free riders as challenges to PBL based on their interview with English teachers implementing PBL.

### 3. Methods

The subject of this study was a small group (12) of Bachelor of Engineering Technology students in their first semester. Due to the pandemic, these students had to study entirely online during a campus lockdown. They could only stay at the campus for two- weeks in March 2021 before the campus was ordered to temporarily close by the Health Department to curb the spread of COVID-19 positive cases.

A qualitative approach using Action Research was employed in this study. Data were collected from three different sources: the assessment of mock meetings, observation of informal discussions online and a survey at the end of the project to confirm the data obtained from the observations. The triangulation method was used to confirm the validity of the data.

There were two semi-formal mock meetings for students to participate in. The first Mock Meeting was for students to discuss and distribute tasks for the video production. The video production was carried out in a group of three; therefore, there were four videos altogether. Mock Meeting 2 was a whole class meeting to discuss the progress of the online event for video viewing. The assessment was done by observing how well students followed the steps in a meeting according to the agenda. There were also two informal discussions before Mock Meeting 2 and after the online event. A survey was also carried out after the online event was over. The questions in the survey were obtained from informal discussion 2 to identify how many felt the same way about some issues. The discussions during the meetings and informal discussions were transcribed, and the survey was calculated in simple statistics.

### 4. Results and Discussion

In order to provide a platform for meaningful communication, a PBL project was assigned to a group of bachelor's students who were studying full online due to the pandemic. The timeline of the *Patriotism Awareness Project* is as Figure 1. Figure 1 shows that students were given three months to complete the project starting from the project's planning until the video viewing on 23-26 May 2022 and the quiz winner announcement on 28 May 2022. Similar to the findings by Izzah & Diana (2021), students did experience time management issues as they submitted the poster for publicity and the videos later than the deadline. Nevertheless, the project was successfully completed.

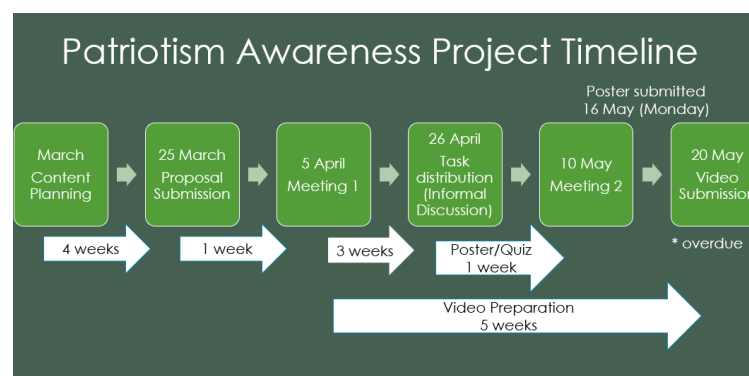


Figure 1: Timeline of Patriotism Awareness Project

#### 4.1 Mock Meetings

Mock Meeting 1 was a three-in-a-group meeting to discuss the video production. It was found that students were well-prepared for the meeting; however, the discussions during the meeting were heavily scripted, and turn-taking went very smoothly. Almost all of the steps in a meeting were followed, and all teammates participated in the discussion. Table 1 provides an extract from the dialogue of the chairperson from one of the mock meetings conducted.

*Table 1: Transcript from Group 1, Meeting 1*

Transcript	Steps in a Meeting
Good morning, everyone. Can you? Can you guys hear me? OK. So it's good to see some familiar faces. Welcome.	Step 1: Call meeting to order
So the purpose of the meeting today is to discuss the matter of umm regarding the patriotism awareness event with a high school student that will be held in May.	Step 2: Brief purpose of meeting
OK, first and foremost, let's start with drafting the content of the video. So do you guys have any ideas?	Step 5: Discuss special business

Mock Meeting 2 involved all students in the class. It was held four weeks after the first mock meeting. Compared to the first meeting, Meeting 2 was less satisfactory as students were less-prepared, and some were unaware of the agenda and some crucial information. Thus, some tasks discussed during informal discussion one were not completed. The meeting was not scripted, and long pauses were prominent during this meeting. The chairperson missed some steps required in a meeting; however, other students helped by asking questions to lead the meeting in the right direction. Some students were reluctant to participate; thus, the chairperson had to call their names out. It was also found that three students did not speak at all, while there were a few students who dominated the meeting. Table 2 provides the extract from the meeting.

*Table 2: Transcript from Meeting 2*

Transcript	Comment
S11: Um, I would like to, uh, suggest we put it on the poster. So it's much be more easier for them. S8: Okay. Thank you. Ili for the suggestion. S2: So we, uh, then we continue to the next agenda, which is the poster. S01: Uh... but the poster since it is my team, uh, me, izzat and pierce will be handling the poster. So, first of all, for the poster, we need the actual date for the event. So can I have that or have we decided on the actual date?	S2 is the chairperson  The date was decided during an informal discussion one week before Mock Meeting 2

#### 4.2 Informal Discussions

Informal discussions were held to provide more speaking opportunities for students. There were two informal discussions. The first informal discussion was done a week before Meeting 2 for the purpose of distributing tasks for the online event so students could report the progress of their tasks during Meeting 2. The lecturer appointed the class representative to lead the discussion. Not all participated during this session, and a few chose to listen and just agree with the decisions made.

Informal discussion two was held a few days after the online event was completed. The purpose was to get feedback from the students on the project by discussing a set of questions. This time

the class representative voluntarily led the discussion. All students participated in this discussion, including the three students who did not speak during Mock Meeting 2. They were encouraged by the chairperson to say a few words.

Turn-taking did not go smoothly – there were times when everyone kept quiet. There were also times when two students spoke simultaneously - which is understandable as turn-taking is more rapid in a face-to-face discussion (Ockey et al., 2019) than online discussion. As opposed to the Mock Meetings, where the students were aware they were being assessed, the discussion in the informal discussions was more natural; the speech was rather unorganised, and more fillers could be heard. Students also asked genuine questions that showed how much they understood the tasks or did not know. Table 3 shows two extracts from the transcript.

Table 3: Transcript from Meeting 2

Transcript	Comment
Uh, for me, uh, everyone have give their best in handling this event. Uh, everyone take part and take responsibilities. Uh, I'm sure we can make better event then this, with the experience we get from here.	-discussion not scripted -ideas not well-organised -a lot of fillers
Thank you everyone. Thank you, Ari. Hm. Um, for me, obviously, I'm not very fluent in, uh, in, um, talking in English, but, uh, see you guys talking English. Uh, always talking like very fluent. I become like, okay, not like this. Uh, I also have to talk in English. So you guys, uh, encourage me, uh, give me motivation, uh, to be more.	

### 4.3 Survey

Some key points from informal discussion two were extracted and turned into statements for a survey. The survey was conducted to confirm whether students felt the same way regarding what their classmates said. When talking about the success of the project, here are what the students said:

- *I don't think it's a successful project, but, um, everyone doing a good job.*
- *Not very successful, but I think, uh, we can improve, um, the other event. Okay.*
- *Uh, I think it's quite successful, but we can do better.*

It seems they had mixed opinions on the success, which is reflected in the survey in Table 4. Students were required to rate the level of the success of their project on a scale of 1 (not successful) to 5 (successful). It can be seen that all felt that the project was successful; however, the majority rated 3/5, showing moderate success.

Table 4: Student perception of the success of the project

Rate	Percentage (%)
5	17
4	25
3	50
2	8
1	0

The low success rating could be caused by students' lack of experience in carrying out such projects, and they faced communication issues:

- *So, I guess we, all of us just lack of experience handling such an event, I guess we need better communication among us.*
- *um, I think the challenges that we face is because of, um, that we are in the pandemic, so*

*we cannot see face to face.*

- *Uh, for me, uh, everyone have give their best in handling this event. Uh, everyone has take part and take responsibilities.*

However, in the survey, one student disagreed that the project was challenging (item 3 in Table 5) as he had some experience handling similar tasks. All felt their teammates were reliable except one (item 4) and item 5 shows that four students had some problems in getting together to discuss the project.

As two groups did not submit the patriotism video on time, the researcher was wondering whether the duration given was inadequate as such comment was given in discussion 2:

- *For me, it's because the the the task is quite taking some time challenge need to do lot of, uh, reading on journal, the, uh, article do about the... and then also the brainstorming also takes time. And also the, about the video making the editing, the editing is quite longer than we thought.*

However, according to item 6 in Table 5, none of the students felt the duration given was too short. Therefore, a contributing factor could be that students struggled to understand the task as per response:

- *And we also don't understand, uh, really don't understand what happened on event. We, we still confuse, even after many, many weeks, we still confuse on how to do the event, how the flow of the event.*

Students faced technical problems like any other online lesson, mainly poor internet connection (item 11, Table 5). Item 7 in Table 5 shows four students having difficulties understanding the task; however, most students did not face the same issue. This could imply that there was a lack of communication among the students as a whole class.

A positive result could be seen in terms of motivation and interest in the project. Items 1 and 2 in Table 5 show that most students strongly agree with the statements below.

- *Yeah it is my first experience holding an online event before. Yeah, it is very interesting.*
- *So, uh, it makes me feel like I want to learn how to, how to handle, how to do it. Okay. Um, how to gain the people interest... of the people that, uh, we want, we want to...*

A positive outcome could also be perceived in students' speaking skills and confidence:

- *Uh, next for your question, as a host, with Dina and Shami, I think, um, to speak to communicate in English after this will be a lot more, um, easier because it has, uh, given us the confidence.*
- *I'm not very fluent in, uh, in, um, talking in English, but, uh, see you guys talking English. Uh, always talking like very fluent. I become like, okay, not like this. Uh, I also have to talk in English. So you guys, uh, encourage me, uh, give me motivation, uh, to be more.*

The survey also reflects this positive outcome (items 8 and 9 in Table 5). Although the language was not accurate, students seemed to try to speak longer. Speaking in English is not without difficulties; the majority struggled to explain their ideas and opinions (item 13). It was also found that most students liked being able to interact with people while carrying out the project (item 12), although three students disagreed. The majority said they were not shy to participate in discussions, but four students did. However, language ability was not the main reason for this situation as only one out of the four students rated disagree for item 10 – it was easy for me to speak in English.

Table 5: Survey result

No	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I think this project was interesting.	-	-	33%	67%
2	I was motivated to carry out the project.	-	-	33%	67%
3	The project was challenging to carry out.	-	8%	75%	17%
4	My teammates were uncooperative.	59%	33%	8%	-
5	It was difficult to find the same time to work together with my group.	8%	59%	25%	8%
6	The time to complete the tasks was too short.	17%	83%	-	-
7	I did not know how to carry out the tasks.	8%	59%	25%	8%
8	It enhances my speaking skills.	-	-	75%	25%
9	It builds confidence in interacting with people.	-	-	33%	67%
10	It was easy for me to speak in English language.	8%	42%	42%	8%
11	My internet connection/equipment is not good.	8%	25%	59%	8%
12	I like being able to interact with people in carrying out the project.	-	25%	50%	25%
13	I struggled to explain my ideas/opinions.	-	8%	75%	17%
14	I felt rather shy to join the discussion.	-	67%	25%	8%

## Conclusion

Generally, the results were similar to other PBL-related research where positive outcomes in students' motivation to learn and speaking skills were seen. Students showed increased participation in informal discussion two, which was the final online discussion for the project. However, results also indicated that the progress in completing the project given was relatively slow due to overdue task submission. Only a few students stood out during the online discussions. Nevertheless, the project was completed, and the students felt a sense of achievement from the effort put forth.

Although there were many challenges in conducting a PBL project online, it should not be a reason for not providing students with opportunities for authentic and meaningful interaction. There is no guarantee that there will be no more lockdowns in the future; thus, further studies on effective online learning need to continue.

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# EDU. TIKTOK: DO-IT-YOURSELF (DIY) AND REUSE, REDUCE AND RECYCLE (3R) PROJECTS FOR ORAL PRESENTATION

Aishah Haji Othman

*Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Keladi, Kulim, Kedah Darulaman*

[mdnoziz@yahoo.com](mailto:mdnoziz@yahoo.com)

## Abstract

Real-life experience and classroom activities are inseparable as they relate to each other. In teaching English to pre-university students, communicating effectively and conveying ideas are vital. Authentic classroom projects are essential for students to undergo real-world challenges. To practise a sustainable environment, students in the current project were exposed to the DIY and 3R projects to realise the aim of green surroundings using a digital tool such as TikTok video application for oral presentation. Project-based learning exposes students to cognitive, kinesthetic, visual, and artistic values. In this showcase, creative and innovative teaching and learning experience with students is shared. The project highlights how the DIY and 3R can sustain the environment to educate students to save the earth. Students were asked to create products from reusable materials and were required to promote and market these products as oral presentation in the classroom. Before the presentation, they had to record the process of making the product, do individual presentations, and practise articulating their ideas. It was found that DIY and 3R projects via TikTok video recording enhanced students' ability to speak English confidently. The activity was fun, not only for students but for the teacher too.

**Keywords:** Project-based learning, oral presentation, DIY, 3R, sustainable environment

## 1.Introduction

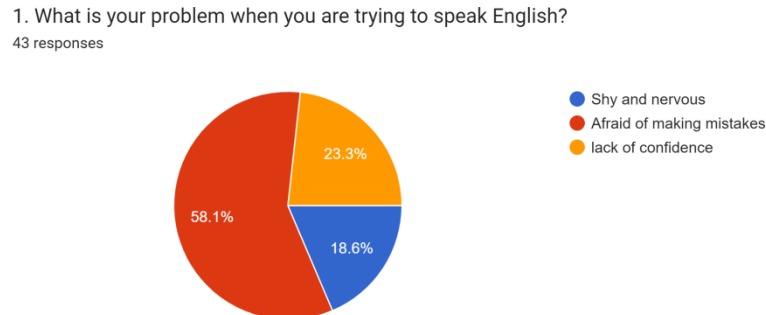
Speaking skill is one of the components of the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) which carries 25% of the total in MUET CEFR in 2022. As this skill is as challenging as the other skills like reading, listening and writing, teachers need to ensure that students are well-versed in using correct spoken English to be used in the examination as well as for daily use. By identifying and making known the problems encountered by learners, teachers can know how to assist their students to acquire the language.

As adventurous and dedicated educators, we always expect the best from our students. However, many students are of intermediate ability or are weak learners of the English language, some of whom are unable to express ideas or thoughts clearly. The reason is that they lack confidence and are afraid of making mistakes in front of their peers (Figure 1). If they can articulate some English words, their vocabulary is basic and limited, not to mention the limited use of sophisticated vocabulary which is almost non-existent. Therefore, teachers need to devise effective ideas in assisting students to improve their speaking skills.

Following that, it is pertinent to include the social media influence that teenagers nowadays love, which is the TikTok application on smartphones. Why don't educators take this valuable opportunity to expand students' speaking ability? As humans nowadays do have tonnes of material waste, the researcher decided to incorporate sustainable and green waste awareness among her students. With that, the project-based learning approach, which is Do-It-Yourself

(DIY) and Reduce, Reuse and Recycle (3R) were adopted in enhancing speaking skills or oral presentation among Form Six students.

*Figure 1: Challenges faced by students in conversing in English*



*Source: Analysis of classroom observation*

## 2. Previous Teaching and Learning Reflections

Arbain and Dedi (2017) state that it is difficult to accomplish the aim of spoken English as it involves many tasks, for example, monitoring and understanding other speakers, and thinking about one's own contribution and vocabulary to use. This means there are various types of demands in tandem. Most students in this study can only do one task at a time and when the teacher tries to push them above the limit, they do need assistance to progress. In addition to that, the students express their concern of feeling nervous, shy and lack confidence. This also leads to the teacher having to provide various types of assistance at one time. Thus, to think of something interesting to make students less nervous, not embarrassed and feel more confident, Educational (Edu.) TikTok was tried in improving students' ability in oral presentation.

### 2.1 Creative Project Objectives

#### 2.1.1 General Objectives

The purpose of this creative teaching project is for students to be able to improve their speaking skills or oral presentation. The students should be able to improve their learning strategies by creating Educational TikTok video for oral presentation in order to increase their confidence, develop new vocabulary and interact with their friends using English language. For the researcher, the goal is to make progress in new methodologies in teaching as an alternative intervention as well as upgrading of teaching skills. Teaching techniques can also be improved, which would enable the teacher to assist students through effective teaching styles.

#### 2.2.3 Specific Objectives

The teacher and students would be able to present orally one DIY and 3R project-based learning video using the Educational TikTok application. Based on the video, observations were made using a special rubric or assessment criteria to assess the students' progress.

### 3. Activity Implemented

An explanation on the implementation of using Educational TikTok video application is in Table 2 below:

*Table 2 : Steps in creating the Educational Tik Tok Video Application in DIY & 3R project*

No.	Step	Action/Intervention
1.	How to create an educational Tik Tok video?	First, students have to download the application from Google Play on their smartphones. Then, by using Tik Tok application, students need to create a video which is uploaded on the teacher's TikTok account. Students also must be taught how to start introductory sentences, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- provide introductory sentences using greetings or introduce own names</li> <li>- mention the task given</li> <li>- describe the group members</li> </ul>
2.	What should be included in the short video?	By using the Educational TikTok video learners have to present: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One DIY and 3R innovative product to be introduced and promoted</li> <li>- the steps involved in making the product</li> <li>- the materials used in making the product</li> <li>- importance of DIY and 3R awareness</li> </ul>
3.	Why use the educational TikTok video?	By doing innovation, students have to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- know how to create a short video and practise oral presentation and speaking skills</li> <li>- use appropriate vocabulary and speech intonation</li> <li>- increase confidence level during the making of the short video</li> </ul>
4.	Who is your audience?	Students must understand that the audience of their videos are other students, teachers or the public.
5.	Where to record the short video?	Learners have to know where to do the recording of the short video, for example, at school or elsewhere.
6.	When to use TikTok application?	When learners have completed their project-based task, they have to record the whole process and edit the video according to their creativity.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

To what extent does Educational Tik Tok Video in DIY and 3R project-based learning improve students' achievement in their speaking skills or oral presentation? Based on the teacher's interview sessions, video assessment and document analysis with the selected students, the findings revealed that students enjoyed the whole process. They mentioned that they were able to communicate and interact with their peers. Besides, with the usage of the Edu. Tik Tok video they had the opportunity to develop their creativity and improved their social skills. How does Educational Tik Tok Video in DIY and 3R project-based learning assist students' interaction in a group task? The students responded that:

Student 1: "I enjoy doing the presentation using social media with my classmates, so I did my best."

Student 2: "I have the chance to practice with others and use better English."

#### 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, for teachers and students out there, always remember to support each other. Educators and learners have to hold each other's hand and help one another to achieve better future. As speaking is one of the toughest skills to be mastered by students, teachers have to give their very best to fulfill students' needs. Identifying and making known the alternatives in teaching speaking, it is hoped that it will open more doors for students' improvement in oral presentation.

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## MAKING GRAMMAR A RIOT TO LEARN

Hoshini S. Vickneswaran

*SMK Puteri, Seremban*

[hoshini85@hotmail.com](mailto:hoshini85@hotmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Grammar or Language Awareness as it is called in the current CEFR aligned KSSM format can often put learners to sleep or at the very least elicit groans of protest. Teaching grammar or Language Awareness can be arduous as there is often times a lack of enthusiasm among learners which tends to bring even the perkier of teachers' energy levels down. Language games is almost a go to each time there is a grammar lesson especially when less proficient or even moderately proficient learners are involved. Most language games take time to prepare and may even need extra materials and resources. What is a teacher to do, when time and resources are insufficient or in minimal supply? Instant creativity in a language class is needed. This paper focuses on several methods that a teacher can employ to not only make learning fun but also help pupils retain what they have learned as well as cut down on the time needed to complete various exercises via collaborative learning. This paper hopes to help teachers and learners across the board to not only complete the Language Awareness lessons in the SOW but also enjoy it as the teaching and learning process takes place.

**Keywords:** grammar; collaborative learning; language games

### 1.Introduction

Grammar or Language Awareness lessons, though very much needed by learners are also their least favourite lesson. This is mainly because the lessons as it is dictated in the sow itself focuses on practice and multiple situations in which the grammar form is used or even the collocation of each word being focused on if it is a vocab centric lesson. There is a justification for the amount of exercises prescribed as well as the need to complete all of them despite them being repeated from primary levels, albeit at varying levels. Many learners and educators view it as revision, yet some teaching has to take place in order to remind learners of the finer aspects of these grammar and vocabulary components. Even in the SOW, language games are recommended but they may need extra preparation time or even extra materials. This may put the educator on the spot if there are several classes that day or simply insufficient time to prepare these games. Then comes the sheer volume of exercise that needs to be completed by each individual learner in order to master the grammar or vocabulary component. This paper will address both these issues- learners' interest as well as time consumed both in class as well as for preparation.

### 2.Material and Methods

The mixed method was used where ideas and notions that were brought forward by experts in the field were examined and adapted to find the best method to teach learners language

awareness skills in a manner which is both enjoyable, efficient as well as effective in covering the components as well as enhancing their understanding and application of the components covered (Elizalde-Riviera & Criollo-Vargas, 2020).

### 3.Results and discussion

It is without a doubt that learners enjoy group work. Group work allows them to not only interact and exchange ideas but also supports the learning process (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012). When it comes to grammar and vocabulary or Language Awareness Skill, especially as prescribed by the textbook, there are very few instances that involve collaborative learning. This is where the educator's role comes in. For high-achievers, the educator may not need to refresh all the grammar rules for the day but assigning this lesson as homework does not make it less tedious.

What can be done is, learners can be put into groups of 4-5 and the exercises can be broken down for them. Collectively, they will still be doing the prescribed number of questions but individually their work can be quartered. For example, if on that day, there are 40 questions to complete, it might at least take an individual learner 20-40 minutes at least to do alone. But in a group of 4-5, each student need only do 8-10 questions where they'd personally take about 5-10 minutes with ample time to discuss not only within their group but as a class as well.

For this paper, we will look at the outcome of both the time taken to complete tasks by learners as well as time educator spends on instruction and explanation to pupils to ensure they were able to understand the topic being learnt as well as provide additional support in times learners are confounded by the task before them.

Below are two tables to report the findings that were conducted in two form 5 classes in SMK Puteri, both classes have mixed ability learners. 5 Sigma comprises of intermediate to advanced learners and 5 Alpha comprises of intermediate to low proficiency learners.

Details Stage	Groups of/ individual	Number of Pupils	Number of questions	Time taken to complete questions	Class discussion	Teacher instruction/ explanation
Pre	Individual	25	40	45 mins	20 mins	20 mins
Post	Groups of 5	25	40	20 mins	15 mins	5 mins

Table 1: 5 Sigma- Past Simple and Past Perfect tense (intermediate-advanced learners)

Details Stage	Groups of/ individual	Number of Pupils	Number of questions	Time taken to complete questions	Class discussion	Teacher instruction/ explanation
Pre	Individual	20	25	40 mins	25 mins	25 mins
Post	Groups of 4	20	25	20 mins	15 mins	15 mins

Table 2: 5 Alpha- Active voice to Passive voice conversion (low-intermediate learners)

In both lessons, the teacher provided prior explanation before learners were put into groups. Learners were also provided with explanatory notes (within textbook) to help aid them during task completion. Learners when put into groups, were told to engage in C3B4Me during task completion (pupils look to peers in their group for help before asking teacher) as well as Round Robin during class discussion where a variant on Think-Pair Share was practised.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Learners shared their immediate satisfaction after the lessons in which collaborative learning was incorporated as they found they spent less time completing the exercises and even had time for enrichment activities or had the option of not having to complete the exercises as homework. In the plenary section of the lessons that involved this method, be it grammar or vocabulary, they also found they retained more and when it came time to use it in their writing, in three or four lessons time, they were still able to remember the required grammar and vocabulary components.

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# USING COLOUR-CODED HAND GLOVES TO IMPROVE YEAR 3 PUPILS' USAGE OF SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT RULE IN WRITING SIMPLE SENTENCES

**Beatrice Barnabas**

*Sk St Mathew Lanchang, Serian, Sarawak.*

[trice92odyssey@gmail.com](mailto:trice92odyssey@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Writing is one of the mediums in communication and also among the main skills to be mastered in ESL classrooms. It is a way for pupils to express their ideas and thoughts. However, without good knowledge of grammar, pupils will face difficulties in writing accurately. English has always been an intimidating language to pupils in rural areas, such as my school. Considering their mother tongue and the lack of a supportive environment for them to use and apply subject-verb-agreement (SVA) rules in their daily life communication, pupils often neglect the rules of SVA in their writing. As a result, the rules of SVA are poorly used in their sentences. Based on the Year 3 Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools, pupils are to at least be able to write grammatically correct simple sentences. This study was conducted with the aim to improve the usage of SVA rules in writing simple sentences among 11 pupils in a Year 3 classroom using colour coded traffic light hand gloves to represent singular and plural verbs. The data obtained were from a pre-test and post-test, observations and a survey questionnaire. Findings indicate improvement in the usage of SVA rules portrayed in their writing as well as increased in their motivation in writing activities.

**Keywords:** subject-verb-agreement, writing, colour coded, improvement

## 6. Introduction

Teaching English as a second language requires teachers to be creative in their way of delivering the knowledge successfully to the young learners. Learning English language would usually be intimidating for the young learners because it is a new language that they have to learn. Conducive learning environment and relating English language to their real life experience would be welcoming to the pupils to learn the language. There are four main skills in English language to be mastered by young learners by the end of their six years of schooling based on the Malaysian Primary School Standard Curriculum and writing skill is a one of it. The reason for this is because the ability to write grammatically allow pupils to convey their thoughts and ideas clearly. In addition to that, grammar is necessary to express the information precisely and effectively. Introducing grammar at the early age of the young learners help them to write cohesively. The most basic sentence structure young learners learnt is simple sentence. However, simple sentence made up from a few grammar rule such as the subject-verb-agreement (SVA). Subject verb agreement rule apply only in English language. This rule is not applicable for Bahasa Malaysia and the pupils mother tongue in my school. It is often neglected by the young learners and having a hard time to be conscious of the rule. The basic grammar learnt when it comes to writing simple sentence usually about the singular and plural subject. The rule of SVA then comes in for the young learners to be aware in writing simple sentence. Without proper guidance and ineffective teaching technique, the pupils might find that the rule is difficult to understand. Young learners need motivation and interest to learn.

## 7. Related Literature

According to Sharna (2019), writing is a skill that need to be learnt from a young age to avoid having any difficulties in mastering the skill in the future. In the Malaysian Primary School Standard Curriculum, the introduction to writing skill have been arranged in such a way that they will learn it from simple to complex. At the very early stage, they will be learning to write simple sentence in simple present tense.

In Year 3 Malaysian Primary School Standard Curriculum, by the end of the year, pupils should be able to write simple sentences using the correct subject-verb agreement. According to Nernere (2019), grammar when taught from the early stage, young learners may deliver clear and understandable language. However, introducing grammar rule to young learners could take away their interest in writing and they may feel difficult to express their mind freely.

Moon (2000), states that young learners are those who will learn only if they are engaged in an interesting activity which is fun yet meaningful. Thus, the use of colour coded hand gloves in introducing the subject-verb agreement in simple sentences. The traffic light colour coded were used as indicator whether or not to add '-s' or '-es' to the end of the verb. Colours can make a significant impact on how the young learners behave in class, maintain focus and retain information. According to Wichman et al., (2002), colours function as a powerful information channel tot he human cognitive system and has been found to play a significant role in enhancing memory performance. The SVA rule has two groups of subjects that needed to be paid attention when choosing the correct verb form.

## 8. Methods

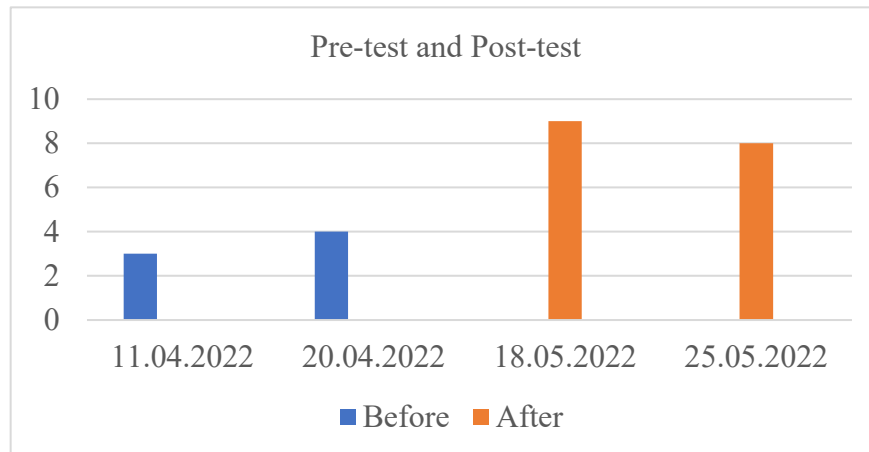
This study is a qualitative research to investigate the use of colour coded hand gloves in improving Year 3 pupils usage of subject-verb agreement rule in writing simple sentence. The data collecting method were from pre-test and post-test, observations and a survey questionnaire. Pre-test was conducted before the used of intervention in the teaching and learning process. It is used to discover the problem and the number of pupils that were unable to achieve the learning objectives. After incorporating the intervention in the teaching and learning process, post-test was used to measure the level of successfulness of the intervention. This is to monitor whether the colour coded gloves are able to improve pupils' understanding and their writing skill. Observation method was also used during the implementation of the intervention to observe pupils' attention span and participation during the learning process. The observation was done before the intervention which is while using the old method in teaching and learning then compared with when using the new method. A survey questionnaire was also conducted to know pupils' feelings and thoughts upon using the intervention in the learning process. All 11 pupils were given the questionnaire and their respond were recorded. The questionnaire was adapted to pupils' level of understanding and styles. The feedback only require pupils to respond using two types of emoticon which are smile face emoticon to indicate positive feedback and sad face emoticon to indicate negative feedback.

## 9. Results and Discussion

The pupils' improvement from pre-test and post-test were recorded into a table. The number of pupils increase from 3 and 4 pupils during the pre-test to 8 and 7 pupils in post-test which are filling in the blank using the correct verb form and writing five simple sentences with correct SVA rule. The simple sentence here refers to present tense and consists of subject and object sentence pattern. Pictures are provided as to guide them in writing. In the making of the hand gloves, pupils participate actively especially in cutting and placing the subjects paper

strips on the fingers. Before post-test, pupils practised using the hand gloves that they made in the classroom. They played games in group of four and five and completed 2 sets of worksheets by referring to the hand gloves. Then, post-test was given and pupils completed it without the presence of the gloves to test their memory and the usage of the SVA rule.

Figure 1 : Pre-test and post-test result



During the observation, pupils showed positive and active participation in the teaching and learning process. Pupils were more focused and showed interest in the learning process and activities conducted in the classroom. Learning with the presence of the gloves attracted their attention and initiated cooperation among the pupils during groupwork. The gloves were convenient for the pupils to refer at anytime. Based on the questionnaire, all pupils were happy and gave good feedbacks regarding the use of the colour coded hand gloves. The SVA rule is no longer a difficult set of rule in writing simple sentences for the pupils.

## 10. Conclusion

Creativity in delivering knowledge to the young learners is a skill that will determine whether the learning process will be fun and meaningful or difficult to learn. Pupils at a very young age learnt better through hands-on activity and knowledge relatable to their real life experience. Learning English as a second language has already been difficult for some pupils, thus teachers play an important role to create an engaging and attractive teaching and learning process or activities for the pupils. Pupils' interest must be taken into consideration when designing teaching aids and activities in the classroom. I believe that with continuous self-improvement in teaching and learning techniques and resources, teachers will be able to achieve many successful teaching and learning experience with their pupils.

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# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MIND MAPPING IN ESL WRITING: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY WITH MIX-METHOD APPROACH.

Dusshantini Sivaraman<sup>1</sup> and Siti Maheen Sharqy Sheikh Mohd Taufik<sup>2</sup>

*Sekolah Kebangsaan Undang Jelebu*

[dusshantinisivaraman@gmail.com](mailto:dusshantinisivaraman@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Writing is the essential part in ESL learning, and it is known as the toughest skill to master. Mastering writing skills allows pupils to obtain new vocabulary and understand sentence structures in constructing sentences and writing texts (Bello, 1997). Moreover, Jusun and Md Yunus (2018) clearly justified that writing is the most crucial and difficult skill to be taught and understood in the ESL classroom, especially in rural schools with little technology. Hence traditional methods of teaching writing skills are still impactful and significant in ESL teaching. Hence, this experimental study with a mixed method approach was designed to identify the significance of using mind mapping in ESL writing classrooms. 90 Level 2 pupils from a primary government school in Jelebu district participated in this study. This research used a questionnaire and interviews to collect data. Quantitative data was analyzed with Microsoft Excel while the qualitative data utilised Nvivo11 and word clouds. 98% of the pupils and teachers found that using mind mapping techniques in ESL classrooms is significant. Overall, this study benefits language learners, teachers and students and future researchers in the field of writing.

**Keywords:** Mind mapping, writing skills, language, acceptance, significance

## 1.Introduction

Conquering writing skills allow pupils to obtain new vocabularies and understand sentence structures (Bello, 1997). Moreover, (Jusun and Md Yunus, 2018, p.470) clearly justified that writing is the most crucial and difficult skill to be taught and understood in ESL classroom, especially in rural schools with no advance technology, hence traditional methods of teaching writing is still impactful and significant in ESL teaching and one of it is by using mind maps. Furthermore, the first language (L1) influences also plays an important role in learning or improving writing skills (Hundarenko, 2019).

## 2.Problem Statement

Teaching writing skills to the Level 2 pupils is quite challenging for ESL teachers at Sekolah Kebangsaan Undang Jelebu, Kuala Klawang (SKUJ). Based on the researchers' observation for the past six months, it is understood that the pupils are facing difficulties in writing an essay, short paragraphs, summaries or even short sentences. The culture and the first language (L1) interference also contribute to this issue in English as second language (L2) writing skills learning among the pupils. During the observation, the researcher noticed that pupils tend to do direct translation from L1 to L2 in writing essays. Moreover, according to Odlin (1989, 2003), Ringbom (1992), Benson (2002) and R.Ellis (2008), this is called as 'negative transfer' where it obstruct the L2 acquisition and in contrast it also allow pupils to realize the errors and make improvement with proper guidance and teaching techniques from teachers. Thus, the mind mapping strategy may positively influence the pupils' writing performance..

### 3. Research Purpose

This study aims to identify the significance of using mind map techniques as the main teaching method for ESL writing skills to Level 2 pupils at SKUJ with the hope this study will contribute towards teaching methods for future teaching and research.

### 4. Research Objective

- a) Are there any significant differences after using the mind mapping strategies in ESL writing class?
- b) What are the ESL teachers' perceptions of using mind maps in writing class?

### 5. Related Literature

According to Kepner (1991), pupils practise writing skills in classrooms and often make errors in spellings, grammar and lack of ideas, also having difficulties in finding new ideas. Thus, Kepner (1991) suggested that additional guidance should be provided to pupils in order to improve their writing skills, which is the ability to construct sentences. Although there are many ways to improve the pupils' writing skills such as using technologies, story books and dictionaries, yet, the most efficient way is mind mapping. Many past studies and the scholars (Buzan, 2006; Lee, 2010; Budd, 2004, Ahangari & Behzady, 2011) suggested that mind mapping is a traditional way and also the best in teaching writing skills. Moving back to the 70s, Ausubel (1978) explained that mind map functions as eloquent knowledge and the idea of mind map helps the learners to understand the process easily when they digest the new ideas from the existing knowledge or the researchers called it as cognitive process. Furthermore, different studies in supporting Ausubel, Woolfolk (1987) described that the highly significant component stressed the learning is when the learners already have the background knowledge, while in contrast Weinstein and Mayer (1986) debated that learners only process the externally received knowledge and organized them accordingly based on current processing.

Based on Buzan's (2002), mind map is the most convenient route to gather information and to process the ideas. Moreover, Buzan described that the mind map helps the learners to be more creative in mapping out their ideas. In addition, Howitt (2009) and Buzan (2002) mentioned that mind map functions as a graphical implementation where the students can utilize and produce thoughts, note writing and develop ideas. In the current ESL classroom, mind mapping is widely in use as a main strategy while in certain places it is drowning. Furthermore, in the past, many scholars (Canas, 2007; Derbentseva, 2007; McGriff, 2007; Oxford 1992) have written their positive views on the significance of mind mapping in improving learners' writing skills. This works as the most effective teaching strategies then and now.

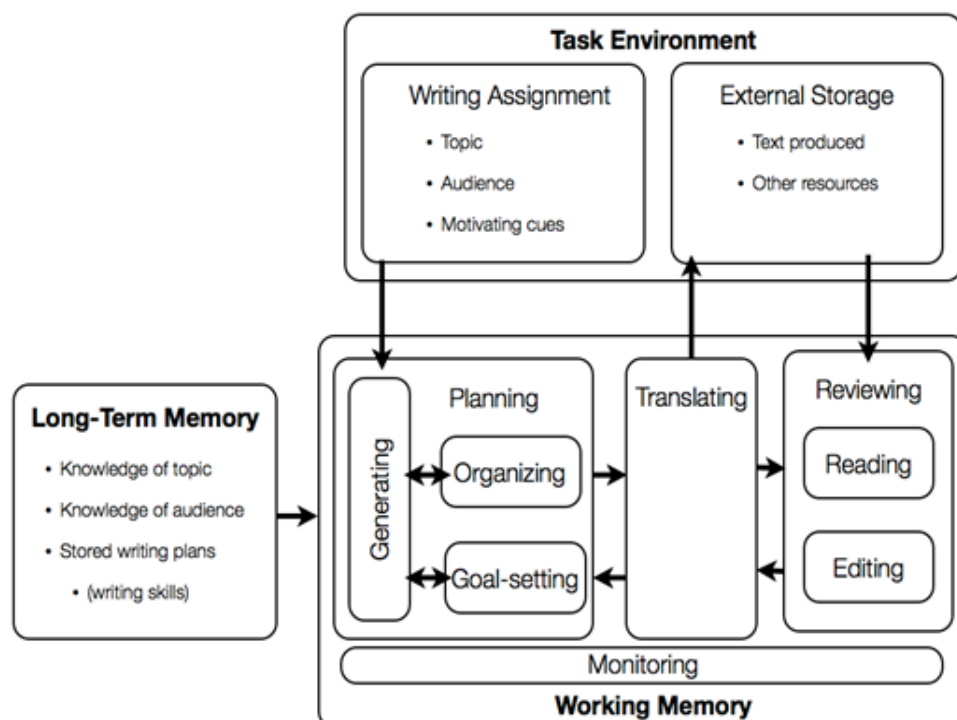
*Table 1: The empirical evidence of the importance of mind map*

Year & Authors	Samples & Instruments	Findings
<b>Rahmah (2017)</b>	52 eighth grade students – use written test analytical rubric scoring (pretest & posttest)	Found that the mind map strategy on descriptive text improved after using the mind map in the classroom.
<b>Ristwanto (2016)</b>	43 junior high school students – use observation,	Found that mind map positively impacted students

	questionnaire and test to collect data.	in improving their writing skills in writing tests.
<b><i>Budiono, Degeng, Ardhana &amp; Suyitno (2016)</i></b>	64 private school students – use short essays and questionnaires	Found that students improved the short story writing skills upon utilizing mind map strategy.
<b><i>Saed &amp; Al-Qamari (2014)</i></b>	91 eleventh grade Jordan female students – use questionnaires, interviews and writing test	Found that students are able to write good summary writing and transfer meanings after using the mind map strategy

This study employed Cognitive Process theory of writing. Writing is a reasoning interaction where it involves the thinking process. To compose, an author needs to utilize the psychological cycle, for example, conceptualizing, arranging and putting together and it involves creativity. Along these lines, the mental writing process means to train learners to utilize mental handling in creating a writing piece. This theory is more famous than other writing related theories as it has many advantages. Moreover this theory has been developed to identify how the guidance from external helps in writing skills for students. Students are encouraged to think and process their ideas before generating a writing piece. Moreover, cognitive process theory also helps students in eliciting their background knowledge before writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981). In conjunction to that, this theory is adapted to the current studies to connect between mind map and cognitive process in producing a writing piece.

*Diagram 1 : Cognitive process theory of writing*





## 6.Methods

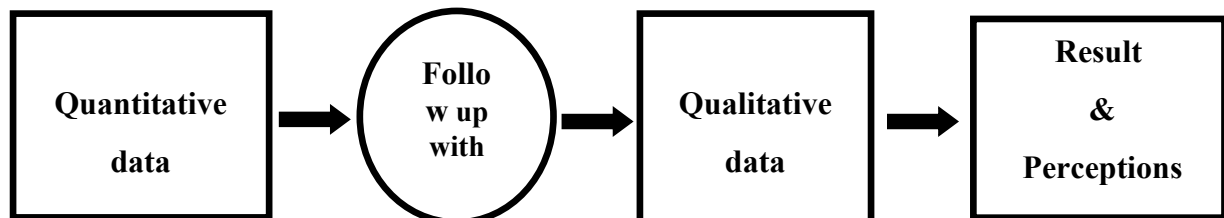
This study was conducted at one of the primary schools at Kuala Klawang, Jelevu district with multiracial population. 95% of the pupils are Malays and the remaining 5% are Indians. The school uses Bahasa Malaysia as the first language and English as the second language, thus the main medium of instruction is the national language, Bahasa Malaysia. This study employed cluster sampling where it is a method for groups of participants to represent the same people and be included in the sample (Jackson, S.L, 2011). A total of 90 Year 5 pupils are chosen from Sekolah Kebangsaan Undang Jelevu (Sekolah Kluster Kecemerlangan), Kuala Klawang. The table below shows the sampling details.

*Table 2: Samples*

Year 5 Arif	30 pupils
Year 5 Bijak	30 pupils
Year 5 Cekap	30 pupils

This study used quasi-experimental design with a mix method approach. To identify the possible effects and causes between dependent and independent variables, quasi-experimental was used (Creswell, 2011). It was functional due to the exact educational setting that took place where the task was done in a real classroom setting and involved pretest and posttest. Furthermore, in this design, quantitative data were collected first before gathering the qualitative data. The follow up helped the researcher to elaborate better on the results. According to Creswell & Plano Clerk (2011), this design is called a two phase model where the idea of collecting step by step data will guide the research to be more analytical and explains the major concerned issue. The diagram below shows the research design of this study.

*Diagram 2: Research design*



Pre-test and post-tests were provided equally for the three groups where the first essay topic was administered for the pre-test and the same essay topic was administered for the post-test after 3 weeks. Moreover, in between three mind mapping and essay writing were given to the treatment group. The essay topics and lessons were reviewed and verified by two English subject experts before administered. The table below shows the data collection method of the study.

*Table 3: Data collection method*

Group	Test	Treatment	Test
<b>Year 5 Arif (Experimental group)</b>	Pre-test (essay writing)	Mind-mapping before writing task (3 mind-maps)	Post – test (essay writing)

<b>Year 5 Bijak (Controlled group)</b>	Pre-test (essay writing)	Common treatment Picture based writing	Post – test (essay writing)
<b>Year 5 Cekap (Controlled group)</b>	Pre-test (essay writing)	Common treatment Picture based writing	Post – test (essay writing)

A questionnaire was administered for the first research question. The researcher adapted the questionnaire from the past studies (Wilson, 2016). Questions in the questionnaire have been adjusted according to the age level of the participants. A total of 10 questions were listed in the questionnaire. A pilot study for this research was conducted successfully and no faults were identified and protocols were followed. Next, the interview questions were used to gather the perceptions from the ESL teachers. The researcher set open-ended questions that focus on the second research question. Since there are only 6 ESL teachers working at the school, the researcher chose a one-to-one interview to gather data on the perceptions of applying the mind-map techniques.

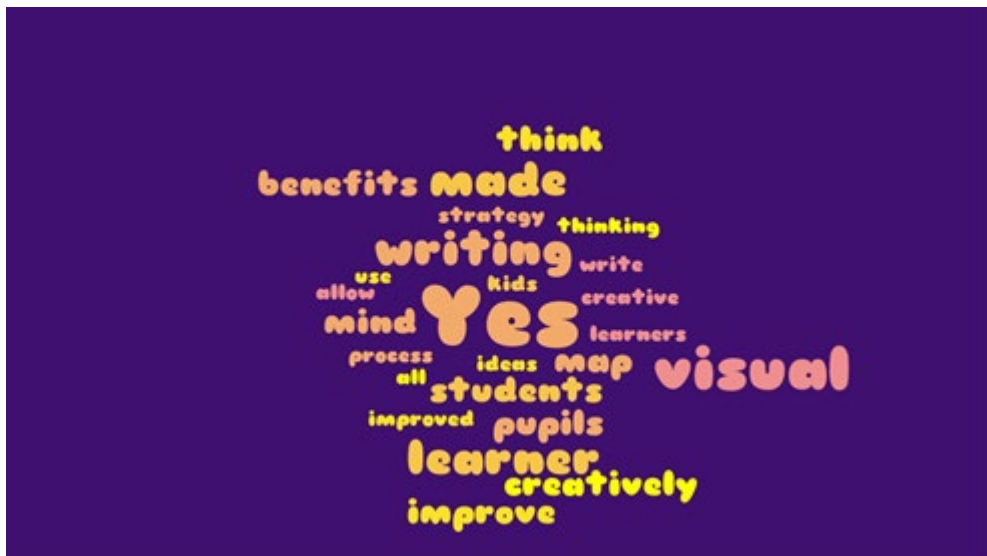
## 7. Discussion & Results

The table below shows the percentages result for the first proposed research question. The percentages data were generated using Microsoft Excel 2011.

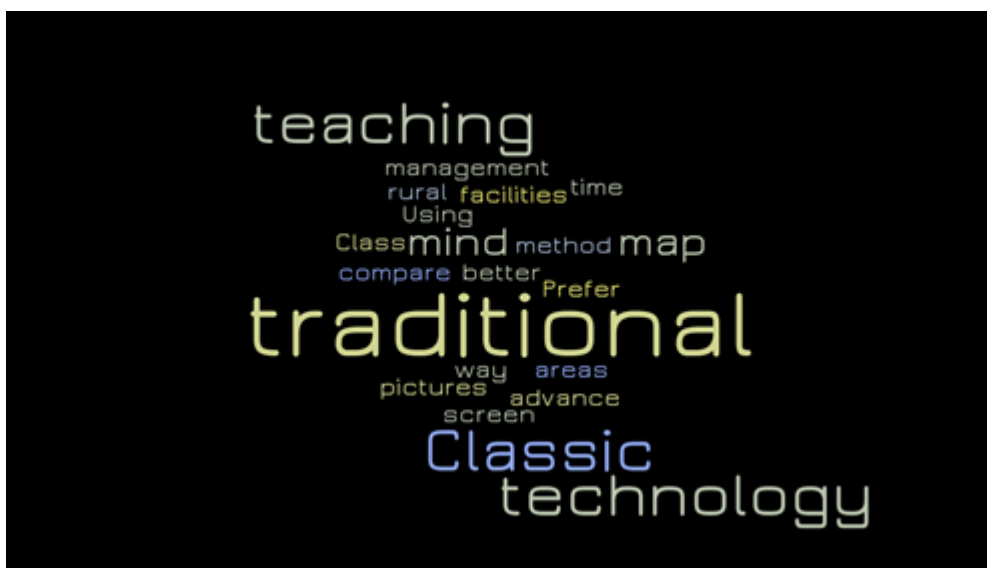
*Table 3: Results*

Questions	Strongly Agree-3	Maybe Agree-2	Disagree-1
<b>Q1</b>	95%	4%	1%
<b>Q2</b>	98%	1%	1%
<b>Q3</b>	96%	3%	1%
<b>Q4</b>	95%	4%	1%
<b>Q5</b>	94%	5%	1%
<b>Q6</b>	93%	6%	1%
<b>Q7</b>	95%	5%	0%
<b>Q8</b>	97%	3%	0%
<b>Q9</b>	98%	2%	0%
<b>Q10</b>	98%	2%	0%

Based on the first interview question, “As an ESL teacher, do you think using mind mapping strategies in ESL classrooms benefits the pupils? Why?”, 100% of the ESL teachers at SKUJ agreed that mind mapping technique is highly effective for the pupils especially the visual learners by allowing them to think critically and be creative.

*Image 1: Responses*

Based on the second interview questions, “As an ESL teacher in a rural area, which teaching method do you prefer; using technology or traditional teaching methods of mind mapping?” 95% of the ESL teachers preferred the traditional way of teaching in rural areas compared to 5% of the ESL teachers who preferred to use technology as well.

*Image 2: Responses*

Based on the third interview question, “Mind mapping techniques help pupils to build confidence in pupils to produce better and improved writing pieces. Agree? And why?” 98% of the ESL teachers strongly agreed that mind mapping techniques helped pupils in building their confidence in generating new ideas for their writing, hence making the pupils write better.

Image 3: Responses



Throughout the treatment for the experimental group, pupils remarkably show the changes after using the mind map before writing the essay. This is proven that mind mapping does assist learners to improve their ESL writing skills. Apart from this, the experimental group is also able to construct new sentences using advanced vocabularies, proverbs and also idioms. Meanwhile, the controlled groups showed no significant differences in ESL writing due to no mind maps treatment. Buzan (2002) justified that mind maps are worth for brainstorming either for individual or group activities, mind maps are helpful for summarizing and note taking task, mind maps are significant to identify the complex problems through critical thinking and mind maps are positive in stimulating eloquent learning process rather than just normal (Buzan, 2002). Sturm, Rankin and Erickson (2002) also explained that mind mapping before the writing can enhance learners to be more conscious in what they are soon to write and be more organized. Thus, all these past studies support the current study in identifying the significance of mind mapping.

## 8. Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to identify the significance of using mind map techniques as the main teaching method for ESL writing skills and this study successfully achieved the objective. The overall findings of this study shows that pupils prefer to use mind mapping techniques before writing essays and the ESL teachers preferred the implementation of mind mapping techniques in the ESL writing classrooms. This study is relevant for all the ESL teachers and also other foreign language teachers and learners, thus this study benefits all the language learners who target to improve their writing skills.

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# VOCABULARY PASSPORT FOR HEARING IMPAIRED PUPILS

**Dliyana anak John**

*SK Pendidikan Khas Sibu*

[g-00002322@moe-dl.edu.my](mailto:g-00002322@moe-dl.edu.my)

## Abstract

In Malaysia, special education schools for the hearing impaired pupils share the same curriculum and syllabus as mainstream schools. English is taught as a second language at the school. Learning two languages at the school is often seen as a challenging task for the hearing impaired pupils as they perceive words as pictures. Unlike pupils with hearing, learning vocabulary for the hearing impaired pupils is a visual task rather than an audio task. Mixing up Malay and English vocabulary is common among the hearing impaired pupils. Nonetheless, mastery of English language is essential for the pupils as English is the international common tongue. Grasping English vocabulary is the first step to mastering other skills of the language. Studies show that hearing impaired pupils possess shorter sequential memory spans as compared to pupils with hearing. Vocabulary Passport is a learning aid to help the pupils memorize and retain the vocabulary that they have learned in the classroom. This learning aid is produced by the pupils during their Language Arts class. As Vocabulary Passport is the routine task for the pupils in every English lesson, it can be used as evidence for classroom-based assessment. Early findings show that the participants appear to be more motivated and enthusiastic in learning English vocabulary on a daily basis. It is recommended that the use of Vocabulary Passport be extended to higher primary schools for the hearing impaired pupils.

Keywords: vocabulary passport, hearing impaired, English

## 1. Introduction

A person is said to have hearing loss if they are not able to hear as well as someone with normal hearing, meaning hearing thresholds of 20 dB or better in both ears (World Health Organization, 2022). In general, hearing impairment refers to hearing difficulty ranging from mild to severe. Hearing impairment can affect individuals of all ages. The Ministry of Health implements a program named Universal Neonatal Hearing Screening Program as an initiative to screen newborns who are as young as 1 month old for hearing loss. Children who are diagnosed with hearing impairment from an early age are given many forms of early interventions. These early interventions are vitals to ensure that the children get sufficient support to overcome their hearing impairment. As causes and degree of hearing loss of each individual is different, interventions that are provided also vary from one individual to another. For instance, an individual with severe to profound hearing loss might be recommended to opt for cochlear implant to send sound signals directly to the hearing nerve. The same intervention might not be appropriate for an individual with moderate hearing loss as the procedure is considered to be invasive. A successful intervention depends on the appropriateness of the early interventions and the family support of the children. Early interventions are provided to the children until they reach their school age which is 4 or 5 years old. As Malaysia is one of the countries that uphold the value of 'Education for All', hearing impaired children are provided with equal right in education ensuring that each child of hearing impairment has access to basic

quality education. In 2020, a total number of 3,829 hearing impaired pupils were registered in the 28 national special primary schools all across Malaysia. They share the same curriculum as the normal pupils with additional sign language in the textbook. In 2016, Malaysia adopted the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for English subject in all national schools. All primary school pupils are expected to achieve the minimum of A2 by the end of their primary schooling. Hearing impaired pupils encounter difficulty learning language skills.

Thus, this leads to this intervention using ‘Vocabulary Passport’ to consolidate the pupils’ vocabulary knowledge before they are able to use the language for other skills. The aim of this action research is to use ‘Vocabulary Passport’ as an intervention to strengthen the pupils’ memory to learn new vocabulary throughout the year. This research also aims to help the researcher to generate more knowledge and information about the participants.

Following the above, the study looks into the following research questions:

- (a) To what extent does Vocabulary Passport strengthen the retention of new vocabulary learned by the hearing impaired pupils?
- (b) What new knowledge and information that the researcher learned about the participants?

## **2. Related Literature**

### **2.1 Vocabulary Acquisition**

In recent years, Malaysia has adopted the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) as a framework for English language teaching, learning and assessment. English subject syllabus used in national schools is thus restructured to ensure its alignment with the CEFR. Teaching and learning of vocabulary is highlighted in the new syllabus with a wordlist that is created to guide the teachers and learners throughout the learning process. For Year 2 pupils, they are not expected to learn all the words by heart, or to spell all of them with 100% accuracy, as complete accuracy in spelling is above A1 targets in the CEFR. The teachers are allowed to select words from the wordlist that they consider as appropriate for the pupils’ level and learning context. Selection of words to be taught to the pupils should be done conscientiously to ensure that the learning is contextual to the pupils’ routine.

Vocabulary is an important focus of literacy teaching and refers to the knowledge or words, including their structure (morphology), use (grammar), meanings (semantics), and links to other words (word/semantic relationships) (Victoria State Government, 2019). Learning of new vocabulary provides the pupils with new knowledge and information. Vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication (Mofareh Alqahtani, 2015); without its appropriate and sufficient knowledge on vocabulary, learners cannot understand others or express their own feelings (Rodrigo, 2016). Before the learner can engage in other language skills activities, they need to grasp the vocabulary that is related to the topic. Regardless of the degree of learners’ competence in grammar and pronunciation, without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, they cannot have effective communication (Min, 2013). The more frequent the exposure to vocabulary is, the more learners are confident in understanding and interpreting the meaning of some unknown words from context (Schmitt, Wun-Ching & Garras, 2011). Therefore, teachers must emphasize on exposing more meaningful vocabulary to the pupils to ensure the usage of the vocabulary is relevant to their environment. The vocabulary is stored in the memory as the result of the individual's experience (Güleryüz, 2002). Every word is placed in the human mind as a concept (Özkırmılı, 1994).

## 2.2 Learning Style of Hearing Impaired Pupils

Learning style generally refers to the natural mechanism adopted by an individual in order to process new information that is presented to them in the most effective way. Ellis (1985), described a learning style as the more or less consistent way in which a person perceives, conceptualizes, organizes and recalls information. According to Dunn and Dunn Model (1990), learning style is a biological and developmental set of personal characteristics that makes the identical instruction effective for some students and ineffective for others.

As for the hearing impaired pupils, their learning style is often assumed to be visual. Deaf individuals' reliance on vision is the frequent suggestion that deaf students, and especially those who use sign language rather than spoken language, are likely to be visual learners (Marschark & Hauser, 2012). In contrast, the parents and teachers of children with hearing impairment found that 60 % of their children with hearing impairment preferred auditory, 7% of children with hearing impairment preferred 'visual' and 33% of children with hearing impairment preferred a combination of 'auditory-visual-kinesthetic' and 'visual-kinesthetic' as their learning style (Shah & Gathoo, 2017). This is due to the fact that over 40 % of the 110 deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) children had one or more vision-related abnormalities (Guy, et al, 2003).

## 3. Methods

This action research adopted O'Leary's model (2004, p.141). This model recognizes that the research may take shape in the classroom as knowledge emerges from the teacher's observations. O'Leary highlights the need for action research to be focused on situational understanding and implementation of action, initiated organically from real-time issues (Clark, Porath, Thiele & Jobe, 2020).

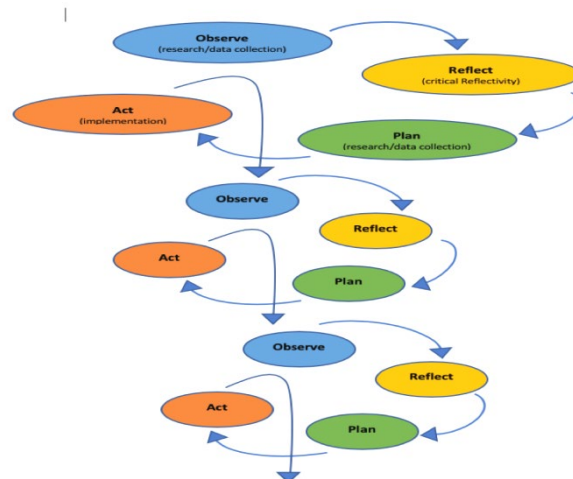


Figure 1. O'Leary's Model

The action research was initiated when the researcher observed the participants' learning process in the classroom. The researcher then reflected upon the observation. The reflection led to the planning of the action to be carried out as the intervention for the issue at hand. The intervention was then put into action. The researcher observed the process of the intervention again and reflected upon the observation. The researcher made adjustments to the plan based on the reflection. Then, the researcher carried out the revised plan for the intervention.

This action research was conducted in a special school in Sibul. Three pupils from Year 2 were selected to be the participants in the action research. All the participants have profound hearing loss. Two participants are average achiever and one participant is low achiever in academic performance.

The observation and other assessment made by the researcher found that the participants encountered difficulty remembering words that they have learned previously. ‘Vocabulary Passport’ is an intervention used to help the participants to memorize the words that they have learned from the Supermind textbook for a long time. This action research was executed from May 2022 until July 2022.

As the name implies, ‘Vocabulary Passport’ is a small notebook with a red cover page imitating the real passport. The content of Vocabulary Passport is a series of concrete nouns that are selected from Supermind. In each sheet, there is the word, its picture and its sign language. At the back of the sheet, the teacher would stamp the date just as the real passport when the participants were able to spell the word correctly. This Vocabulary Passport is a part of the classroom routine as the participants would queue up to stamp their passports before the lesson begins. The teacher would only stamp the words that the participants spelled correctly. If the participants were not able to spell the words correctly, they were allowed to refer to the passport. In each lesson, the teacher would randomly select a word from the passport to assess the pupils. The teacher would sign (read) the word and the participants would have to spell the words and explain the definition of the word. At the end of each topic in the textbook, the teacher would assess the passport and select the most stamped passport to provide the reward.

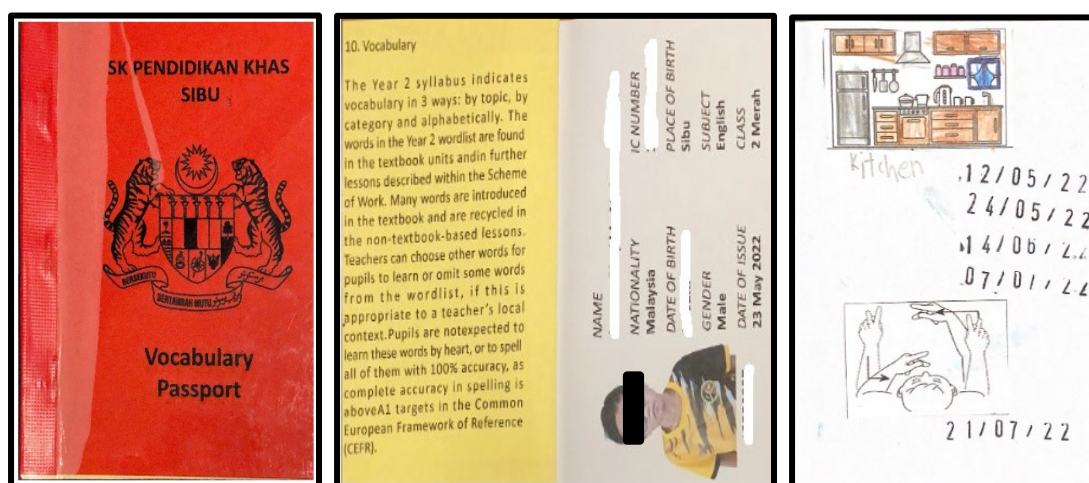


Figure 2. Vocabulary Passport

This research is qualitative research. Data is collected through naturalistic observation of the participants behaviour during the intervention using Vocabulary Passport. A checklist is also used to record the words that can be memorized by the participants and vice versa.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

##### 4.1 Vocabulary Retention

The total number of words taught by the teacher throughout the 3 months period was 12. When the intervention was started in May, the participants were learning the vocabulary from Unit 5 of the Supermind textbook. The total number of words selected from the topic was seven. The

main goal was for the participants to memorize the spelling, sign language and the meaning of the seven words that were selected. Though there were many words taught for one topic, the researcher only focused on the seven words to be memorized by the participants. The checklists below show the results of the intervention for each participant.

*Table 1. Participant A's vocabulary checklist*

words date	house	kitchen	bedroom	bathroom	living room	dining room	stairs	spider	tiger	crocodile	lizard	snake	remark
10/5	√												
11/5	√												
12/5		√	√										
17/5	School activity												
18/5			√	√									
19/5					√	√							
24/5				√			√						
25/5					x	√							
26/5	√			x									
14/6		√				x							
15/6			x				√						
16/6		√			√								
21/6								√					
22/6								√					
23/6								√	√				
28/6									√	x			
29/6											√	√	
30/6	School activity												
5/7									√	√			
6/7	√			x									
7/7			x								√		
12/7		√								√			
13/7					√							√	
14/7						√					√		
19/7							√					√	
20/7			√							√			
21/7					√					√			

*Table 2. Participant B's vocabulary checklist*

words date	house	kitchen	bedroom	bathroom	living room	dining room	stairs	spider	tiger	crocodile	lizard	snake	remark
10/5	√												
11/5	√												
12/5		√	√										
17/5	School activity												
18/5			√	√									
19/5					√	√							
24/5		√					√						
25/5			√	√									
26/5					√		√						

14/6		√		x	√								
15/6	√				√								
16/6						√	√						
21/6								√					
22/6								√					
23/6								√	√				
28/6									√	√			
29/6											√	√	
30/6	School activity												
5/7									√	√			
6/7			√			√							
7/7		√								√			
12/7	√											√	
13/7				√					√				
14/7			√					√					
19/7					√						x		
20/7			√								√		
21/7		√						√					

Table 3. Participant C's vocabulary checklist

words date	house	kitchen	bedroom	bathroom	living room	dining room	stairs	spider	tiger	crocodile	lizard	snake	remark
10/5	√												
11/5	√												
12/5		x	x										
17/5	School activity												
18/5				x	x								
19/5						x	√						
24/5			x		√								
25/5		x					x						
26/5		√				√							
14/6			x		√								
15/6				x		√							
16/6			x	x									
21/6								√					
22/6								√					
23/6								√	√				
28/6									√	x			
29/6											x	x	
30/6	School activity												
5/7										√	x		
6/7							√	√					
7/7				√								√	
12/7					√						√		
13/7	√									√			
14/7		√								√			
19/7			√								√		
20/7						√			√				

21/7				x								√	
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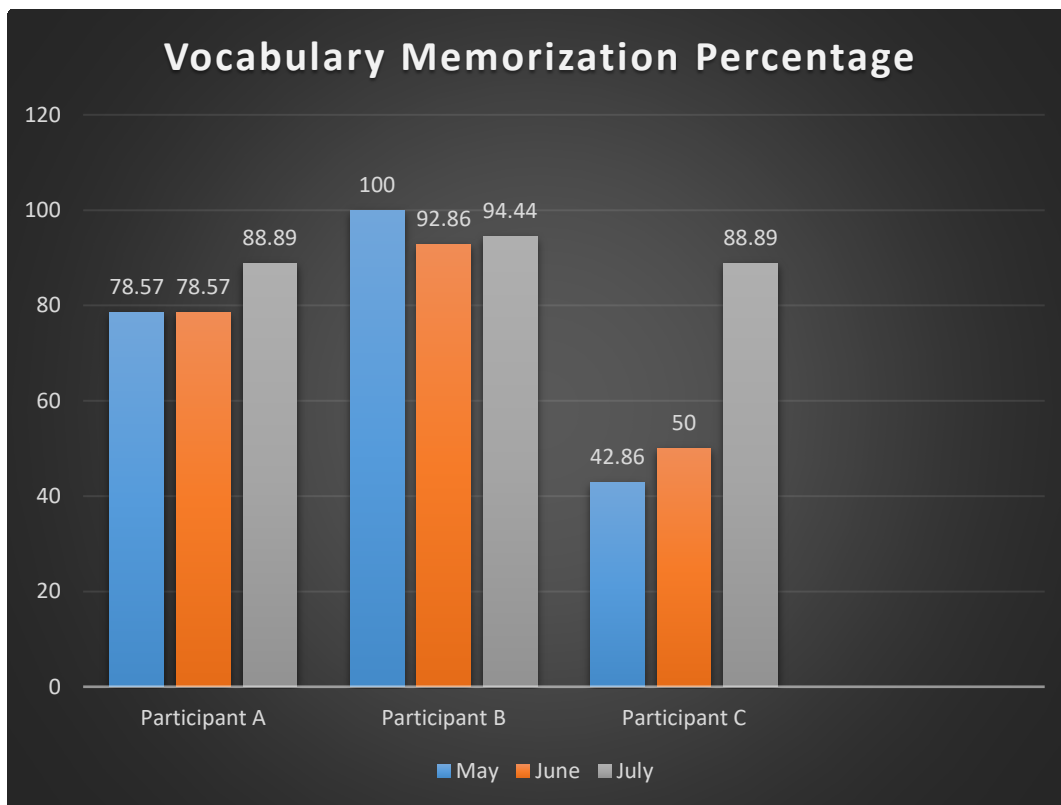


Figure 3. The percentage of vocabulary memorized by the participants for 3 months

Figure 3 shows the percentage of vocabulary that can be memorized by the participants over the three months. Participant A is an average achiever. In May, when the researcher introduced the new words to the participants, Participant A managed to memorize 78.57% of the total words. In June, the researcher started to introduce new words from a new topic in the Supermind textbook. Participant A still managed to memorize 78.57% of the total words. In July, Participant A managed to memorize 88.89% of the total words. The result shows that the intervention using Vocabulary Passport has a positive impact on Participant A's memory retention of the words that she/he has learned.

In May, Participant B managed to memorize all the words that she/he has learned. However, in June, when the researcher introduced new words from a new topic, the percentage of the words memorized by the participant dropped to 92.86%. In July, the percentage of the words that can be memorized by Participant B increased to 94.44%. The result shows that the intervention using Vocabulary Passport has a positive impact on Participant B's memory retention of the words that she/he has learned.

Participant C is a low achiever in the classroom. In May, when the researcher started to introduce new words, she/he only managed to memorize 42.86% of the total words. In June, Participant C's achievement increased to 50%. In July, the percentage of the words that can be memorized by Participant C increased to 88.89%. The result shows that the intervention using Vocabulary Passport has a positive impact on Participant C's memory retention of the words that she/he has learned.



In summary, the intervention using Vocabulary Passport has a positive impact on the participants' vocabulary acquisition. All the participants show improvement in terms of their memory retention of the words that they learned over the period of three months. In July, the participants generally still managed to memorize the sign language, spelling and meaning of the words that they have learned since May.

#### 4.2 Observation about Participants

Naturalistic observation that was conducted by the researcher showed that all three participants were motivated and enthusiastic in learning English vocabulary through the use of Vocabulary Passport. This can be seen from their efforts to memorize the words that they have learned from each lesson.

The participants also showed excitement and enthusiasm every time the researcher started the lesson with stamping their Vocabulary Passport. These emotions reflect active participation of the pupils. The participants' engagement is important to ensure the intervention is able to help them in learning new English vocabulary.

#### 4.3 Discussion

Based on the overall results, intervention using Vocabulary Passport helps the pupils with hearing impairment memorize the words that they have learned better.

*Research question 1: To what extent does Vocabulary Passport strengthen the retention of new vocabulary learned by the hearing impaired pupils?*

The result shows that all participants exhibit improvement in memorizing the words that they have learned. In May, the number of words that were introduced to them was 7. In June, another 5 words were introduced to them, making the total number of 12 words. In July, there were no new words introduced. The participants were assessed based on the 12 words that they have learned from May to June.

Participant A showed no improvement for the first 2 months learning the vocabulary through Vocabulary Passport. This is because the participant was still figuring out the way this intervention works. This is common among the hearing impaired pupils. They require more time to learn and adapt to every environment. In the third month, Participant A showed improvement in memorizing the words that have been learned. This proves that long-term use of Vocabulary Passport strengthens the participant's memory of the words that she/he has learned. When this intervention has become the routine in the English lesson, the participant studies the words more frequently, thus strengthening her/his memory's of the words.

Participant B showed excellent results for the first month. She/he managed to memorize all 7 words that were introduced to her/him. However, the result shows a slight decrease of 7.14% for the second month. This happened when the researcher introduced 5 more words to the existing 7 words in the Vocabulary Passport. The increment in the number of words makes it more challenging for the participant to memorize all the words. The participant showed improvement in the third month. This shows that the participant was able to memorize the words better with the help of Vocabulary Passport in their learning process.

Participant C is a low achiever. At the end of the first month, Participant C only managed to memorize 42.86% of the total words. Participant C showed slight increment to 50% for the

second month. In the third month, Participant C managed to memorize 88.89% of the total words. This result is the most significant as it shows the effectiveness of using Vocabulary Passport intervention to help the hearing impaired pupils to memorize the words that they have learned more effectively.

Significant increment of the participants' ability to memorize the words has an implication. The implication is that learning through routine in the classroom makes the learning environment predictable. Young learners, especially hearing impaired pupils, have anxiety when it comes to learning new words. When they are being exposed to the words multiple times in a predictable environment, it makes learning more fun and at ease. This kind of learning environment creates a more effective learning outcome.

*Research question 2: What new knowledge and information that the researcher learned about the participants?*

Learning English vocabulary can be a challenging task for hearing impaired pupils as the auditory learning style is mostly preferred by the pupils. Hearing limitations caused the pupils to lose interest in learning vocabulary in general. Learning vocabulary conventionally in the classroom creates dull learning experiences among the pupils. Dull learning experience shortens the memory span of the pupils in learning the vocabulary. Using Vocabulary Passport as an intervention in the classroom creates new learning experiences for the pupils. This increases their interest in learning the vocabulary. Thus, they can learn and memorize the vocabulary easily.

The researcher learns that the participants responded positively towards the reward system that was introduced alongside the intervention. As young learners are different from the adult learners, tangible rewards can be encouraging and motivating for them in learning. Getting tangible rewards from their achievement is a form of extrinsic motivation that strengthens their willingness to learn in the classroom. The pupils will find learning to be fun thus they can learn better.

The participants showed competitive spirit while learning the vocabulary through Vocabulary Passport. They strive to memorize the words that they have learned because they want to get the reward. This kind of competitive spirit can facilitate a growth mindset. In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment (Dweck, 2015).

From this research, intervention that is paired with a reward system shows significant results to help the pupils to learn English vocabulary better. The pupils were motivated to learn the vocabulary in a fun and rewarding way. This implies that the researcher can pair the intervention that he/she plans with a reward system to instill both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

## **5. Limitation of the study**

Though Vocabulary Passport did noticeably help the hearing-impaired pupils to learn English Vocabulary more effectively in terms of their memory retention of the new words that they have learned, using this intervention in a longer term may cause boredom among the pupils. Therefore, modification should be done to the intervention in order to sustain its effectiveness

in helping the pupils to learn vocabulary. Modification can be done to the type of reward that is given to the pupils. Shortening the time for the reward can maintain the excitement among the pupils to learn and memorize the vocabulary that they have learned in the classroom.

However, as this intervention is paired with a reward system, the type of motivation that is involved in this intervention is more directed to extrinsic motivation. There have been issues with using extrinsic motivation to encourage the pupils to learn the language. However, as the participants in this study are young learners of 9 years old, extrinsic motivation is appropriate to be applied in the classroom to encourage their learning.

## 6. Conclusion

This action research is research that studies both the pupils' learning and the teacher's teaching practice. Using Vocabulary Passport as an intervention in the classroom helps the hearing-impaired pupils to learn new words in a more meaningful and fun way. This intervention also motivates the hearing-impaired pupils to learn English vocabulary. The teacher gains knowledge and information about her teaching practice as well as the pupils' learning interest. This information is beneficial for the teacher to plan her teaching in the future.

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# THE USE OF COMPUTERISED ANALYSIS IN ANALYSING THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF THE VOCABULARY IN MOTHERS' TALK

Wong De Yun

*University of Nottingham Malaysia*

[wongdy6894@gmail.com](mailto:wongdy6894@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Naturalistic mother-child interactions provide a high degree of authenticity to the richness of the lexicon of those interactions. Past studies established that the lexical richness (LR) of mothers' talk predicts their children's lexical development. However, language sample analysis that has a high degree of ecological validity requires extensive accuracy in coding and computation of the codes. This paper presents the methodology employed in utilizing a free access software, Computerized Language Analysis (CLAN) to analyse the LR of mothers' talk in 11 mother-child naturalistic interactions in monolingual English families, from the HSLLD corpora in CHILDES. The children were observed across the mean age of 3 to 4 years old. The LR matrices of mothers' talk were compared across 3 conditions: shared book reading with the Very Hungry Caterpillar; What Next, Baby Bear! and toy play. The quantity of LR in mothers' talk was measured as lexical density using CLAN's built-in VOCD command; and the quality of LR was measured as lexical sophistication using the WDLN command, and lexical density using the EVAL command. Using the Kruskal-Wallis analysis, my findings showed that the lexical density of mothers' talk was higher in shared book reading than in toy play interactions, but their lexical sophistication was higher in toy play than in shared book reading. The study concludes with implications in using CLAN to automatise the analysing of adult-child conversations in English, and the impact of books versus toy play on young children's exposure to the quality and quantity of LR in their environment.

**Keywords:** Computerised language analysis, vocabulary, lexical richness, mothers' talk, shared book reading

## 1. Introduction

Various studies had found that adults' language rich in words, grammatically complete and complex advances children's language development (Montag et al., 2015; Weisleder and Fernald, 2013). Shared book reading (SBR), of all adult-child interactional contexts, has been suggested to scaffold adults to use a higher quantity and quality of language input with children (Dawson et al., 2021; Montag et al., 2015, 2018). With existing research showing children's books to have higher LR compared to adult-child talk, this suggests a possible influence of LR in books on the talk surrounding books. However, this was yet to be studied. Similarly, Toy Play (TP) was also found to elicit high quality language from mothers (Salo et al., 2015). Therefore, TP will also be used in this study to represent spontaneous talk contexts.

Existing research of SBR and TP commonly utilises naturalistic interactions measured through Language Sample Analysis (LSA) (Finestack et al., 2020; Ratner and MacWhinney, 2016). However, several barriers might hinder the achievement of LSA with a high degree of ecological validity. This could be avoided by using computerised language analysis with the CLAN software (MacWhinney, 2000).

With the present research gap, this study aims to investigate the LR of mothers' talk (1) during SBR using books of different LR properties, and (b) between SBR and TP, with the CLAN software.

## 2. Related literature

To measure vocabulary quantity and quality in talk, a range of LR measures were often used (Dawson et al., 2021). This includes lexical diversity which measures the total quantity of lemmas, lexical sophistication measuring less frequently occurring words and lexical density measuring the amount of meaning-bearing words such as verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions.

## 3. Methods

The transcripts of 11 mother-child dyads during SBR and TP were taken from the HSLLD corpus in CHILDES (MacWhinney, 2000). The participants were low-income English-speaking families living within or around Boston, Massachusetts. The data was collected from home visit 1, with the mean age of children being 3 years old; and home visit 2, with the mean age of children being 4 years old. Mothers' talk from the following interactions was selected for analysis:

- Home Visit 1, where they engaged in
  - 1) SBR using the Very Hungry Caterpillar book, or SBR1 (VHC),
  - 2) TP, or TP1;
- Home Visit 2, where they engaged in
  - 3) SBR using the Very Hungry Caterpillar book, or SBR2 (VHC),
  - 4) SBR using the What Next, Baby Bear! book, or SBR2 (WNBB),
  - 5) TP, or TP2.

For data analysis, the calculation of LR was carried out using the CLAN software (MacWhinney, 2000). The lexical diversity (D value) was computed using the VOCD command in CLAN. The calculation required at least 50 utterances within the sample to plot the random-sampling TTR curve to match against the theoretical D coefficient to obtain a value of D (Durán et al., 2004; MacWhinney, 2000). This process was repeated three times to obtain an average D score as the final value.

Next, the lexical sophistication values were obtained by calculating the mean morphemes of the words within the transcripts, using the WDLN command. CLAN was able to automatically identify all the morphemes within the sample and calculate the mean morphemes.

The lexical density was calculated using the EVAL command. Before the calculation, the words had been automatically coded according to their word types using the MOR package. This command will then extract the total number of meaning-bearing words to be divided by the total number of words.

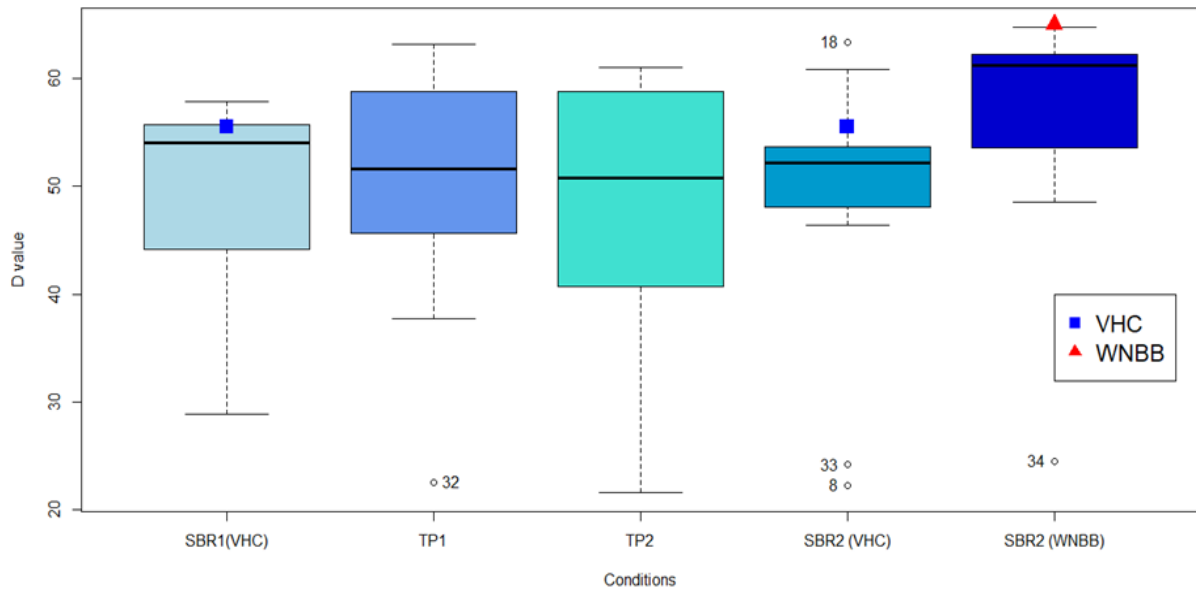
After obtaining the LR values, the R studio software (Rstudio Team, 2022) was utilised. The Kruskal-Wallis test and post-hoc Dunn test were adopted to calculate the differences between the descriptive statistics of the lexical score across all five conditions.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Differences of the LR in books and mothers' talk during SBR

Through this study, it was shown that complex measurements of lexical richness can be obtained via the use of computerised language analysis. The LR of the books were found to have no significant differences with mothers' talk across the SBR conditions, suggesting that the LR of books does not influence the LR of mothers' talk. Despite that, the LR value of mothers' talk was observed to increase during SBR using the book with the higher corresponding LR measure as observed in Figures 1, 2 and 3. Therefore, these findings will need to be further replicated with larger sample size.

Figure 1: Lexical diversity of mothers' talk across conditions



Note. The blue squares signify the lexical diversity value of VHC and the red triangle signifies the lexical diversity value of WNBB.

Figure 2: Lexical sophistication of mothers' talk across conditions

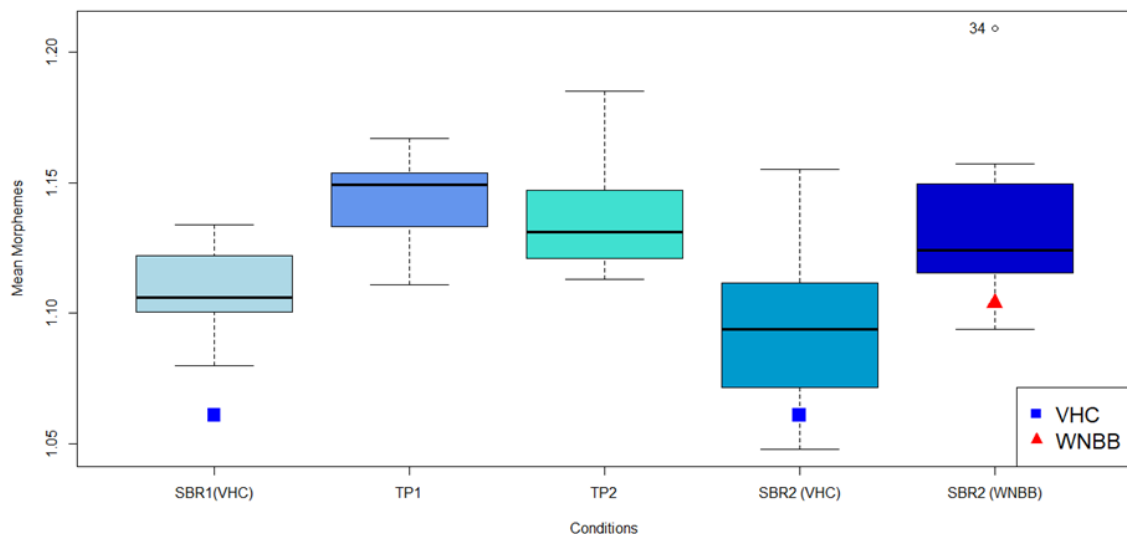
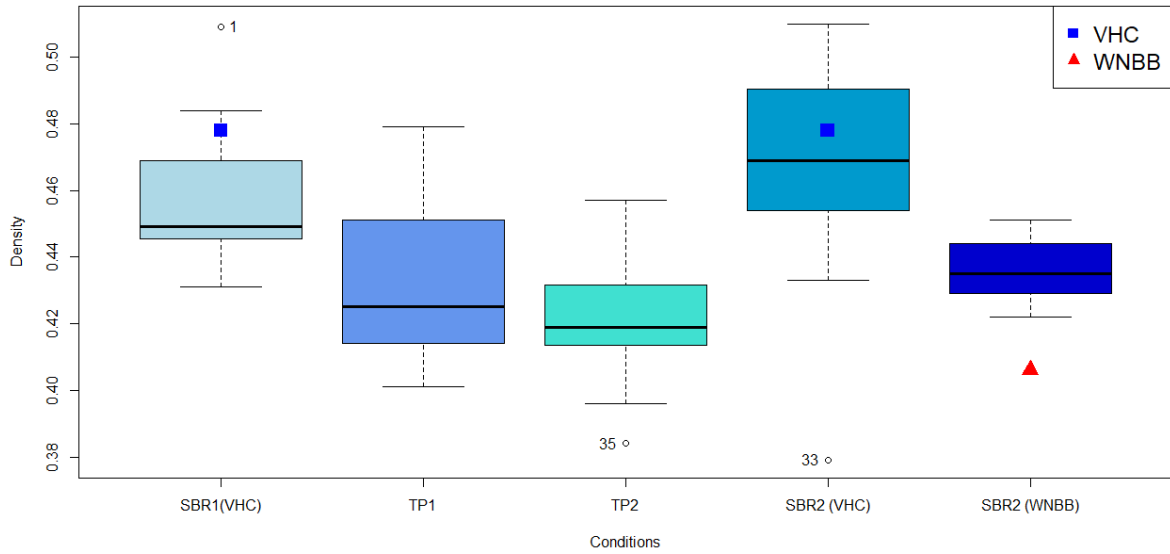




Figure 3: Lexical density of mothers' talk across conditions



#### 4.2 Differences of LR in mothers' talk during SBR and TP

When comparing LR of mothers' talk across 5 conditions, lexical diversity yield no significant difference. Whereas lexical sophistication,  $H(4) = 20.297, p = .001, \eta^2 = .204$ , and density,  $H(4) = 20.395, p = .001, \eta^2 = .205$ , showed significant differences.

The post-hoc Dunn test results showed that the lexical sophistication of mothers' talk was significantly higher in TP compared to SBR as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Dunn test results of lexical sophistication in mothers' talk across conditions

Conditions	z-value	p-value
TP1 ( $M = 1.143, SD = 0.019$ ) vs SBR1 (VHC) ( $M = 1.109, SD = 0.016$ )	-3.129	.016
TP1 ( $M = 1.143, SD = 0.019$ ) vs SBR2 (VHC) ( $M = 1.097, SD = 0.033$ )	-3.655	.003
TP2 ( $M = 1.136, SD = 0.021$ ) vs SBR2 (VHC) ( $M = 1.097, SD = 0.033$ )	-2.956	.025

Addressing the results, SBR was found to contain more lexically sophisticated words compared to spontaneous adult-child talk such as TP (Dawson et al., 2021; Montag et al., 2015, 2018). This unexpected finding might be due to TP not being constrained by the morphemic complexity of the books. The books, VHC and WNBB might be predictable texts containing repetitive language, plots and rhymes that lowered the lexical sophistication of talk during SBR (Dickinson et al., 2014).

As for lexical density, the post-hoc Dunn test showed mothers' talk to be significantly higher in lexical density during SBR compared to TP as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Dunn test results of lexical density in mothers' talk across conditions

Conditions	z-value	p-value
SBR2 (VHC) ( $M = 0.467$ , $SD = 0.037$ ) vs TP1 ( $M = 0.434$ , $SD = 0.025$ )	2.782	.043
SBR1 (VHC) ( $M = 0.459$ , $SD = 0.023$ ) vs TP2 ( $M = 0.421$ , $SD = 0.021$ )	3.314	.008
SBR2 (VHC) ( $M = 0.467$ , $SD = 0.037$ ) vs TP2 ( $M = 0.421$ , $SD = 0.021$ )	3.767	.002

The higher lexical density during SBR compared to TP was in line with existing research (Dawson et al., 2021; Montag et al., 2015, 2018). When comparing books and everyday talk between adult-child, books tend to have a higher number of meaning-bearing words such as nouns and adjectives. Since the talk in TP is spontaneous, it is also more likely to include function words (Massaro, 2015).

## 5. Conclusion

Overall, naturalistic language samples can provide rich data on the production of discrete language properties. The use of CLAN could help us effectively understand the process of English language use through these samples for research and classroom practices. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the role of texts in children's books is not as straightforward as the quality of their LR. SBR may elicit higher lexical density than TP, but TP elicited greater lexical sophistication in this study, suggesting different interactional contexts can promote different language learning opportunities (Salo et al., 2016). Additionally, the small sample size further challenged the results obtained. Further research is warranted to establish a better understanding of the findings obtained, particularly (1) the influence of the LR of books on the LR of mothers' or teachers' talk and (2) the LR of mothers' talk during SBR and TP.

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# SPEAKING PROFICIENCY OF NON-ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS; THE BARRIERS (A CASE STUDY AT MURIA KUDUS UNIVERSITY, INDONESIA)

Yulia Galuh Tantri<sup>1</sup>, Farid Noor Romadlon<sup>2,\*</sup> and Agung Dwi Nurcahyo<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Universitas Muria Kudus*

<sup>2</sup>*Universitas Muria Kudus*

<sup>3</sup>*Universitas Muria Kudus*

[\\*yuliagaluhantantri@gmail.com](mailto:yuliagaluhantantri@gmail.com) [\\*Farid.noor@umk.ac.id](mailto:Farid.noor@umk.ac.id) [\\*agung.dwi@umk.ac.id](mailto:agung.dwi@umk.ac.id)

## Abstract

For students in non-English departments, speaking is one of the more challenging English skills. This is necessary for students to understand in order to pronounce good and correct sentences. They need to learn a lot of vocabulary and how to pronounce it in order to produce a sentence. Students also need to have confidence in order to master speaking skills. The aim of this study is to describe the problems in speaking English and their causes based on the explanation provided above. The researcher also wants to know how to solve the problems of non-English speakers. Researchers used qualitative research in this study. The participants were students of the Indonesian language and literature Education Department in the eighth semester of Muria Kudus University. According to the study's findings, almost all students have linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties when speaking English. Lack of grammar, poor pronunciation and a lack of vocabulary are three common linguistic issues. Anxiety, shyness, and lack of confidence are non-linguistics. Low motivation, the habit and mother tongue, a lack of practice and opportunities, and a fear of making mistakes were the factors that contributed to the problem of speaking English in this study. Some ways to improve this are by listening to and singing English songs, watching English films with English subtitles, and using Google Translate to look up the meaning of difficult words and how to pronounce them. In addition, to improve their speaking skills, sometimes students also practice speaking in English with their friends or independently.

**Keywords:** Speaking English, Linguistic Problems, Non-linguistic Problems, Non-English students

## 1. Introduction

Language plays a crucial part in communication. A person can communicate his or her feelings and thoughts through language. A language is also a tool for international communication. International languages are used frequently in the present period to communicate a lot of information in all forms, both verbally and in writing. In this sense, the Indonesian government has required that English be one of the topics that all students, particularly those in higher education, must take. Students from departments other than English are also offered it. Even though it is now a required subject, many students still struggle with learning the language.

Language skills can be divided into two categories: receptive and productive aspects. The receptive aspect of listening and reading involves acceptance or absorption. The production of language, whether spoken or written, as shown in speaking activities and writing, are temporary productive elements (Mulyati&Cahyani, 2007).

For students in non-English departments, speaking is one of the most difficult English skills. This is because students must understand how to produce good and correct sentences to pronounce. They need to learn a lot of vocabulary and how to pronounce it in order to form a sentence. Students also need to have confidence in order to master speaking skills.

## 2. Related Literature

According to Tarigan, 1987 cited in Heriansyah, (2012), speaking is a tool to communicate ideas that are arranged and developed by the listener's needs. Speaking is one of the important skills that allow us to communicate or express ourselves in a spoken language. It is the ability to interact orally with others by sharing with them one's point of view and feelings in different situations that take place in real-time (Haidara, 2016). Speaking is the most complex and difficult skill to master (Hinkel, 2005, cited in Nazara, 2011). There are still many non-English students who have difficulties speaking English.

Al Saadi (2013, p78) states that speaking difficulties can be defined as some things that can hinder students' progress and exclude them gradually from the procedure of learning because they fail in fulfilling the basic requirements of successful communication during the English lesson. The difficulties can be about the grammatical structure, vocabulary mastery, and how to pronounce the word correctly, and also other problems come from psychological factors like lack of confidence and lack of motivation. Siagian and Pinem (2020) stated that the problems faced by the students lie in the linguistics and non-linguistic aspects. They are the lack of effective transition of knowledge into practice, unsupporting classroom instructions, the influence of the first language used, the disadvantaged socioeconomic factor, and English speaking anxiety.

The students' problems in speaking English are caused by some factors. Tuan and Mai (2015) stated that students usually found difficulties in speaking because of some factors, such as confidence, listener's support, students' listening ability, and pressure to perform well. These factors influence them to speak English, especially to speak English in front of the class. Then, responses from the audience whether their attention, respect, or appreciation influence students to perform well in speaking English

Rahmaniah, Asbah, and Nurmasitah (2018) claim that speaking is particularly difficult for non-English department students because of their difficulty memorizing and pronouncing vocabulary, lack of confidence, preference for speaking to their friends in their mother tongue, and fear of their friends making fun of them. The purpose of this research is to identify the issues that non-English majors have when speaking English, as well as the reasons for those issues. It also aims to identify the solutions that non-English majors have found. Amiatun Nuryana (2020) indicated that non-English students struggled with grammar, vocabulary, meaning, pronunciation, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and anxiety when speaking English. Additionally, Tasmia (2019) identified three factors that contributed to the difficulties and strategies chosen by Non-English majoring students in speaking English, namely psychological factors, linguistic factors, and contextual factors.

## 3. Methods

The qualitative case study method is applied in this study. Cresswell (2014) claims that qualitative research is an investigation process of comprehension based on various methodological traditions of inquiry that investigates a social or human issue. Creswell (2012) states that qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social human problem. The process of research involves

emerging questions and procedures; collecting data in the participants' setting; analyzing the data inductively, building from particulars to general themes; and making interpretations of the meaning of data. Moreover, a qualitative case study was an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin 1984 in Nunan 2010). To collect the data, the researcher uses questionnaires and interviews. The number of students who filled out the questionnaire was 27 participants, and the number of students interviewed was 10 students.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Based on the results of questionnaires and interviews, the eighth-semester students of Indonesian Language and Literature Education class 2022/2023 found problems in English speaking, both linguistic and non-linguistic problems.

##### Linguistic Problems

Linguistic problems are the first type of speaking difficulty. Fitriani, Apriliaswati, and Wardah (2015) define linguistics as the scientific study of languages, including the study of vocabulary, phonology, and language structure (grammar).

##### Vocabulary

One of the crucial aspects of speaking English that must be acquired is vocabulary. Huwari (2019) stated that the more vocabulary students have, the more they can participate in conversations. "Hanya sebagian kosa kata yang saya kuasai," said students S-5. The results of the questionnaire show that certain Indonesian language and literature students have a lower degree of vocabulary mastery than others who do. Students who struggle with vocabulary claim to only be familiar with the basic words they learned when studying at their previous grade level. "Hanya sebagian kosa kata yang saya kuasai," said students (S-5). Additionally, they run into a lot of difficult words and decide to avoid them. The other students responded, "Banyak kata-kata dalam bahasa Inggris yang tidak pernah saya jumpai" (S-4). This makes it difficult for these students to speak English.

*Table 1 Lack of Vocabulary*

Statement	Answer			Total
	Yes	No	Others	
I master a lot of vocabulary in English	11	16		27
I always avoid difficult words when speaking English	26	1		27

##### Lack of Grammar Mastery

The next problem is that students feel less mastered in grammar. In this study, almost eighth-semester students of Indonesian language and Indonesian literature education for the academic year 2022/2023 had poor mastery of English grammar. Some students admitted to grammatical problems that they found it difficult to understand and memorize grammar rules like past, present, and future tenses. "*Aku masih kurang paham sama SPOK-nya Bahasa Inggris. Terus juga kalau ngomong untuk yang udah lewat tuh gimana, yang akan datang gimana, aku masih*

*ga paham sampai sekarang*", said the student (S-9). A different student added, *"Saya kesulitan dalam tata bahasa dan penggunaan Verb 2, Verb Ing, dll"* (S-1).

**Table 2 Lack of Grammar Mastery**

Statement	Answer			Total
	Yes	No	Others	
I often make grammar mistakes when speaking English	27	0		27

### Difficulty in Pronunciation

One of the problems while speaking English is pronunciation. According to the findings of research interviews, a number of students felt that many English terms were challenging to pronounce. "Pengucapan saya yang terkadang terdengar aneh," the student (S-20) stated. This is because students rarely even almost never use English in daily speaking. When communicating, they mostly only speak Indonesian and Javanese. The other student (S-5) stated, "Iya (difficulty in pronunciation), karena dalam komunikasi sehari-hari saya lebih sering menggunakan bahasa jawa".

**Table 3 Difficulty in Pronunciation**

Statement	Answer			Total
	Yes	No	Others	
I have difficulty with pronunciation when speaking English	20	7		27

### Non-Linguistic Problems

The non-linguistic problem is the psychological one. Anxiety, shyness, lack of confidence, low motivation, etc. were among the psychological issues that students of Indonesian Language and Literature Education at Universitas Muria Kudus discovered.

#### Anxiety

Speaking English is something that is rarely done by non-English students. According to the study's findings, practically all eight-semester Indonesian Language and Literature Education students in the academic year 2022–2023 experience anxiety whenever they are required to speak in English. The student stated, "I feel anxiety setiap disuruh ngomong didepan kelas, takut salah, takut tiba-tiba ngeblank semua" (S-18). Students claimed that one of the causes of their anxiety was that they did not master English properly. "Iya, Sangat cemas," the student said, "since I don't think people understand me in conversation in English" (S-16).



**Table 4 Anxiety**

Statement	Answer			Total
	Yes	No	Others	
I feel anxious every time I'm asked to speak in English	27	0		27

### Shyness and Lack of Confidence

One of the psychological issues with speaking English is shyness. When speaking English in front of a large audience, students experience shyness and lack of confidence. Students think they don't understand English, which causes them to feel this way. As a result, self-confidence is crucial when speaking English. Students can't speak English if they don't have confidence in themselves and believe in themselves. Additionally, when communicating in English, students feel less accurate and fluent. The pupil stated, "Kadang aku kalo udah disuruh ngomong bahasa Inggris aku sering belibet" (S-18). However, depending on the situation and the people involved, some students only experience embarrassment sometimes. "Tergantung sama siapa yang sih, kalo sama temen yang deket dan disituasi yang santai, aku nggak terlalu malu" (S-7) exclaimed.

**Table 5 Shyness and Lack of Confidence**

Statement	Answer			Total
	Yes	No	Others	
I am shy when I want to start a conversation in English	18	7	2	27
I feel insecure when speaking English in front of many people	25	2		27

### Factors Causing English Speaking Problems

#### Low Motivation

Many of the eight-semester Indonesian Language and Literature Education students have come to realize the importance of English in a modern environment. They know that learning English will make it easier for them to keep informed, not only when speaking, but in every way as well. However, some students of Indonesian Language and Literature Education still lack the motivation to learn English more properly, especially when it comes to speaking. "*Saya belum ada motivasi lebih untuk mempelajari itu, itu sih untuk sekarang*" said the student (S-13). This is caused by the fact that some of them assume that speaking English is not absolutely important for the life they currently lead.

**Table 6 Low Motivation**

Statement	Answer			Total
	Yes	No	Others	
I do not have more motivation to master the ability to speak English	9	18		27

***Habit and Mother Tongue***

Most eighth-semester Indonesian Language and Literature Education students, according to data collected from interviews, are not accustomed to using English in daily life. Students' learning of English is facilitated by this, particularly in speaking. They frequently communicate with one another in Indonesian and Javanese. One of the problems they face is an environment that does not encourage them to speak English. So, they have less opportunities to use English outside of class. As a result, they have problems remembering English vocabulary and sentence pronunciation. The student said (S-25) “*Ya, karna lingkungan saya sedikit yang berbicara bahasa Inggris*”. Further more, the other student (S-4) said that “*Saya tinggal dilingkungan dan keluarga yang dari kecil tidak menggunakan bahasa inggris untuk berkomunikasi*”.

**Lack of confidence and Lack of chance**

Almost all eighth-semester students of Indonesian Language and Literature Education rarely practice speaking English, according to the data collected for this study. They only begin practicing when an English class is in session. They seldom ever put their abilities to use outside of the classroom. S-9 said that “For speaking, I rarely. Tapi kalo berlatih buat memperbanyak kosakata, saya sering melakukannya”. In addition, students also feel that they do not have the opportunity to speak English because their environment is not supportive. The student (S-1) said “*Iyes, karena lingkungan saya yang jarang menggunakan bahasa inggris sehingga saya hanya menggunakan bahasa inggris dikelas bahasa inggris saja*”.

**Table 7 Lack of Practice and Lack of Chance**

Statement	Answer			Total
	Yes	No	Others	
I often practice speaking English to improve my speaking skills	14	13		27
I don't have much chance	18	9		27

***Fear of making mistakes***

Fear of making mistakes is one of the factors that cause problems in speaking English. Students are afraid that when they speak English, they will mispronounce. “*Iya, aku takut bikin kesalahan dan itu bikin aku ngga pede buat ngomong bahasa Inggris*”, said the student (S-10).

It is in line with G'rler (2015: 15) specifying that a lack of self-confidence is a psychological and attitude barrier that makes it difficult for a learner to speak in their mother tongue or a foreign language.

**Table 8 Fear of Making Mistakes**

Statement	Answer			Total
	Yes	No	Others	
I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking English in front of the class	20	7		27

### The Problem Solving

The researcher outlined and covered the causes of the problems with English speaking among Indonesian Language and Literature Education students in the previous section. The lack of grammar is the most frequent linguistic problem discovered. Anxiety-related problems are the most common non-linguistic problems. The majority of them feel that using grammar correctly when speaking English is quite difficult, and virtually all of them also experience anxiety whenever they are asked to do so. Students of Indonesian Language and Literature Education also struggle with speaking English due to other linguistic problems such as vocabulary, pronunciation, shyness, and lack of confidence. It is necessary to find a solution if speaking English is a problem. In this situation, a solution is required to address the problems. According to Muzanni and Muhyadi (2016) problem solving is learning to solve problems by using various strategies for the problems presented in the lessons and problems encountered in daily life about environmental changes. This finding was obtained based on interviews with ten students.

Q7: How do you deal with the problems you encounter in speaking English?

Q8: What do you usually do to improve your English speaking skills?

Answer:

- *Sambil bawa HP, buka google translate buat cari arti dari kosakata yang sulit atau cari bahasa inggrisnya (S-1)*
- *Belajar dan selalu mencoba berbicara dengan bahasa inggris. Saya juga sering menonton film dengan subtitle untuk mempelajari kosakata (S-2)*
- *Latihan buat ngomong sedikit-sedikit, biasanya perkalimat-kalimat sederhana (S-3)*
- *Menggunakan google translate (S-4)*
- *Saya sering belajar dari lagu yang saya dengarkan atau film yang saya tonton untuk lebih memahami kalimat bahasa inggris. Dan menurut saya itu salah satu cara yang cukup efektif. Saya juga sering ikut menyanyikannya saat sedang mendengarkan untuk melatih pelafalan (S-9)*
- *Lebih banyak mempelajari kosakata yang baru dan lebih banyak berbicara bahasa inggris (S-10)*
- *Belajar melafalkan kosakata melalui lagu (S-14)*
- *Saya biasanya pake google translate buat cari arti kata yang susah, sama ucapannya gimana (S-16)*

- Saya sering pake google translate buat cari kosakatanya, terus bagaimana sara ngucapinnya. Kadang sesekali saya mecoba berbicara didepan kaca, terus kadang kalo didepan temen-temen yang dekat suka soksoakan pake bahasa inggris juga (S-20)
- Nonton film bahasa inggris, sesekali berbicara dengan orang lain menggunakan bahasa inggris sedikit meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara saya (S-25)

Pawatcharaudom (2007, P.20-21) in Nurul Hidayah 2014 suggested some strategies that are usually used by learners to solve the difficulties they find in speaking: 1)Adjust the message; 2)Use paraphrasing; 3)Use approximation; 4)Switch to native language; 5)Create new words; 6)Use non-linguistic resources (mie, gesture);7)Seek help

## 5. Conclusion

The researcher drew the conclusion that the speaking English proficiency of eight-semester students of Indonesian Language and Literature Education at Universitas Muria Kudus was at a low level and needs to be improved based on research findings and discussion. Almost all students have a lot of problems speaking in English. There are two categories of these issues: linguistic problems and non-linguistic problems. Lack of vocabulary, difficulty in pronunciation, and lack of grammar are linguistic problems. In terms of non-linguistic or psychological issues, these include shyness, anxiety, and lack of confidence. There are several elements that contribute to the problems themselves. Low motivation, habit and mother tongue, a lack of practice and chance, fear of failure, and low motivation were the factors causing the problems in speaking English in this study.

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## **Materials Development and Adaptation**



# USING IMAGINATIVE CARTOON-DRAWING METHOD TO TEACH NARRATIVE WRITING IN A PRIMARY 5 CLASSROOM

**Chia Choon Poh**

*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina) Sungai Menyan, Serian, Sarawak, Malaysia*

[chia.choonpoh@hotmail.com](mailto:chia.choonpoh@hotmail.com)

## Abstract

Typically writing is taught based on a textbook. The traditional approach to teaching writing is mechanical and rigid. Pupils are forced to follow a pattern to write. The content is standard and banal. Everybody uses the same vocabulary and sentence structure. This research was conducted in a Primary 5 English Language classroom with twenty pupils. The question is how to make an English Language writing class interesting and stimulating. An imaginative cartoon-drawing method was used as a treatment. Stories are used as the teaching materials, and integrated skills of listening, speaking, and writing are adopted. The instruments used to collect data were pre- and post- interviews with the students, class observation reports, and the stories written by the pupils. The findings indicated that using the imaginative cartoon-drawing method is an effective way to teach writing in a primary 5 classroom as seen in the classroom dynamics, pupils' participation and interaction between the teacher and pupils in the process of the study.

**Keywords:** action research, narrative writing, imaginative cartoon-drawing, vocabulary, sentence structure

## 1. Introduction

During my teaching of the English Language, I have put very little attention to writing pedagogy in my Year 5 classroom. Problems abound in teaching writing in my classroom occurred. From the perspective of a teacher, I always ask myself, "How could my writing class be made more interesting and stimulating? How is it possible to improve the current situation in teaching writing in my Year 5 classroom? What is the alternative method?" From the perspective of a learner, I asked myself, "How could I develop the skills of teaching writing? How could I become a reflective English Language teacher?"

## 2. Observation

The teaching method is the first and foremost issue worth probing into. Typically, writing skill is taught based on a prescribed textbook in primary schools. I simply stick to the textbook and adopt the very traditional method. A typical composition lesson goes as follows:

I taught the class a sample of writing in the unit, which usually consists of several sentences describing a person or an object. Then, with the help of some guiding questions, I asked the class to do parallel writing, which means to write a similar text by simply changing the names, pronouns, numbers, or some details of the original text. Finally, the students copied the answers to the guiding questions in their exercise books and submitted their 'composition'.

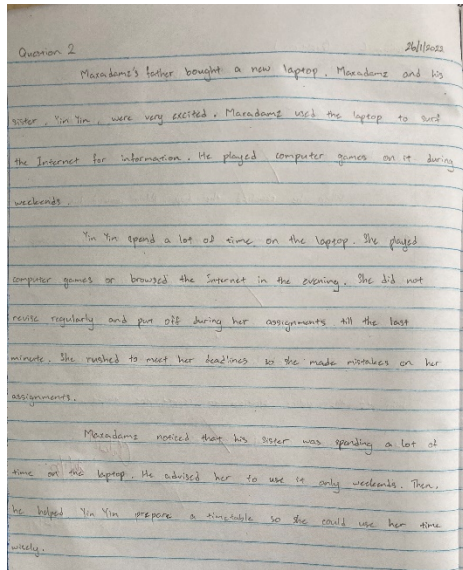


Figure 1: Composition of Pupil A

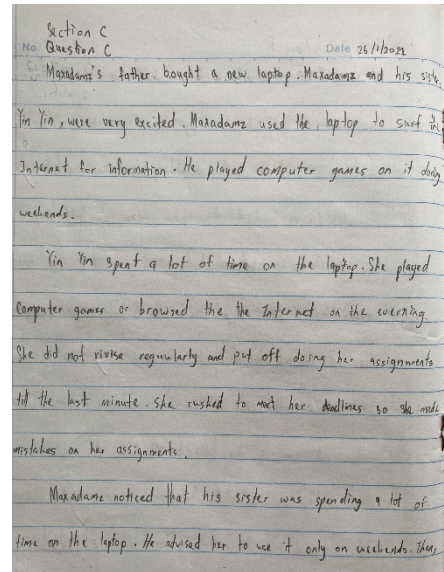


Figure 2: Composition of Pupil B

## Reflection

Based on the observation of the current situation in my English Language teaching, it is found that the writing class is boring; thus, my pupils are not motivated to learn writing. Something ought to be done to change the methodology in practice rather than at the mere policy level.

## 3. The Research Question

How can my English Language writing class be made more interesting and stimulating?

## 4. Related Literature

Integration of skills is an issue of concern in teaching English Language. Reading and writing are typically perceived as related skills. By contrast, little work has been done in the writing literature to link listening and speaking skills to the development of writing skill. According to Second Language Acquisition theories, acquisition of a language including L1 and L2 follows a natural route: listening - speaking - reading - writing (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). Sufficient and comprehensible input of listening, speaking and reading will facilitate writing. In the same vein, Communicative Language Teaching advocates an integrative approach to teach the four English Language skills because language is acquired holistically rather than discretely (Brown, 2001; Littlewood, 1981; Widdowson, 1978).

The imaginative cartoon-drawing teaching method employed in this writing class is new. According to the pupils interviewed, their English Language teachers in primary 1 to 4 used the traditional methods in teaching writing. That is why they find this writing class particularly interesting and enjoyable. Language is a system for the expression of meaning and using language which is meaningful to the learner promotes learning (Brown, 2001; Littlewood, 1981; Widdowson, 1978). Stories embed meanings, so pupils are readily encouraged to use the language in the process of decoding the meaning of the story and reconstructing it.

## 5. Methods

The method being tried is an imaginative cartoon-drawing method. It draws on the communicative view of language. A combination of the integrative and the narrative methods is not often used in the teaching of writing, especially when writing is integrated with listening and speaking. It is not with its commonly perceived related skill, which is reading.

The proposed procedures of the writing class are as follows:

- (1) The teacher plays to the class the story recorded, and there is no ending to the story.
- (2) The teacher discusses the story with the class and helps them to understand the gist of it.
- (3) The teacher brainstorms some possible endings of the story with the students orally.
- (4) The pupils draw up individually the ending of the story
- (5) The pupils write up in groups the ending of the story with some new vocabulary and sentence structure provided.
- (6) The teacher invites some pupils to share their endings with the class.

## 6. Results and Discussion

*Table 1: Aspects of Observation*

PUPILS' PARTICIPATION	CLASSROOM INTERACTION	CLASSROOM DYNAMICS	THE PRODUCT	LANGUAGE USED
Pupils had more participation.	The interaction pattern began to change.	Built up a more relaxed atmosphere.	Different endings were produced by different groups of pupils.	Conducted in target language.
More hands up.	Interaction between pupils began to emerge.	The atmosphere in the class became livelier.	The quality of content varies.	Occasionally used a few Chinese words or sentences when pupils did not understand.
Increased participation on pupils' willingness to present their stories.	Group discussion was the part that they enjoyed most.	Pupils more eager to participate and contribute ideas about the stories.	The laughter of the class in the sharing session suggests that pupils enjoyed the stories.	Always encouraged pupils to speak in English Language.

## 7. Conclusion

The findings indicate that there are changes pertaining to classroom dynamics, pupils' participation and interaction between the teacher and pupils in the process of the study. Those changes are due to three possible contributing factors, which is the teaching method, strategies, and techniques.

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# COURSE MATERIAL USE IN ONLINE TEACHING FOR ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN JAPAN: IMPLEMENTATION OF OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Hiroyuki Ida<sup>1\*</sup> and Yaoko Matsuoka<sup>2</sup>,

<sup>1</sup>*Josai University*

<sup>2</sup>*University of the People*

[\\*hiro-ida@josai.ac.jp](mailto:hiro-ida@josai.ac.jp)

## Abstract

This presentation investigates the possibility of using Open Educational Resources (OER) for English as a Foreign Language in Japan, based on the two survey results in 2020 and 2021. Online survey was conducted to 126 university students. The survey questions were created about the effectiveness and drawbacks of using paper-based textbook, and its potential use of OER in their learning. The survey included both questionnaires and free description section and we obtained statistical data and text. From the survey, 1) about 70% of the respondents admitted the effectiveness of using paper-based textbook; 2) for the drawbacks, although they did not directly refer to the issue on inefficiency of paper-based textbook, some complained about the progression of course, as teachers cannot cover the whole textbook contents; and 3) in the second year of this survey (in 2021), some students suggested that, as online education is promoted, material and pedagogy should be devised to react to digitally mediated instruction. Although OER is often regarded as an innovative way of fostering education, it is not particularly pervasive in higher education in Japan despite the increased preference for online learning. This might be relevant to the educational system from the secondary education. In conclusion, implementing OER might be strongly influenced by the educational environment and will not work as long as the negotiation with teaching model is taken into account.

**Keywords:** textbook use, Open Educational Resources, online teaching

## 1. Introduction

This study investigates the possibility of using Open Educational Resources (OER) for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in higher education in Japan, based on the two survey results in 2020 and 2021. The expansion of online classes due to the pandemic has given Japanese higher education a chance to rethink course materials in the digital environment. Although using technology in language teaching is developed in the field of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and the pedagogical aspect of technology is intensively elaborated for effective teaching in the classroom (Gillespie, 2020), discussion regarding the use of materials was insufficient. While the discussion on material development is often seen (Tomlinson, 2012), the use of materials is less featured. The COVID-19 experience of the university could have the chance to promote the use of OER as a component of course materials, but the development and usage of OER are not reported. Rather, in reality, teachers still used paper-based textbooks without using OER as compensation for such emergencies. One predictable reason may relate to the distribution system of textbooks in Japan's education.

In Japan, textbooks are distributed to elementary and junior high school students for free as a national policy, such that students are accustomed to learning using course materials. Teachers

prepare for all the materials students use in the course. This implies that students are in the situation of “spoon-feeding”, where all the necessary materials are given (Smith, 2008), and students do not have to strive to actively access what they are requested. In educational technology and literacy studies, material use itself is social and unstable (Burnett & Merchant, 2020; Oliver, 2013), where learners make their sense based on their needs and learning environment. This is built on the perspective that actual text use was not embodied. For OER, its role has been criticized as it is difficult to match the teachers’ teaching model (Knox, 2013). Although OER might raise the accessibility to the contents, implementing it as a course material will be a challenge.

This study empirically explores effective means of using OER based on the students’ perception of using textbooks in online teaching and proposes the potential use of OER in the post-COVID-19 era.

## 2. Methodology

This study conducted two online surveys via Learning Management System in 2020 (n=94) and 2021 (n=32), respectively. The survey questions were created about the effectiveness and drawbacks of using paper-based textbook, and its potential use of OER in their learning. The survey included both questionnaires and free description section and we obtained statistical data and text. For the analysis, the anonymity of the students was guaranteed and free description was investigated through close reading of the obtained text.

## 3. Results

Here is the overview of the findings:

- 1) About 70% of the respondents admitted the effectiveness of using paper-based textbooks as a course material. The reason for this is that they can share the same information throughout the class and feel the sense of belonging to the community wherever they are. Furthermore, some participants answered the effectiveness because they can go over the contents at any time.
- 2) For the drawbacks, although they did not directly refer to the issue on inefficiency of paper-based textbook, some complained about the progression of course, as teachers cannot cover the whole textbook contents. This is not limited to online environment, but persistent to the problem in thinking about the relationship between textbook usage and teaching model.
- 3) Although clear description was not found, in the second year of this survey (in 2021), some students suggested that, as online education is promoted, material and pedagogy should be devised to react to digitally mediated instruction. This implies that students are gradually accustomed to engaging in learning throughout online environment. However, interestingly, using ICT is becoming common at secondary education, no participants refer to OER nor digital textbook alternative to paper-based one.

## 4. Discussion & Conclusion

Based on the survey accounts, although OER is often regarded as an innovative way of fostering education, it is not particularly pervasive in higher education in Japan despite the increased preference for online learning. This might be relevant to the educational system from the secondary education, but they did not specifically refer to the preference of OER. This research added the cultural and educational factors behind the textbook use as well as its instability, as previous research studies suggested. However, for further justification, the influence of secondary education on the way of engagement in higher education will be our



challenge. This could be drawn from the survey in this research.

In addition, as Knox (2013) already maintained, using OER is often difficult in relation to educational model. In Japan, even pandemic situation, teachers tend to use paper-based textbook rather than OER that are compensate for the difficulty of students' accessibility of buying textbook. This research could not include teacher's belief in their teaching, but students can flexibly use textbook outside the classroom based on their learning style, which might be that learning takes place anywhere (Gourlay, 2021). In this sense, leading students as independent learners is not influenced by the types of media; rather the way they devise the usage of textbook should further be investigated for future research to augment students' engagement in English language learning inside and outside the curriculum.

As a limitation of this research, as this research focused on emergent phenomena as a result of COVID-19, clear comparison was not conducted regarding the condition of usage of textbook between paper-based and digital context. Thus, this research took the stance of seeking for the potential of using OER for post-pandemic era of language teaching beyond dual discourse of paper-based or digital one.

In conclusion, implementing OER might be strongly influenced by the educational environment and will not work as long as the negotiation with teaching model is taken into account. From students' experience, they can easily adapt to the learning environment, so social aspect of textbook usage should be investigated by combining with teaching model that language teachers create in their teaching design. This will augment the reality of how OER could be implemented in language teaching.

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# POLITEKNIK MERSING STUDENTS' SCORES IN THE TOEIC® LISTENING AND READING TEST AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

**Adleena Adha Abdul Mua'ain<sup>1</sup>, Norhaslinda Muhamadin<sup>2</sup>,  
Baizura Hasni<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of General Studies, Politeknik Tun Syed Nasir Syed Ismail, Malaysia*

[adleena@ptsn.edu.my](mailto:adleena@ptsn.edu.my)

<sup>2</sup>*Department of General Studies, Politeknik Mersing, Malaysia*

[norhaslinda@tvvet.pmj.edu.my](mailto:norhaslinda@tvvet.pmj.edu.my)

<sup>3</sup>*Department of General Studies, Politeknik Mersing, Malaysia*

[baizura@tvvet.pmj.edu.my](mailto:baizura@tvvet.pmj.edu.my)

## ABSTRACT

Malaysian polytechnics English courses are designed for students to communicate effectively within the industry and society at large. The input and materials of the English language courses have adapted many communication settings that occur in the actual working situations. One of the ways to assess the execution of the English courses is by adopting the TOEIC® tests. Politeknik Mersing and several other institutions of higher learning have adopted the TOEIC® tests as it is one of the reliable tools of assessment for English language skills at the workplace. This study seeks to examine Politeknik Mersing students' scores in the TOEIC® listening and reading tests. The participants for this study consisted of 85 students who enrolled for the TOEIC® test at Politeknik Mersing. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted for the overall score of the TOEIC® test as well as scores on the reading and listening components. The results revealed that the average score achieved on the TOEIC® listening test is 335 points and the average score achieved on the TOEIC® reading test is 258 points. This achievement reflects that both receptive language skills are at intermediate level. TOEIC® scores can be used as an indicator of the language skills areas that can be performed and improved at the workplace setting. These results also indicate that educators should review and improve their materials to suit the needs of the industry. However, there is a need for further studies in different contexts that provide empirical evidence and contribute to increasing literature on the relevance of the TOEIC® test in TVET higher education settings.

**Keywords:** TOEIC®, TVET, receptive skills, proficiency level, ELT materials

## 1. Introduction

In Malaysia's efforts to become one of the world's high-income and advanced economies, the government has designated Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as one of the areas that must be prioritised to propel the nation's economic growth. With the increasing demand for a highly skilled workforce, TVET institutions including Politeknik Mersing (PMJ), strive to develop quality semi-professional personnel. However, hard skills alone are insufficient. Communication skills play an important role in establishing rapport and sharing ideas in an informal way (Sihe & Marjuki 2010). Good communication skills, particularly in the English language will help graduates to get hired, land promotions, and be successful (Doyle 2014; Rajathurai 2018). PMJ has moved a step ahead by offering the TOEIC® listening

and reading test for students. This initiative is not only beneficial for students' certification, but also prepares work-ready students and makes them stronger candidates for job opportunities, which will help to obtain prospective employment within local and global companies.

## 2. Materials and Methods

As one of the tools to measure English language proficiency, the TOEIC® listening and reading test is used as an assessment at the workplace globally. The test helps employers make informed decisions related to job placement, recruitment, career progression and training (ETS, 2022). The tasks have also been modified to reflect varieties of communication patterns and methods in the modern workplace and daily life (Ashmore, et al., 2018). This is in tandem with the vision of the Department of Polytechnic Education (DPE) in producing quality graduates who are ready for the workplace upon graduation as well as in fulfilling the workplace demand for language proficiency of technical workers.

## 3. Results and Discussion

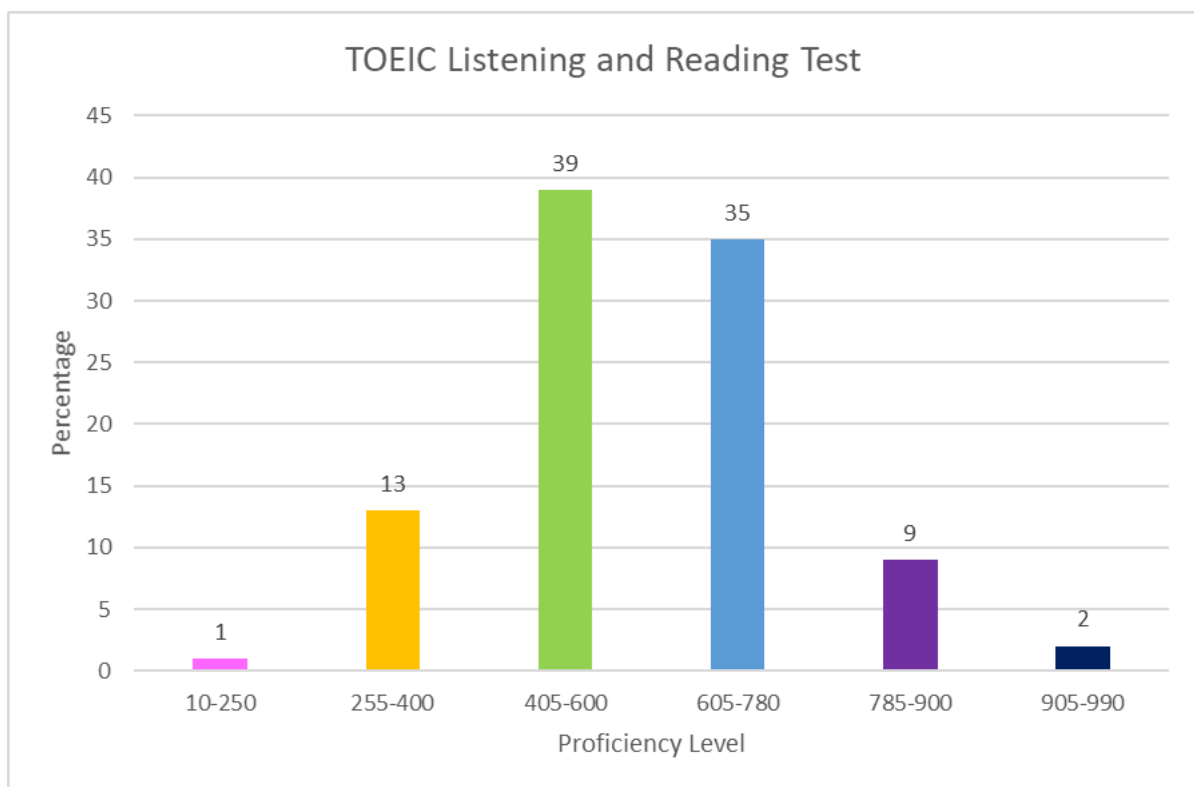


Figure 1: The Percentage of Students' Scores on the TOEIC® Test

Figure 1 indicates that 39% of students scored in the range of 405-600. This is closely followed by 35% of students who scored between 605-780. About 9% scored between 785-900, 2% scored 905-990 while only 1% scored within the minimum score range of 10-250. It is worth noting that the average TOEIC® score in Malaysia is 649. The students' achievement shall be further explained by the information provided in the table below.

Table 1: The TOEIC® Listening and Reading Scores and Proficiency Levels

TOEIC Score	Proficiency Level
10-250	Basic English proficiency (survival skills)
255-400	Elementary proficiency (very limited communication)
405-600	Elementary proficiency plus (limited communication)
605-780	Limited working proficiency
785-900	Working proficiency plus
905-990	International professional proficiency

Most PMJ students have above average elementary proficiency with limited ability to communicate at global workplace. However, it should be emphasised that an almost similar percentage of students can be categorised as individuals with limited working proficiency. The score range of 550-785 can also be described as the threshold of the independent user, therefore, the students should be able to comprehend familiar, everyday language. About 9% reached above average working proficiency, which places them in the independent user vantage point. Interestingly, 2% of students managed to reach international professional proficiency which can be further improved with the right intervention.

### 3.1 Implications for Materials Development

As the results imply, a haul in materials development for polytechnic English courses to build on students' proficiency is necessary. It is critical to consider the implications for materials development under these premises.

#### 3.1.1 Authenticity

While many teachers believe that the written exercises in their English language classes are adequate, it is invalid (Isnin, et al; 2019). As proposed by Ramamurthy (2021), language instruction must take place in real-world settings where students can practise their language skills. Therefore, in the context of communication, learners need to be given more opportunities to communicate in real-world circumstances. Materials for this opportunity may be adopted from real written texts such as manuals, reports, speeches, and others.

#### 3.1.2 Social skills

The lack of coordination is mainly caused by weak communication ability. Poor English language skills will decelerate the flow of effective communication, cause misinterpretation, create frustration and barriers among employees (Ojanperä Miina, 2014). Krishnan, et al. (2019) further added that graduates' poor communication skills influence their clarity of speech when facing formal situations. Thus, the materials should coordinate the language items and the environment.

#### 3.1.3 Vocabulary

Based on the results, students' elementary level could stem from poor vocabulary, which is why they are having difficulty comprehending and responding to written and spoken texts. It is also due to communication obstacles caused by the usage of unsuitable vocabulary. The lack of confidence in using the language is one of the main barriers for students to communicate

in English (Palpanadan, et al., 2019). Hence, the materials developed should consist of a wide range of vocabulary that is relevant to their field of study.

#### 4. Conclusion

The results allow us to conclude that majority of the students have an elementary plus to limited working proficiency in English at the workplace according to TOEIC® standard. However, some students have managed to ace the tests and proved that technical students can communicate efficiently in a global setting. Hence, modular integration, a negotiated curriculum and providing exposure to social and life skills with collaboration are some of the techniques for developing the materials (Lauzon, 2018).

The materials should take the view of industry experts to improve the quality of teaching and learning at higher education and emphasise transferable skills, especially interpersonal skills for socialisation, collaboration and teamwork as proposed by Weiss (2014). Given the importance of English proficiency for job placement nowadays, it is imperative to ensure the students are equipped with the right skills and mastery of the language upon graduation.

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# DEVELOPING AN AWARENESS OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN EFL

**Philip Cardiff**

*Kanda University of International Studies*

[cardiff-p@kanda.kuis.ac.jp](mailto:cardiff-p@kanda.kuis.ac.jp)

## Abstract

The challenges of sustainable development presented by the Anthropocene have had a tremendous impact on our world, and education is widely recognized as one of the most important tools to mitigate these global problems. The following paper presents an overview of the development of an EFL course taught over a semester at a Japanese university. Specifically, it attempts to demonstrate how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be utilised in an EFL context to provide a framework to raise students' awareness of sustainability issues, while helping them acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to take action for sustainable development. Finally, the paper outlines some of the key issues that should be considered by EFL practitioners who are interested in implementing the SDGs into their classrooms.

**Keywords:** English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

## 1. Introduction

In the era of the Anthropocene, the challenge of sustainable development is recognised as an issue of global concern. In 2015, the UN general assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015). At the forefront of this agenda are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a 'universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity' (United Nations Development Programme, 2018). The 17 goals (see Fig. 1) include 169 associated targets, representing a vision for sustainable development to be 'incorporated into national planning processes, policies and strategies' around the world (UN, 2015 p13).

Education is widely recognized as a key strategy in the pursuit of sustainable development, since it is both a goal in itself (SDG 4) as well as a means for achieving the other SDGs (Rieckmann et al, 2017). In addition, target 4.7 of SDG 4 specifically calls for a greater focus on the teaching of sustainable development (UN, 2015). In Japan, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), has responded by outlining a plan to implement education for sustainable development across educational institutions, and has highlighted both educators and learners as major stakeholders in their commitment to achieve the SDGs (MEXT, 2021).

This paper outlines the process of curriculum development and materials design for an elective English course (The UN Sustainable Development Goals: Key Issues & Taking Action) taught over a semester at a private language university in Japan.



Source: United Nations Development Programme. (2018). Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from: <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>

## 2. The Case for SDGs in EFL

Educators are tasked with preparing future generations to face the challenges of the world, and as such, it has been argued that all educational institutions ‘can and should consider it their responsibility to deal intensively with matters concerning sustainable development’ (Rieckmann et al, 2017 p7). Regardless of any sense of responsibility, there are a number of reasons to consider integrating the SDGs into an EFL classroom.

Firstly, the SDGs are engaging. The goals provide a clear framework through which to explore a range of fundamental social, economic and environmental issues, such as climate change, gender equality, poverty and discrimination. Learning about the SDGs may help students to develop insight into global issues they are familiar with, while also shedding light on those they are unaware of.

The SDGs are also a rich educational resource in terms of content. The United Nations and associated organisations publish a significant amount of research on each of the goals. This research is consistently updated and often includes supplemental videos and further reading materials, all of which can be utilised by teachers and provide meaningful content for learners.

A further rationale is provided by Cates (2002, p45), who makes the point that teaching about global issues in an EFL context provides an opportunity to shift from ‘language as structure to language for communication around the world’. Teachers can use the SDGs as a platform to experiment with a range of communicative tasks, such as creating a campaign for policy change or writing to a government leader.



### **3. Course Design**

The design and pedagogical approach of this course takes much of its influence from Rieckmann et al (2017), while themes and topics have been informed by various educators and sustainability experts including Green (2018) and Brinkmann (2021).

The course is divided into three units over a 15-week semester:

Unit 1: An Introduction to the SDGs

Unit 2: Making Connections

Unit 3: Taking Action

Each unit includes a variety of topics representing the three dimensions of sustainability (environmental, economic and social) as well as lessons focussed around specific SDGs.

### **Reflection Tasks**

Reflection is considered a key requirement to develop the skills necessary to understand and promote sustainable development (Rieckmann et al, 2017; Concina, 2019). Throughout this course, students are encouraged to reflect on the themes and topics covered in class both through group discussions and by responding to reflective questions in various lessons and at the end of each unit.

Anecdotally, responses from students at the beginning of the course often outline their interest in the SDGs and a desire to ‘take action’, yet they lack an understanding of the goals and of their connection to them or how they can contribute towards their progress. By the end of the course, however, students demonstrate a deeper connection to sustainability issues, which helps them to consider how they can take action in a more tangible way. They can reflect on the values that underlie their practices and are better able to understand how these actions can impact sustainability both positively and negatively.

### **4. Considerations**

A key consideration for the design of this course has been deciding which SDGs to focus on specifically and which to omit. While each goal is important in itself it would be impractical to touch on all of them, given the plethora of SDGs and their associated targets. Consequently, decisions about which SDGs to include in the curriculum are informed by existing literature and student preferences. Climate change and environmental sustainability, enshrined in SDG 13 is prioritised throughout the literature (Rieckmann et al 2017; Brinkmann 2021; Steele & Rickards 2021), while goal 4 (Quality Education) is considered essential both as a stand-alone goal and as a means for achieving the other SDGs (Rieckmann et al, 2017). In addition, Green (2018) has highlighted goals 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities) and 16 (Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions) as the most challenging to achieve globally, warranting their inclusion in the curriculum. Student reflections in previous iterations of the course have provided insight into which SDGs they are particularly interested in, which also forms the basis for much of the course content. In every semester to date, goal 5 has emerged as the most popular SDG, followed by goals 13 and 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth).

Another issue worth considering is the English ability necessary for learners to engage with SDG themes and ‘authentic’ content that has not been developed specifically for language

learning. Jodoin and Singer (2019) have suggested that in order to effectively engage with SDG content, students require an intermediate or at least B1 level of English on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). There is no language tier system for this particular course, and while some students have found it more linguistically demanding than others, this has not significantly impacted class participation or the quality of assignments. Nevertheless, after each iteration of the course, content is reviewed based on student feedback from their reflections.

## 5. Conclusion

The advantages of and rationale for integrating the SDGs into an EFL classroom are multiple. Firstly, SDG content is informed by critical issues which are both engaging and applicable to a range of academic subjects and contexts. Moreover, this content is readily available and consistently updated in line with global events, which can be utilised to make lessons up-to-date and meaningful for learners. In addition, the SDGs afford EFL practitioners the opportunity to combine this content with participatory teaching methods, to offer students a holistic learning experience.

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# NEED FOR TEACHING MATERIALS TO FOSTER POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD OWN ENGLISH

**Tomoyuki Kawashima**

*Gunma University*

[tkawashima@gunma-u.ac.jp](mailto:tkawashima@gunma-u.ac.jp)

## **Abstract**

The low speaking skill of Japanese learners of English has been a disgraceful issue. According to the TOEFL iBT Test and Score Data Summary 2019, Japan ranked the lowest in speaking section score means among 35 countries and territories in Asia. Other international comparisons show that Japanese learners tend to underestimate their English abilities and have a weaker L2-speaking self-image than their Asian counterparts (e.g., Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009). Moreover, they are inclined to blindly aspire to the pronunciation of native speakers (NSs) and downgrade the pronunciation of non-native speakers (NNSs). Primarily, pedagogy is responsible for this situation. However, it is plausible that Japanese learners' lack of confidence and narrow awareness, which is attributable in part to a scarcity of teaching materials that specifically present competent NNSs, has contributed to their low motivation and poor English-speaking abilities. This paper discusses the need for teaching materials to build positive attitudes toward learners' English and introduces the material I developed to improve the existing situation. The situations learners face in multilingual societies like Malaysia would differ from those in Japan's almost monolingual society, where this research project is based. It is hoped, however, that this article may be of some help in teaching a language to learners who lack confidence in their ability to use it.

**Keywords:** listening practice, L2-speaking self-image, non-native speaker models, awareness

## **1. Current Situation**

### **1.1 Characteristics of Japanese Learners**

Japanese learners have poor English-speaking skills. According to the TOEFL iBT Test and Score Data Summary 2019, Japan ranked worst in the speaking part and third lowest in terms of total score means among 35 countries and territories, after only Tajikistan and the People's Democratic Republic of Laos.

The L2 self-image is a key concept in Dörnyei's motivational self-system model. The concept defines motivation as the desire to reach one's ideal linguistic self by reducing the perceived gap between one's real and ideal selves (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005). For this reason, developing a distinct L2-using self-image is critical for successful language learning. However, this is not always the case with Japanese learners.

In an international comparison, Taguchi, Magid, and Papi (2009) revealed that Japanese learners have a weaker L2-speaking self-image than their Iranian and Chinese counterparts. Furthermore, Japanese learners are likely to underestimate their English ability. Tokumoto and Shibata (2011) asked college students from Japan, Korea, and Malaysia to rate their English in terms of accentedness, intelligibility, and acceptability. Japanese students' self-evaluation of English was much lower than that of Korean students. For instance, fewer Japanese students

agreed with statements like “I’m happy with my English pronunciation” and “My pronunciation would be acceptable in international business.”

## 1.2 Possible Cause: Extremely Narrow Range of Native Speaker Accents as Model

The Japanese language education is primarily responsible for these undesirable traits of Japanese learners. Take some possible causes, for example. English has not been seen as a practical skill, but it has been viewed as a subject for high-stakes entrance examinations to high schools and colleges. A strong emphasis has been placed on grammar and translation, and limited time has been spared in the classroom for writing and speaking practice. In addition, teachers generally use Japanese to teach English, and they tend to rely on the recording provided by textbook publishers for speech models. As a result, learners’ exposure to actual speech samples is restricted to a small number of English accents represented in the model readings textbook publishers offer.

Data can support my final point. I conducted a questionnaire survey in 1999, 2006, and 2016 to clarify the dominance of Americans in classroom speech models (Kawashima, 2000, 2009, 2018). A questionnaire was sent to all the high school English textbook publishers to ask about the speakers they used to record model readings for their textbooks. American and Canadian speakers accounted for 92.4% of all speakers in 1999, 90.9% in 2006, and 85.4% in 2016. On the other hand, tiny portions, 2.1% in 1999, 2.5% in 2006, and 3.8% in 2016, were NNSs. They were from Japan, Israel, the Philippines, and nine other countries and territories across the world. A further examination indicated that, while the percentages of NNSs grew somewhat between 1999 and 2016, it did not mean that more NNSs were represented in the speech models. In fact, it was the opposite. In 2016, fewer publishers hired fewer NNSs than before. However, the share of NNSs in the total increased because identical speakers were employed for many textbook titles (Kawashima, 2018).

In the 2016 survey, I asked about the possibility of future integration of non-native speech in audio samples. Despite admitting the necessity for including NNSs, the responses of textbook publishers were negative. Their comments suggested they lacked the extra energy to attempt anything new. The shrinking market owing to a decrease in the number of children created a fierce struggle for survival among textbook publishers. The following figures demonstrate the severity of the situation. The number of textbook publishers decreased from 23 in 1999 to 15 in 2016. Moreover, in Japan, 215 titles of English textbooks were published in 1999 for high school students. However, the number dropped to 112 in 2016. In other words, textbook titles decreased by 48% in 17 years (Kawashima, 2000, 2009, 2018). Given the desperate situations surrounding textbook publishers, I concluded that expecting textbook publishers to extend speech samples on their model recordings would be pointless. See also Kawashima (2019) for further background research on my project. It describes teachers’ perceptions about introducing NNS English, learners’ reactions to experimental lessons, and the levels of difficulty in listening to NNS English.

## 1.3 The Importance of Non-Native Speaker Models

It is regrettable that, while English is increasingly used as a lingua franca, learners are not aware of the situation. Instead, they continue to have native speaker-centric views on English, believing that they must, for instance, sound like Americans when they speak English. It may be claimed that exposure to a very restricted range of NS models would develop unrealistically

narrow stereotypes of how English should be spoken and that these stereotypes would make learners more hesitant to speak English.

Some researchers emphasised the importance of using NNS models. Cook (1999) argued that materials should reflect the existence of successful L2 users to demonstrate that they are “not just pale shadows of native speakers” (p. 200). According to Kitano (2001) and Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, and Shimizu (2004), exposing Japanese learners to English spoken by NNSs whose proficiency is not necessarily native may minimise their feelings of inadequacy and enhance their self-confidence as English users.

#### 1.4 Growing Need for Non-Native Speaker Representation in Audio Material

In recent decades, several publications have urged teachers to include the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) concept (e.g., Bowles & Cogo, 2015; Galloway, 2017; Matsuda, 2017). However, Galloway and Rose (2015) have pointed out that audio material or practical activities reflecting the ELF concept are not necessarily available.

Rose and Galloway (2019) examined six influential English textbooks in the global textbook market using a four-dimension global English language teaching framework for the textbook evaluation. Their finding demonstrated a lack of widely used textbooks that adequately represented NNS English samples.

#### 2. Free Online Listening Material

The free online listening practice material that I produced, *Listening Practice in Real English* (<https://real-english.health.gunma-u.ac.jp/>), is primarily aimed at high school and college students in Japan and other Expanding Circle countries. Easier test items from high-stakes exams in Japan were re-used, and the recordings were reproduced by selected NNSs with a distinctive L1 accent. Users can choose between the original recording made by Americans and the reproduced recording.

Now, 50 dialogues played by speakers from ten countries are available, but I intend to expand the number of questions to 130, including 30 monologues, and the number of speakers from 10 to 30 in a few years. Moreover, I have a plan to include true or false questions about the global spread of English use, the ambiguous definitions of NSs, the dubious legitimacy of NSs as sole norm providers, and the effects and roles of English accents. This addition of quizzes on facts and research evidence aims to help users identify their misconceptions about real English, NSs, and accents. It is hoped that exposure to non-native speech samples with controlled difficulty levels and awareness-raising tasks will encourage English learners at home and abroad to have a more positive attitude toward their own English and use it confidently as an additional language to express themselves.

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# MICRO PODCAST LESSONS FOR ESL STUDENTS: YAY OR NAY?

Priscilla Shak<sup>1</sup>, Wendy Hiew<sup>2</sup> and Bernadette Tob<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1-3</sup>*Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning,*

*Universiti Malaysia Sabah*

[\\*pshak@ums.edu.my](mailto:pshak@ums.edu.my)

## Abstract

Two years post-pandemic, one of the most valuable lessons learnt for Higher Education stakeholders is the need for a more flexible learning format that could cater to the new norm. Hence, moving forward, hybrid classrooms are expected to flourish as they provide the desired flexibility where it combines the advantages of both the traditional and online classrooms. Nevertheless, digital divide (not necessarily restricted to space or distance constraints) remains the reality for many students, specifically those who have limited access to high-speed internet. For this reason, it is necessary to include digital educational tools that are easily accessible for this group of students. Hence, this study seeks to investigate the use of micro podcast lessons as an alternative for English as a Second Language (ESL) students in a blended learning mode. A mixed-method design was adopted involving 60 participants in a quasi-experimental study, and the use of questionnaire surveys, post-tests, and interviews. The paper focuses on the findings of the questionnaire survey to gauge the feasibility of incorporating podcast lessons for asynchronous learning and to investigate students' acceptance of their use. Findings indicated that while podcasts have been around for quite some time, some students still need to familiarise themselves with the podcast format. Additionally, while most of the respondents supported the use of micro podcasts lessons for asynchronous learning, a few were hesitant to embrace them. Thus, this study highlights the need for further investigation on the design and effectiveness of integrating micro podcast lessons in the English language classroom.

**Keywords:** micro podcast lessons, hybrid classroom, blended learning, asynchronous lessons, technology integration

## 1. Introduction

Students with limited high-speed internet access frequently find themselves unable to cope with the demands of online lessons. In many cases, they were unable to participate in various virtual lessons and had difficulties in accessing recorded lectures due to the typically large storage requirement and their limited internet connections. In Malaysia, connectivity has been a longstanding issue due to various reasons including geographical and financial constraints (Gomes, 2021; Jacobs & Subramaniam, 2020). As such, there is a need to provide students with an alternative that could allow them to access quality resources even with limited bandwidth or without the presence of internet. This is where micro podcasts can play a role. Unlike video streaming or synchronous lessons, audio podcasts require lesser bandwidth and occupy less storage if downloaded for offline use. Thus, making them a feasible option for students with limited internet reach.

As the world has witnessed, the post-covid landscape is a starting platform for the application of new technologies and applications in the education arena. In light of the usage of more advanced and complex e-learning applications, podcasts, which typically come in the form of

audio recordings, seem to be unimpressive in comparison. Nevertheless, despite being seemingly basic audio recordings, podcasts have great potential for educational purposes which can be used for both general and specific language learning. Salmon et al. (2008) defined a podcast as a digital media file that:

- plays audio (sound) or audio and vision (sound and something to view); with vision, the term ‘vodcast’ is sometimes used;
- is made available from a website;
- can be opened and/or downloaded (taken from the website that offers it and placed in something of your own) and played on a computer; and/or
- is downloaded from a website to be played (p. 1)

This study seeks to investigate the use of micro podcast lessons as an alternative for English as a Second Language (ESL) students in asynchronous learning. This study is guided by the following research questions:

- i) What are ESL students’ perceptions towards the use of micro podcasts in the English for Occupational Purposes classroom?
- ii). What types of podcast lessons are suitable for ESL learners?

## 2. Related Literature

Previous studies on the use of podcasts in language learning have indicated that they are useful for vocabulary building (Gholami & Mohammadi, 2015; Sansinadi et al., 2020), improving listening comprehension (Abdulrahman et al., 2018; Al Qasim & Al Fadda, 2013; Fitria et al., 2018; Wiyanah, 2015), enhancing motivation (Abdulrahman et al., 2016; Hasan & Tan, 2013), improving speaking skills (Samad et al., 2017), and improving pronunciation (Mbah & Iloene, 2014; Sansinadi et al., 2020). In addition, podcasts have been found to encourage students to engage in autonomous learning (Cross, 2016; Yaman, 2016), feel less “distant” and more “connected” (Nie et al., 2010, p. 112), while student-created podcasts could promote a community of support among students (Khoo et al., 2013; Lee & Chan, 2007; Lee & Tynan, 2008). Previous studies on the use of podcasts in language learning mainly revolve around the use of pre-existing podcasts which are available on the internet, as well as those provided on other podcasts applications on Android or iOS platforms. Scant research was found on teacher-developed micro podcasts formats. Therefore, this study seeks to close the gap by investigating the use of micro podcasts that are created as part of a lesson delivery system for English language courses.

Indeed, podcasts are greatly suitable for ESL students as they are typically presented in audio format, which makes them an excellent option for delivering lessons to enhance listening comprehension skills. With no video to distract them, students will be able to focus on the contents of the talk (Hawke, 2010). The absence of visuals will enable them to concentrate on the pronunciation, vocal intonation, and the use of pauses in speech. In addition, podcasts can also be used for both content and language delivery. Podcasts, on their own, are not meant to be used as whole lessons nor to replace language instructors (Indahsari, 2020). They are means that enable the integration of technology in language teaching and as such should be used conscientiously. Simonson (2007) opined that “a recording of a lecture is a poor example of a podcast” (p.105). Instead, he asserted that the content of a podcast should be limited to a single idea or “chunk” explained verbally in three to ten minutes recording.

## 3. Methods

This paper reports the quantitative findings of a larger-scale mixed-method study. A purposive sampling procedure was used and the participants were second-year students taking the EOP course. A total of 42 students completed the 40-item survey questionnaire. The questionnaire

was divided into four parts: (a) biodata, (b) micro podcast lessons for interviews, (c) podcast – experience, attitude, and preferences, and (d) suggestions for improvement. The SPSS (version 28) statistical software was used for descriptive statistics such as frequency and mean, and Cronbach Alpha for Likert-type questions. The reliability of the questionnaire items yielded a Cronbach Alpha score of .819 which indicated acceptable and good internal consistency.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

With regards to the first research question, “what are ESL students’ perceptions towards the use of micro podcasts in the English for Occupational Purposes classroom?”, findings indicated that although most of the students were new to using podcasts, most were very receptive to their use in the English classroom as they were able to learn at their own pace. In addition, adopting podcasts for language learning also allowed the students greater flexibility in choosing when and where to learn. Apart from that, the micro podcast lessons also injected a fun, new element that added variety to the course. Most importantly, students were able to learn about ‘interview’ topics through the micro podcast lessons and felt that the podcasts have effectively prepared them for the interview assessment.

As for the second research question, “what types of podcast lessons are suitable for ESL learners”, most of the students have indicated a preference for shorter videos that range between 1 to 10 minutes. Although some of the students have indicated a preference for a video or vodcast format, most welcomed the use of audio podcasts in the English lessons. It was also found that most students tend to choose topics that would help them to perform well in the interview task or assessment.

Moreover, most of the students also preferred to access the podcasts on their handphones. Therefore, the podcast application chosen to create lessons should have mobile applications available to students to allow a more convenient access. Finally, most students felt that the micro podcasts are more suited for use as lessons on a topic or for revision use, and to a lesser extent for pre-lessons use. Hence, future podcasts should be designed with these different uses in mind.

#### 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, micro podcast lessons are a great addition to the English language classroom for teaching and learning. Students can learn about the topic from the podcasts and are keen to continue using podcasts in future lessons. Therefore, it is recommended that more micro podcast lessons should be developed to cover other EOP topics or even topics for other courses to cater to students of different groups or proficiency levels.

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# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING GOOGLE FORMS FOR ONLINE EXTRA CLASS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

Ong Ma Vin<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*SMK Teluk Kumbar*

[g-37214071@moe-dl.edu.my](mailto:g-37214071@moe-dl.edu.my)

## Abstract

The issue faced by many students during online extra class was the ability to learn effectively from home. They worried that they would miss out a lot of learning, be behind in the English language syllabus and the negative impact on their performance for the upcoming examination if they missed out any information. Fortunately, there are many online resources and means for students to learn. One of them is through Google Forms. This study attempts to investigate whether Google Forms is an effective way to deliver lessons to students learning from home. Various questions were asked through Google Forms to gauge its feasibility throughout the two-month period of its usage so far in online extra classes for school. The implication of this study for English language teaching is the ability to share the feasibility of Google Forms as a method for online learning in the scenario of extra class. Results revealed positive findings regarding using Google Forms for learning in online extra class. Firstly, respondents found that Google Forms allowed them to learn at home effectively. Next, respondents found that Google Forms was easy to use and they were able to complete lessons. Furthermore, respondents found that Google Forms allowed them to learn English in a fun and interesting manner. Besides, respondents found that Google Forms allowed them to enhance their learning through the incorporation of technology. Based on the findings, it could be said that Google Forms is an effective way to learn online during in online extra class.

**Keywords:** online learning, effectiveness, google forms

## 1. Introduction

The problem faced by many students during online extra class was the ability to learn effectively from home. They found it to be an unusual form of learning where they had additional classes through an online form rather than face-to-face. Initially, they had lower self-esteem and confidence that they were learning effectively. Students were worried that they would miss out a lot of learning, be behind in the English language syllabus and the negative impact on their performance for the upcoming examination if they missed out any key information. Fortunately, there are many online resources and means for students to learn. One of them is through Google Forms. According to Iftakhar (2016), he claimed that virtual classroom refers to an online classroom that allows partakers to communicate with each another, view presentations or videos, interact with other participants and engage with materials in work groups. One example of virtual classroom is through Google Forms which was launched in 2008 that allows quizzes to be part of the learning process. This issue of students learning effectively through online means warrants attention as education for students should be carried out in a proper manner even during through online methods.



## **2. Significance of Study**

This study would be important to investigate whether Google Forms is an effective way to deliver lessons to students learning from home. This would be helpful to cover classes that were missed and also to provide additional practice for students to complete at home. It is hoped that the data obtained would help to answer whether teachers could replace teaching and learning in the physical classroom through Google Forms including its advantages and disadvantages that comes with it for teachers thinking of alternatives to teach and deliver lessons online.

## **3. Research Questions**

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

- Is Google Forms effective for online extra class in secondary school?
- What are the challenges of using Google Forms for online extra class in secondary school?

## **4. Method**

The data collection is based on data obtained through quantitative research. A survey through Google Form was carried out in order to find out whether students find Google Forms was effective for online extra class and also if there were any challenges of using Google Forms. The survey consisted of 10 questions in total and were based on Likert scale. A sample of 30 students were selected through purposive sampling in order to ensure that all the participants of the survey had undergone Google Forms and of the same age. For this study, students were 17 years old and currently Form 5 students. Gender of the students was not a criterion of the purposive sampling; a random number of males and females were selected to form 30 students in total. The data was analysed in order to find out whether students find Google Forms was effective for online extra class in secondary school and if there are any challenges of using Google Forms. The data was processed and tabulated in form of Bar Chart. The highest percentage for each response would support or deny the assumptions given.

## **5. Findings and Discussion**

Results revealed that positive findings regarding using Google Forms for online extra class. Firstly, respondents found that Google Forms allowed them to learn at home effectively. Secondly, respondents found that Google Forms was easy to use and they were able to complete lessons properly. Thirdly, respondents found that Google Forms allowed them to learn English in a fun and interesting manner. Next, respondents found that Google Forms enabled them to complete tasks given by teacher easily. Besides that, respondents found that Google Forms allowed them to enhance their learning through the incorporation of technology. Based on the findings, it could be said that Google Forms is an effective way to learn online for extra class.



## 6. Limitations

Limitations faced by the researcher is lack of time to carry out the research due to time constraints completing the syllabus, difficulties in looking for a colleague to be the research assistant due to hectic working schedule, occasionally facilities available at the research location may not be adequate or fully booked. Another limitation is the research was carried out over a period of two months which was a short period of time. Besides that, some of the participants needed constant reminders to complete the survey which took up a significant time of the researcher involved.

## 7. Conclusion

Based on the findings from the Google Form, most of the respondents found that Google Forms allowed them to learn at home effectively, was easy to use and they were able to complete lessons properly, allowed them to learn English in a fun and interesting manner, enabled them to complete tasks given by teacher easily, and allowed them to enhance their learning through the incorporation of technology. It is hoped that this research could help other educators to understand the strengths and weaknesses of using Google Classroom for online lessons.

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## **Creative Teaching Showcase**

## SPOT ‘EM IN ACTION

Alessandra Quincy<sup>1</sup>, Vanessa Injoh<sup>2</sup>, Melna Ittany<sup>3</sup> and Alicia Terra<sup>4</sup>

*IPG Kampus Tun Abdul Razak*

[alicia23-1186@epembelajaran.edu.my](mailto:alicia23-1186@epembelajaran.edu.my)

### Abstract

A mini whiteboard and a marker can change a typical punctuation exercise into an engaging game-based punctuation activity that creates a fun and engaging learning experience for learners. Spot ‘Em in Action is a game-based activity which aims for pupils to work in teams to spot the punctuation errors in sentences provided and to rewrite the sentences with the correct punctuation on their mini whiteboards within the time provided. It has gaming features such as a reward system, physical power up pack, progression, collaboration and competition among teams. In this showcase, we share our experience of using Spot ‘Em in Action in writing lessons to help young learners use punctuation appropriately at the sentence level, and to demonstrate how it can be used in actual classroom situations. Apart from this particular application, Spot ‘Em in Action is also versatile enough to be used in different contexts, classes, skills or lessons. It can even be modified to become an online game-based lesson by using interactive online whiteboards where pupils can virtually collaborate with their teams. Furthermore, Spot ‘Em in Action is also practical for teachers as the physical aids are accessible and affordable, with just self-produced mini whiteboards from laminated A4 papers and markers. We found that Spot ‘Em in Action to be able to teach punctuation, is effective and engaging for pupils, and shows a lot of promise for other skills and topics. In conclusion, we believe that Spot ‘Em in Action exemplifies how gamification can be effectively incorporated in ELT for real learning and not just “for fun” as some may say.

**Keywords:** Game-based activity, gaming features, punctuation, ELT, practical

### 1. Introduction

Gamification has been defined as the use of “game-based mechanics, aesthetics, and game thinking to engage people, motivate action, promote learning, and solve problems” (Kapp, 2013, p. 125). Abreast with the current development of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, gamification has been widely integrated in the classroom learning to help the learning become more fun and interesting for young learners. The implementation of gamification in primary school learning is crucial as it provides meaningful learning which allows students to learn better compared to the traditional learning in which Kapp (2013) has indicated that gamification can increase learner engagement in the learning process. Therefore, Spot ‘Em in Action has been introduced by the teacher trainee to provide fun and meaningful learning to the students with its game features as the reward system that focuses on the correct use of punctuation of English language, targeted at primary school students.

#### 1.1 Problem Statement

This project is focused on the primary school students as some of them have difficulties in using proper punctuation in their writing. The correct use of punctuation is very important as it helps the readers to understand the meaning that is conveyed as well as to teach the student to become a good writer. Without the correct use of punctuations, the meaning of the sentence cannot be

understood properly because punctuation clarifies the meaning of the written sentence (Iorio & Beyer, 2001). This is also posited by Zickermann and Cunningham (2011) that many students are lacking the motivation and interest to learn. So, the objective of this Spot 'Em in Action activity is that pupils will be able to identify and use punctuation appropriately to complete the sentences given within the time limit with the integration of gamification. This not only helps students to have fun learning but also prepares them in using punctuation correctly for their writing in future. Hence, this paper will explore more on The Spot 'Em in Action as the gamification in the classroom learning in teaching English as a Second Language for primary school students.

## **1.2 Significance of Study**

The significance of this project is that students are able to enjoy and follow the game, as well as identify and use correct punctuation at the end of activity. Hence, this enables them to use proper punctuation in their writing which helps contribute to advancing English language education. Spot 'Em in Action helps to improve their writing skills as they get to know the correct use of punctuation which is one of the main components in the writing. As a result, this activity enables students to become good writers who are able to use correct punctuation to convey meaning effectively through their writing.

## **2. Method**

The method used to collect data for the Spot 'Em in Action activity is through implementation of the activity in the actual classroom which was carried out by the teacher trainees of semester 6 of 3<sup>rd</sup> year degree students during their practicum which started on 8 August 2022. It involved students of Year 3 and 4 of SK St James Quop, Sarawak and Year 3 and Year 6 of SK Petra Jaya Sarawak respectively. The data was collected based on the final results of the Spot 'Em in Action activity where the students were assigned to their respective groups and allocated five minutes to spot punctuation errors. They assigned a representative to rewrite the sentence on a mini whiteboard with its correct punctuation and raised their mini whiteboards to show their answers. They were required to work in groups and the points were given according to the correct answers and received a random power up from the lucky bag as they were able to provide the correct answers.

## **3. Findings and Discussion**

Our findings during the implementation of this activity in the classroom showed that most of the groups worked together to complete their tasks. Although not all group members participate in writing or giving answers, they let the others participate by letting them choose the power ups or paper strips and raising the mini whiteboards. This activity allowed them to practise teamwork among themselves. Besides, all the students have actively participated in this activity. Although the classes can be loud during the activity, it was positive noise where they discussed with friends, and were not playing around. Moreover, the project was able to run smoothly as planned with minor errors, but it could not end in 30 minutes as suggested. It takes more than 30 minutes to complete all levels.

### **3.1 Limitation**

The limitation of this activity is it can only be implemented on young learners. This is because learners of older age may find this activity less entertaining as they may find it too easy. Besides,

the duration of this project is dependent on the size of class, so for bigger classes, more time is required to complete the activity.

#### **4. Conclusion**

At the end of this activity, the pupils are able to identify and use punctuation appropriately to complete the sentences given within the time limit which achieves the target for the activity. Spot 'Em in Action provides a meaningful learning experience to students as it integrates gamification which is the reward system in teaching punctuation. The Spot 'Em in Action activity which integrates elements of gamification is able to boost students' motivation and increase participation as they get competitive to win the game. The combination of strong motivation and high task engagement facilitate successful learning experience (Davis & McPartland, 2012). This can also promote collaborative skills among students as they need to work together to complete the task. This Spot 'Em in Action activity is suitable for both teachers and learners and as it can be improvised with other topics, is practical to use and the materials do not cost much. Hence, this activity promotes other skills such as collaboration which is significant for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.

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# PRODUCING DIGITAL STORYTELLING AS AN ANTIRACIST PEDAGOGICAL TOOL FOR 21ST CENTURY PRE-SERVICE TESL TEACHERS

Alia Aifa Norharmi<sup>1</sup> and Azlina Abdul Aziz<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Fakulti Pendidikan, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

<sup>2</sup>*Fakulti Pendidikan, Universiti Pendidikan Malaysia*

[\\*azlina1@ukm.edu.my](mailto:azlina1@ukm.edu.my) (Corresponding author)

## Abstract

Digital Storytelling (DST) is the integration of digitally animated characters and objects, text, audio recordings and music that are produced and presented in a virtual environment. It has revolutionised the way stories are told, giving a stage for students to learn through multimodal media. This study examines the experiences of pre-service TESL teachers in producing graphic narratives digitally founded on racial themes as an antiracist pedagogical tool. It also examined how DST facilitates the development of personal understandings of racism as well as in acquiring TPACK (technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge). This study adopted a mixed-methodology case study research design. Forty pre-service teachers at a public tertiary institution in Malaysia were selected through purposive sampling for the study. The data were collected using document analysis, a questionnaire, and personal written reflections. The collected data produced favourable findings concerning their perceptions of the creation of digital graphic stories as a means of addressing and raising awareness of racial issues in society, and as an instructional tool in ESL classrooms. The findings revealed that (1) the use of multiple modes of media helped channel messages cinematically, (2) it raised awareness of racism in its various manifestations and perspectives, and (3) empowered students through collaborative works which fostered creativity and accordingly (4) enhanced the quality of learning materials produced. Overall, this study concludes that DST enabled rich connections between realistic stories and racially relevant teaching and learning in a subtle yet significant manner, consequently making them engaging.

**Keywords:** *digital storytelling, teacher perspectives, racism, antiracist, pre-service TESL teachers*

## 1. Introduction

Rapid technological advancements in recent decades have led to the global proliferation of educational technology throughout the education sector. With the availability of digital cameras, personal computers, scanners, and easy-to-use software, educators have been able to harness the digital world with these new technologies to further their educational objectives (Smeda et al., 2014). Indirectly, this new use of technology has revolutionized the way stories are told. Its growth has, in turn, prompted the development of innovative storytelling techniques known as digital storytelling

In language teaching, a classroom lesson on racism could enormously expand familiarity with racial issues across multiple layers of society. Teachers, however, are often dismissive of

the idea of teaching it, especially in a multiracial classroom, stemming from an absence of mastery in approaching the topic. Often, the avoidance is also due to a fear of misspeaking or sounding racist. Aminuddin (2020), notes that studies on racial and religious discrimination in Malaysia are often avoided given the sensitive topic, the potential for political ammunition, and the prospect of people facing seditious charges. Thus, teaching students about race remain a challenging task, made more difficult by the prevalence of racialized language (Khanna and Harris, 2015). However, to create a safe classroom environment, educators must be willing to navigate rough waters when addressing sensitive and tough themes such as racism. Therefore, this study aims to examine pre-service TESL teachers' perspectives on digital storytelling as an antiracist pedagogical tool through the creation of digital graphic stories.

## 2 Related Literature

### 2.1 Digital Storytelling

Smeda et al. (2014) described digital storytelling as “a modern incarnation of the traditional art of storytelling”. This style of storytelling is, according to Rahiem (2021), traditional techniques combined with contemporary tools such as digital images, graphics, music, and sound, to create narratives together with the author's voice. These multimedia elements are then merged using specialized software to tell stories that revolve around a specific theme and viewpoint (Robin, 2016). In simple words, the traditional narrative format has been given a contemporary facelift in the form of digital format.

### 2.2 Teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Teaching the twenty-first-century generation calls for more creative, relevant, and diversified pedagogical approaches. Robin (2006) asserts that DST appeals to students with diverse learning styles, provides students with opportunities for collaboration, and boosts student achievement through individual ownership and accomplishment. Torres (2017) brought attention to the fact that in language learning, students should not only be receivers but producers of the language they are learning. Sharing a similar view, Ohler (2005), cited by Robin (2016) highlighted that when students create personal or insightful narratives, they transform from being passive consumers of information into active producers of new knowledge.

Robin (2016) added that DST supports learning by enabling students to express their creativity and critically reflect on what they have learned through the creation of digital stories. Towndrow and Pereira (2018) found that the inclusion of media and multimodality contributes to the broadening and deepening of their interpretative frames and enriches their understanding of the world. Those two accords with Clark & Medina (2000), in which, when used as an educational tool, storytelling can support critical and multicultural understandings, develop connections between personal narratives, and encourage reflexivity.

### 2.3 Technology, Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK)

TPACK, Technology Pedagogy and Content Knowledge (formerly known as TPCK), developed by Mishra and Koehler (2006), is the theoretical framework of this study. An immense amount of attention has been drawn to the TPACK framework in the area of educational technology as it identifies what teachers should know and how they should integrate technology into their teaching (Harriman, 2011). This theory suggests that teachers should be prepared for three types of knowledge: technological expertise (skills related to the



operation of standard and advanced technologies; TK), methods of teaching (PK); and content knowledge (CK), as it offers a holistic framework for examining the integration of technology into pre-service teacher education. This case study deals with pre-service teachers utilizing a technological tool that is digital storytelling. Thus, TPACK is an ideal fit for this study.

### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study uses a case study research design with a mixed method approach to provide more insights and understanding about this study. This study is drawn from the experiences of TESL undergraduate students enrolled in a Literary Production in the Digital Age course that involved teaching racism through the use of digital storytelling. In the 14-week course, participants are expected to produce a digital graphic story addressing societal racism within Malaysian society within a ten-minute duration. This assignment was introduced in a lecture format.

#### 3.2 Research Samples

The sample consisted of forty pre-service TESL teachers (31 female and 9 male) selected using a purposive sampling technique. Selection criteria included TESL pre-service teachers, having basic technological skills, and achieving a Band 4 MUET score. All of these individuals are third-year students enrolled in a Bachelor of Education in TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) programme at a Malaysian public institution during the 2021-2022 academic year.

#### 3.3 Instruments

A quantitative research design was employed using a set of questionnaires, while a qualitative research design was collected in the form of personal written reflections. Thus, for the quantitative data, several questions were adapted based on the digital storytelling framework by Smeda et. al (2012) and related questionnaires by Bolin & Grant (2016). The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The questionnaire and personal written reflection were then administered to the respondents towards the end of the semester. The respondents were then given some time over the semester break to answer the questionnaire. Throughout the study procedure, privacy and confidentiality were respected.

#### 3.4 Data Analysis

Due to the small sample size, the gathered data from the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics. Manual calculations and a table of frequencies and percentages were used to present the findings. As for personal written reflection, verbatim quotes from the participants' personal written reflections are included within the article to corroborate the findings of this study.

## 4 Results and Discussion

*Table 4.1: The Value of DST as an Antiracist Pedagogical Tool*

No.	Using digital graphic stories	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	as a classroom resource to address racial concerns in a community.			1 (2.5%)	8 (20%)	31 (77.5%)
2	as a tool to capture stories that illustrate the complex, varied, and persistent nature of racism.			2 (5%)	9 (22.5%)	29 (72.5)
3	as a tool to connect individual experience (micro-level) to cultural,		1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	9 (22.5%)	29 (72.5%)

	historical and structural phenomenon (macro-level)					
4	as a platform for accessing marginalized voices.			4 (10%)	5 (12.5%)	31 (77.5%)
5	to inculcate a sense of patriotism for our country.			1 (2.5%)	8 (20%)	31 (77.5%)

Responses obtained from respondents regarding the value of digital graphic stories as antiracist pedagogical tools are presented in Table 1. The results revealed that the majority of them (87.5 percent) concurred that the first and fifth items are the most frequently attended items as the crucial values they want to emphasise in producing digital graphic story projects as an antiracist pedagogical tool. In general, the analysis of these findings revealed that the digital graphic stories project is, (1) an approachable method for classroom lessons when dealing with sensitive and complicated issues; (2) indirectly serves as an outlet for pre-service teachers to create learning resources that are based on authentic stories and real-life experiences; and (3) demonstrates pre-service TESL teachers' creativity in dealing with Malaysia's cross-racial and cross-sectoral racial issues while working collaboratively between races in the video creation. This is consistent with Robin's (2016) assertion that the creation of digital stories encourages students to express their creativity and critically evaluate what they have learned.

*Table 4.2: Developing Personal Understanding of Racism*

No.	Through the DST project	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	My views on racial discrimination within the community have been widened.			1 (2.5%)	7 (17.5%)	32 (80%)
2	I am more aware of the different forms of racial discrimination that exist in society.			1 (2.5%)	7 (17.5%)	32 (80%)
3	I am more aware of the different racial discrimination that transcends in various sectors				10 (25%)	30 (75%)
4	I am more aware of different racist perceptions.			3 (7.5%)	5 (12.5%)	32 (80%)
5	I developed a critical perspective on racism.		1 (2.5%)	2 (5%)	8 (20%)	29 (72.5%)

Respondents' responses to the questions on developing a personal understanding of racism through digital graphic storytelling are shown in Table 2. Based on the pattern of the findings, the majority of respondents are of the opinion that their own awareness of racial concerns has increased as a direct result of participating in the DST project. In general, the majority of participants are overwhelmingly in agreement with all of the claims made, particularly regarding how the DST project broadened their views on racial discrimination within the community. The findings of Towndrow and Pereira (2018), who found that the use of media and multimodality broadens and deepens their interpretative frameworks and enhances their comprehension of the world, are consistent with this outcome. It also increased their awareness of the different forms of racial discrimination that exist in society and across sectors and helped them develop a critical perspective on racism.

*Table 4.3: Developing Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK)*

No.	Through the DST project, I learned to	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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<b>Technological Knowledge</b>						
TK1	utilize technology to enhance the quality of my instruction.				10 (25%)	30 (75%)
TK2	produce my own learning materials using technology.				9 (22.5%)	31 (77.5%)
TK3	produce visual content using digital technology.				8 (20%)	32 (80%)
<b>Pedagogical Knowledge</b>						
PK4	blend language learning with technology.			1 (2.5%)	8 (20%)	31 (77.5%)
PK5	employ a variety of teaching approaches for language learning.			1 (2.5%)	3 (7.5%)	36 (90%)
PK6	adapt teaching approach to fit the subject content.			1 (2.5%)	10 (25%)	29 (72.5%)
<b>Content Knowledge</b>						
CK7	utilize multimodality to depict the often covert nature of racism.			4 (10%)	9 (22.5%)	27 (67.5%)
CK8	incorporate related authentic content into teaching racism			3 (7.5%)	11 (27.5%)	26 (65%)
CK9	incorporate creativity into teaching racism.			1 (2.5%)	6 (15%)	33 (82.5%)

Table 4.3 displays the responses received from respondents about the DST project's goal of fostering technological, pedagogical, and subject knowledge. The findings showed that the majority of them agreed that the DST project had helped them enhance their TPACK expertise which reflected their role as creators of learning materials. As stated by Torress (2017), when learning a language, students should be both consumers and producers of the language they are learning. Under technological knowledge, the majority strongly agreed that the project has assisted them to produce visual content using digital technology. This indicates how the use of multimodality by pre-service TESL teachers' video creation has been advantageous in the delivery of messages. Under pedagogical knowledge, the highest response recorded on item PK5 is on employing a variety of teaching approaches for language learning. As this project was done in a lecture format, one of the course assessments is for them to construct lesson plans targeting four English language skills based on the digital graphic stories. Thus, it required them to adapt different teaching methods to each language skill. Under content knowledge, the majority of the participants highlighted that they learned to apply creativity while working with members of other races in the creation of digital graphic stories.

## 5 Conclusion

This research demonstrates that digital storytelling is an effective antiracist pedagogical tool for exploring sensitive and difficult topics like racism. The racism theme was chosen as the focus of this study since Malaysia is a multicultural nation where individuals of various races coexist despite cultural differences. The findings offer insights into digital storytelling as an effective and powerful antiracist pedagogical strategy as well as valuable educational resources for ESL classrooms. With that in mind, educators, teachers, pre-service teachers, and other members of the teaching profession must be made aware of the use of digital storytelling for addressing racism concerns in the classroom. They must also recognize that the digital storytelling technique mirrors 21st-century learning, where digital literacy elements and the combination of multimedia components are the means by which the current generation acquires knowledge. The incorporation of digital storytelling into pre-service teachers' education is also considered ideal since it enables each teacher to create their own learning materials based on actual and authentic life issues, rather than relying on Internet-accessible ready-made learning

materials. To conclude, educators play a crucial role in helping students openly discuss sensitive topics such as racial issues by providing a safe platform and DST made it feasible by providing authentic content and incorporating racially relevant teaching and learning approaches, which simplifies lesson delivery.

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# UPDATING CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT WITH TECHNOLOGY: THE USE OF NCT 21 IN ESL CLASSROOMS

Amirul Zikri Hadi, Fatin Nadhirah Suhaidi and Irsabrina Awang Hepeni

*IPG Kampus Tun Abdul Razak, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak.*

[amirul23-593@epembelajaran.edu.my](mailto:amirul23-593@epembelajaran.edu.my)

## Abstract

Classroom management is as crucial in the 21st Century classroom as it has ever been, regardless of changes in learning environments and activities. When teachers have to spend time regulating disruptive behaviours, this time is diverted from academic instruction, leading to less productive instruction. Neo Classroom Technology 21 (NCT 21) is a digital programme that modernises the behaviourist approach to classroom management by eliciting certain reactions in response to specific sounds. This software is to be used in a physical classroom. It may be accessed on a teacher's smartphone, which serves to control these sounds which are then played on a speaker to elicit responses based on 10 of the most popular classroom instructions for everyday teaching and learning practices. NCT 21 also incorporates the element of gamification in education by promoting collective responsibility among students. This is because NCT 21 incorporates the awarding of merit and demerit points based on student behaviour, and they are rewarded by groups based on points accumulated. This project is highly versatile since it can be utilized at all levels of primary school and in a variety of school subjects. Responses can also be customised for various purposes. In this showcase, we present the application of NCT 21 in actual classrooms and how it has evolved from the prototype with continual improvement from cycles of use and data collection. Although NCT 21 may be a work in progress in some aspects, so far there are highly positive signs that it is an effective tool.

**Keywords:** classroom management, technology, software, instructions, gamification

## 1. Introduction

In the 21st Century Learning, technology plays an important part in teaching and learning. The major rationale for incorporating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into education is that it encourages students to think constructively, helps them to overcome cognitive limits, and engages them in cognitive processes that they may not have been able to do otherwise (Salomon, 1993). It is also becoming essential for teachers to use technology to facilitate learning. The integration and application of technology have significantly changed the learning environment in the classroom to become more conducive. Technology offers a variety of options for making education more productive in terms of progress (Patel, 2013). So, the traditional teaching method whereby teachers give lectures in front of learners and giving instructions through the whiteboard must be changed in parallel to the development of technology.

This paper presents how our innovation project, NCT 21 is able to assist teachers with classroom management and induce an essence of gamification in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms in primary schools in Malaysia to make learning more conducive and fun for

both the teachers and students. In the first step, we present some of the key arguments for why technology is important in assisting teacher with classroom management. In the empirical part of the paper, we present the early findings and results of the implementation of NCT 21 in actual classrooms.

### 1.1 NCT 21 Application Design

Figure 1: User Interface of NCT 21 application



Figure 1 shows the NCT 21 application which consists of the Main Menu, the 'Instructions' page which present ten buttons of common classroom conducts and lastly the 'Supernova Metre' which acts as a reward system and it shows the cumulative merit points of four groups of pupils.

Table 1: Classroom instructions and songs

INSTRUCTIONS	SONGS
KEEP QUIET	Put a finger on your lip like this, Shh (2x) Put a finger on your lip, close your mouth with a zip Put a finger on your lip like this, Shh
ATTENTION	If you're happy and you know it clap your hands (2x) If you're happy and you know it and you really want to show it If you're happy and you know it clap your hands
GROUP UP	The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, round and round The wheels on the bus go round and round



	All day long
STAND UP	Head, shoulders, knees and toes (2x) Eyes and ears and mouth and nose Head, shoulders, knees and toes (2x)
SIT DOWN	The ants go marching one and one hurra-hurray (2x)
COUNTDOWN	Hickery dickory dock, The mouse went up the clock, The clock struck one, The mouse fall down, Hickery dickory dock.
TIME'S UP	Here comes Mon (2x) Hurry, hurry, hurry Oh here comes Mon
TAKE 5	Ooh, where can I sleep (2x) Sleepy mummy, sleepy mummy Where can I sleep? Sleepy mummy, sleepy mummy Can you tell me?
WRONG	Woo-woo, woo-woo London bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down London bridge is falling down, what do we do?
CORRECT	B-I-N-G-O (3x) Your answer is BINGO!

The instructions are chosen from ten most common classroom conducts which are assigned to a specific song each. The songs are picked from some nursery rhymes which imply the meaning of the instructions.

## 2. Related Literature

Fundamental changes have occurred in classrooms in addition to teaching approaches since the chalk-and-talk method is insufficient for efficiently teaching (Susikaran, 2013). The learning environment becomes a dynamic space full of relevant assignments where the students are accountable for their own learning by integrating and utilising technology. Using computer technology a real learning experience that increases learners' responsibility (Drayton et. al, 2010).

The use of technology can improve both the teacher's and learners' educational needs. Based on a study conducted by Bordbar (2010), the result shows that almost all teachers held a positive attitude towards the use of technology in class. There are two different ways for teachers to integrate technology into the classroom (Warschauer, 2000). The first is a cognitive approach, which allows learners to significantly expand their exposure to language while also developing their own knowledge. The social method, on the other hand, provides learners with realistic social interactions as a means of practising real-life skills gained via participation in real-world activities. For learners' educational needs, Shyamlee (2012) ascertains that technology enhances student learning attention since it implicates students in practical processes of learning through communication with each other.

Moreover, ICT can be used in the classroom by keeping the learners engaged. Younger learners at the primary level usually struggle to stay on task or interested in the lesson, particularly if it is not interactive. Learning using technology can make even the most monotonous tasks or



home works more engaging, which helps learners to stay focused. According to Hennessy (2005), the usage of ICT serves as a catalyst for inspiring instructors and students to work in new ways. For example, making learners work together indirectly promotes cooperation.

### **3. Methods**

A systematic implementation process was developed after extensive observation and analysis. The data was collected based on the observation of Year 3 pupils from Endap Primary School, SK Endap, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak. A total of 37 pupils from the class were chosen as a sample. Appropriate advance planning was done in order to have secured a competent execution that satisfies the requirements for classroom management. The project team initially conducted a careful analysis of the pupils' knowledge of the songs utilized in the design. It was crucial to fully comprehend how children would respond to it, especially in light of how it might affect how well the implementation goes. An effective strategy was put together once the programme was comprehended.

### **4. Results and Discussions**

The demonstration of the application of NCT 21 shows a successful result as an effective tool to assist teachers in classroom management. It appears that pupils are more engaged and enthusiastic to learn. Pupils' participation in class activities helps them in controlling the classroom as well as understanding academic subjects and learning activities effectively. Consequently, it develops motivation for pupils to learn. Pupils that are motivated can build positive outlooks and achieve their highest potential. Thus, when pupils get motivated, they are able to have the strong resolve required for comprehending and achieving academic goals. Therefore, increasing pupil motivation is seen as essential to enhancing academic learning, achieving educational objectives, and effectively managing the classroom. Although the NCT 21 application is considered successful, it is time-consuming since students would sing along to the song, just to understand certain instructions. Since this innovation is still undergoing trial to assist classroom management and implement gamification in ESL classrooms, there are still a lot of upcoming findings and improvements needed, thus more time is required to achieve the positive results successfully.

### **5. Conclusion**

Teachers with good classroom management abilities should make use of efficient methods to reduce inappropriate behaviour by creating predictable conditions because strategies to encourage appropriate, prosocial behaviour may occasionally fall short. For students who are at risk, environments that are predictable and offer beneficial learning opportunities are particularly crucial. Considering what we currently offer, the design is now working well in the classroom and can only be made even better by conducting additional studies and testing.

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# BIBLIOTHERAPY: EXPLORING MALAYSIAN CULTURE THROUGH DIGITAL STORYBOOKS

Nhithilan Thavamoney, Siti Mysarah Mohd Shuib, Siti Halimah Mohd Tahar,  
Nurul Mardhiah Mohd Nizar and Abdul Muiz bin Shamsul Arifin

*IPGK Darul Aman*

[Mysarah02@gmail.com](mailto:Mysarah02@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Bibliotherapy is known as a therapeutic approach employing written materials to produce efficacious changes and promote personality growth and development within the reader. In language classes, it is conducted with the intent to assist learners in understanding themselves and coping with their problems using literature pertinent to their personal situations and developmental needs. In the primary ESL classroom, bibliotherapy indirectly has the ability to cultivate an interest in multiculturalism, a chance that is not easily obtained through the typical teaching and learning process. Therefore, bibliotherapy can not only aid personal development and nurture good behavior, but it also exposes learners to the diverse cultures and ethnicities found in Malaysia; a melting pot of different cultures. However, the lack of literature on multicultural elements in the form of storybooks and novels hampers the teaching and learning process using bibliotherapy. In overcoming this issue, we have decided to create digital storybooks that integrate various multicultural elements found in Malaysia. In this showcase, we will share multicultural issues that can be addressed through the digital storybooks produced using the bibliotherapy technique. This innovation would not only assist and facilitate learners in enriching their knowledge of our local culture and encourage their linguistics development, but also introduce the uniqueness of Malaysia to the global world through digital storybooks.

**Keywords:** Bibliotherapy, digital storybooks

## 1.0 Introduction

Bibliotherapy is a unique way for young students to experiment with different ideas, feelings, and attitudes by gaining a better grasp of their environment, community, and social expectations. In the primary ESL classroom, bibliotherapy has the potential to indirectly nurture an interest in multiculturalism, an opportunity that is not easily accessible through the conventional teaching and learning process. Therefore, bibliotherapy not only promotes personal development and fosters good behaviour, but it can also expose students to the melting pot of cultures and races found in Malaysia.

## 1.1 Issues

The first issue that will be addressed here is the misconception of East Malaysian lifestyles, and the focus is on Sarawak. Most children's perceptions of community life in Sarawak are inaccurate, perhaps due to its location on Borneo Island. Children may believe that the people of Sarawak still live in deprivation because they still live in wooden longhouses, have no access

to the internet or modern technology, travel with '*sampans*' and bathe in rivers. Due to modernisation and globalisation, many good changes have occurred. Therefore, young learners must have access to this information so that this misconception does not persist as they grow.

The second issue that is highlighted in this paper is the celebrations celebrated in Malaysia. Although Malaysia is a multicultural country, there are still Malaysians who lack knowledge about the celebrations in Malaysia and often think that certain celebrations and festivals exclusively belong to people from a certain religion. The lack of exposure to cross-cultural elements would have an overwhelming impact on not only a learners' classroom experience but their perspective of life and functions in the community as well.

Both issues highlighted, are a small fraction of the multicultural issues that are commonly experienced in a culturally-diverse country like Malaysia. These issues can be addressed in the English language classes through bibliotherapy. However, upon completing an assignment on bibliotherapy and culture, we discovered that it is hard to find a sufficient number of books and literature on the subject matter, be it digitally or in concrete storybooks.

## **1.2 Innovation**

Unfortunately, the paucity of literature on multicultural elements in the form of storybooks hampers the teaching and learning process using bibliotherapy. In overcoming this issue, we have decided to develop digital storybooks that incorporate diverse multicultural elements found in Malaysia. This innovation would not only assist and facilitate learners in enriching their knowledge of our local culture and encourage their linguistic development but could also introduce the uniqueness of Malaysia to the global world through digital storybooks.

The innovation of digital storybooks seeks to highlight, for now, two crucial multicultural issues addressed by the current mainstream: the East Malaysian lifestyles and celebrations in Malaysia.

## **1.3 Objectives**

Based on the issues discussed earlier, it is evident that the younger generation, especially young children, need to be exposed to other cultures, especially the ones that co-exist with their own. Manning, Baruth, & Lee (2017) stated that "multicultural education is both a concept and deliberate process designed to teach learners to recognize, accept and appreciate the differences in culture, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, religion, special needs and gender". These factors will influence children's educational experiences. Furthermore, by understanding and accepting the multicultural system of their school, they can reject any form of oppression related to diversity (Saleh & Doni, 2018). In this paper, the multicultural education process will be executed through bibliotherapy, using the innovation created specifically to achieve these objectives:

1. To use bibliotherapy in broadening young learners' knowledge of multiculturalism.
2. To expose learners to the diverse cultures and ethnicities found in Malaysia through appropriate digital reading sources and resolve misconceptions, specifically on the lifestyles of people in Sarawak and celebrations in Malaysia.
3. To offer learners an enjoyable and convenient way of learning through the use of digital storybooks.

4. To assist the development of all the 2030 sustainable development goals through unity that is achieved as a result of multicultural education.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

This section provides an overview of three main key ideas that are the gist of this innovation: bibliotherapy, storybooks and multiculturalism in Malaysia.

### **2.1 Bibliotherapy**

Bibliotherapy generally refers to the use of literature to help people cope with emotional problems, mental illness, or changes in their lives (Pardeck, 1994), or to produce effective change and promote personality growth and development (Lenkowsky, 1987). By providing literature relevant to their personal situations and developmental needs at appropriate times (Hebert & Kent, 2000), bibliotherapy practitioners attempt to help people of all ages to understand themselves and to cope with problems such as separation, child abuse and adoption. Bibliotherapy can also be used in tackling multicultural issues that students endure, such as racism and stereotypes.

According to Keskin (2018), one of the solutions to the issues in a multicultural society is providing education containing multicultural values. Most importantly, it helps to spread multicultural awareness through the moral values conveyed in the books used, especially when it is filled with values and principles. Therefore, bibliotherapy may be an option that can be considered in addressing multicultural issues. Teachers can integrate bibliotherapy in the classroom through the use of children's literature such as poetry, graphic novels and short stories as it helps to expand young readers' perspectives by providing them with exciting knowledge through storybooks; be it printed or digital.

### **2.2 Storybook**

Printed storybooks have entertained countless children throughout the globe for decades. However, the state of technology has changed and has seeped into the daily lives of people in every town. In most societies today, digital technology is an integral part of young children's everyday lives (Chaudron, Rosanna & Monica, 2018) and interactions with digital media are becoming an increasingly important aspect of children's everyday lives in classrooms and at home, among other places (Fibriasari et al, 2021). Bedtime stories have transformed from traditional print to digital storybooks and can now be viewed from smartphones and tablets.

One possible advantage of digital storybooks is that they can include multimedia components as well as interactive features that may aid in the acquisition of a foreign language. Despite the differences, one important essence shared by both types of storybooks is their ability in inculcating values through their content. Value-based stories encourage young learners to think about and reflect on not only the universal values such as friendship, respect, honesty, and love but could also be used as a tool to promote patriotism, multiculturalism and to name but a few.

### **2.3 Multiculturalism in Malaysia**

Malaysia is known as one of the most multicultural nations in the world. Multiculturalism means the acceptance of the other culture, including its ethnic beliefs and customs, and it paves the way for the abolition of all racial distinctions (Moawad et al., 2017).

Therefore, the integration of multiculturalism elements in storybooks is significantly crucial in helping children explore how people from other cultures do similar things in different ways, enabling them to gain a sense of acceptance and appreciation for diverse cultures (Omar & Dan, 2017). As we live in a multicultural society, it is significant for children's literature to give a positive insight into the ideas and values of people from different backgrounds that will teach valuable lessons about tolerance, equality, and cross-cultural friendships. In short, reading about multiculturalism in children's literature is one of the best ways to open students' minds and hearts and increase their appreciation and inclusion of diverse beliefs and cultures.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This section gives an overview of the innovation, the digital storybooks and the target groups.

#### **3.1 Target Group**

The target audience would be primary school students, most specifically the Level 2 students. In contrast, most students have mastered the three fundamental skills: reading, writing and arithmetic. Students are provided with the basic skills at a young age; therefore, the tendency for them to be attracted to the storybooks created is high. The storybooks contain elements of visuals, vibrant colours, and dialogues, which are undoubtedly helpful for students to read. Be it students who have low proficiency in reading, but with visual interpretation provided, they may be able to grasp the flow of the story.

These digital storybooks are intended to reach a global audience as well and at the same time introduce the uniqueness of Malaysia, a country coined as Asia's melting pot. It is hoped that these books are able to spread awareness of multicultural issues on misconceptions that are harboured in the minds of people who are not exposed to cultural differences.

#### **3.2 The Digital Storybook**

We have decided to come up with a digital storybook as our product because it is closely related to bibliotherapy. We believe that bibliotherapy can deliver a big impact on the readers of multiculturalism. However, in coping with the new era of digitalisation, we shift the commonly printed storybook that people often buy at the bookstore, to a digital storybook that people can find online, just by a click.

Both books were designed with a few main essences in mind; multiculturalism, language and enjoyment. Besides disseminating values on cultures, these books serve as a tool for teaching in a language classroom. It can be used to teach reading fluency and comprehension, grammar, literature and also writing during English lessons. These books facilitate digital literacy development too through the integration of multimedia technology into the classroom. Teachers can either display the story in class using a projector or get the students to read individually at their own pace using laptops or desktops at the computer lab. Teachers can also conduct flipped classroom activities by assigning students to read the story at home using their own digital devices. This promotes student-centred learning which encourages students to be responsible for their own learning.

The idea of producing digital books instead of typical storybooks was derived from the experience of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is vital to have accessible teaching and learning materials that can be retrieved easily using various digital devices. Moreover, in

this era, people spend most of their time on gadgets, including primary school students. Thus, this digital storybook is more approachable to the audience as it is easier for them to have access to the storybook. These digital storybooks, when shared online, are also accessible to readers all over the globe as they are able to read the book online without having to travel and buy the physical storybooks. This, indirectly, helps to introduce the uniqueness of local culture and literature to the global audience.

### **3.2.1 Sarawak**

Ronny is a hornbill caught for the purpose of a zoo in Kuala Lumpur and intends to return to his home in Sarawak. He fled and got lost in the city of Klang. Later, he met some new friends, Pigeon, Eagle and All-Knowing Parrot, who offered to help him return home. However, both Pigeon and Eagle have no idea where Sarawak is located. Luckily, All-Knowing Parrot knew where Sarawak is located at. The Parrot tells them a story about the people and culture of Sarawak. Along the way, Hornbill witnesses different cultures from the hometowns of Pigeon and Eagle. When they arrived in Sarawak, all three of them, Parrot, Eagle and Pigeon, had been proven wrong. They were shocked by the people of Sarawak because it was not like what Parrot told them.

### **3.2.2 Devi's Family Celebration**

Devi is an Indian girl who celebrates Deepavali. However, there are some of Devi's family members who celebrate other festivals as well. In this storybook, we also share some information on the celebrations, such as how people celebrate them, the food, and also the story behind the celebration. This will help readers grasp the celebration in a broader context, rather than just seeing it as a common festival. This story also portrayed how unique a country called Malaysia is to the global audience because only Malaysians can share such values and celebrate the differences without having any prejudice or discriminating against people based on their religion or belief.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

In recent years, culture is also identified as an essential pillar in achieving sustainable development (Lazar & Chithra, 2021). Understanding cultures increases tolerance, enhances our quality of life and increases overall well-being for both individuals and communities which creates opportunities for unity in diversity. The unity achieved, especially in a cultural melting pot, is the essence that would assist the development of all the 2030 sustainable development goals. The idea of bibliotherapy, which we deliver through digital storybooks, can aid the audience, specifically the primary school students and the global audience by exposing them to new knowledge of multiculturalism in Malaysia and teaching them the good values that are presented in the stories. It is hoped that these digital storybooks will help in widening the readers' view of Malaysia and understanding of the different racial and ethnic heritages of Malaysians.



## TEACHER REFLECTION WITH E-PORTFOLIO

Hadirah Azman<sup>1</sup> and Nirmala Rajoo<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Management & Science University*

<sup>2</sup> *Management & Science University*

[nurulhadirah082707@gmail.com](mailto:nurulhadirah082707@gmail.com)

### Abstract

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas. In the teacher training programs at Management and Science University (MSU), teacher trainees are required to produce e-portfolio to reflect on their learning and as preparation for their teaching practicum. The e-portfolio is a key assessment tool for the course Microteaching conducted for future teachers in MSU. The e-portfolio contains reflections and evidence of weekly lectures, basically teaching topics and assessments given throughout the subject, including additional research on teaching skills and constructing self-teaching principles which guides the teacher trainees in emphasizing elements that they have learned to become effective future teachers. Highlighting the assessments that they have participated in, such as the mock teaching, developing independent learning blogs as well as teaching aids, may give opportunities for future teachers to evaluate their progress and elements that need to be improved from the reflection created. Fortuitously, the creation of this e-portfolio may also be developed among language learners as it may enhance learners' responsibility for their learning. Advantageously, it is in line with the 21st-century learning to allow learners to become independent in the learning sessions while developing creativity and critical thinking in producing an e-portfolio.

**Keywords:** E-portfolio, Reflection, Teacher Training Programs

### 1. Introduction

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas. In light of this fact, a portfolio that is indicated in the education field may contain quality works of the students with its systematic collection of academic evidence in experiencing and reflecting the learning progress. These collections are recorded and booked to produce a long-lasting product accomplished by the students, which may benefit their future. Besides, it is convenient for every individual to create the masterpiece regardless of the level of achievement, which may be one of the reasons it has been developed in teacher training programs at Management and Science University (MSU).

### 2. Related Literature

According to an article, the author stated that previous scholars mentioned successful classroom teaching may have resulted from frequent reflective practice by teachers (Nespor, 1987 as stated in Moayeri & Rahimiy, 2018). The authors also highlighted that pre-service teachers are successfully aware of their growth in education music programs due to the successful process folio taken as part of their assessment material (Silveria, Beauregard & Bull, 2017, as stated in Moayeri et al, 2018). Other than that, an article by Jones studying the effect

of reflection on teachers' effectiveness stated that an educator will grow successfully with the implication of reflection regardless of how many experiences and institutions they graduated from (Jones, 2020). These show that many scholars supported the concept of reflections in teachers' practices in ensuring they may productively struggle to answer critical questions as feedback for their teaching. It was all to ensure they are willing to change and improve their teaching for the student's learning.

### 3. Methods

The teacher trainees are required to produce an e-portfolio to reflect on their learning and as preparation for their teaching practicum. As it is known, teachers are required to do reflection for every class that they have conducted. Hence, this type of assessment has been prepared for the teacher trainees in taking note of how they may improvise their teaching and learning sessions. In this institution, the creation of the e-portfolio has been a part of the assessments that need to be accomplished individually. Considering this, every student will be exposed to the details that can be included in the portfolio, which have been explained by the respective lecturer. Above all, by the end of the semester, the teacher trainees would be presenting their e-portfolio, which may reveal extra knowledge, skills, and values that they acquired throughout the classes conducted. Hence, every learner may have the opportunity to share and gain new information. In point of fact, the e-portfolio contains reflections and evidence of weekly lectures, basically teaching topics and assessments given throughout the subject. These are such as the stages of conducting a lesson, techniques of engaging the classroom, and developments of teaching materials.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The reflections written contain students' perspectives of the knowledge and skills learned. Plus, they may understand and appreciate the experience learned as well as discover unintended knowledge. It is due to the fact that students may include additional research on teaching skills and constructing self-teaching principles which may guide the teacher trainees in emphasising elements that they have learned to become effective future teachers. For example, on the topic of Reinforcement strategies, additional resources can be found on YouTube on how to handle a classroom in a better way according to research done by previous scholars. These contain the extra tips and latest discoveries on how a teacher may implement the strategies to ensure the students have positive engagement in a classroom. Besides, by realising the significance of discovering extra knowledge, one may acknowledge that learning is an ongoing behaviour even though they have been called an educator.

Besides, the utilisation of an e-portfolio allows the students to create the contents digitally with the inclusion of wider features to ensure the presentation of the portfolio is more creative, attractive, and accessible, especially at this point in time. Students may access several online features as a platform for them to create it where it may make up their minds on the inclusion of technology in the education field. Therefore, an e-portfolio is a key assessment tool for the course Microteaching conducted for future teachers at MSU. It familiarises the teacher trainee with the latest feature of creating digital artefacts, which is also a must for present-day educators to be prepared for the online world.

Highlighting the assessments that they have participated in, such as the mock teaching, developing independent learning blogs as well as teaching aids, may give opportunities for future teachers to evaluate their progress and elements that need to be improved from the reflection created. What is more captivating is that some of the assessments that they had to play a part that were tasks in groups. Therefore, interestingly, even though a respective group had produced a similar product for the assessment, they might experience and gain new knowledge differently. Hence, reflection written may be different, which is in line with the

teaching experience for every teacher. Teacher trainees may acknowledge the importance of learning from different experiences, which may produce different improvisations towards their passion. Besides, all of it is for the benefit of future students.

Furthermore, students would realise their passion grows as they may include their principle in teaching in making the portfolio their own. Plus, the freedom to create the content may attract their honest intention towards teaching. Along the lines, organisation skills will be developed among the students as they may arrange the reflections according to teaching topics or monthly sessions in completing the syllabus depending on their creativity.

Fortuitously, the creation of this e-portfolio may also be developed among language learners as it may enhance learners' responsibility for their learning. This is due to the requirements that need to be fulfilled in completing an effective e-portfolio, whereas photos were taken for each class or progress for the Microteaching subject as part of the evidence in attending and participating in the class. Plus, the additional information included provided an opportunity for them to be independent in searching by themselves in adding to the teaching skills or techniques. Therefore, the tips shared by the whole class may be acquired and acknowledged fully in developing oneself as an effective educator in the future. Advantageously, it is in line with 21st-century learning to allow learners to become independent in the learning sessions while developing creativity and critical thinking in producing an e-portfolio.

## 5. Conclusion

In the final analysis, reflection in the form of a creative masterpiece may give an opportunity for an individual, especially as an educator in having a pause and learn through the experiences as much as possible and finally come out with precious values that should be interpreted and improvised in future teaching. The process of creating the masterpiece is able to gain an individual's interest in providing full commitment to create engaging future mindsets, which help us in breaking normal patterns of behaviour and produce effective personal growth. Besides, this e-portfolio may be part of their resume, especially in the education field, as their assessments were also in this only one click resource.

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## USING THE GIST MIND MAP TO IMPROVE WRITING AN INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH IN AN ACADEMIC STYLE

Gan Si Wah Roselind<sup>1</sup>, Wong Su Huia<sup>2</sup> and Chin Yee Yuen @ Kelvin Chin<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>*Kolej Tingkatan Enam Tawau, Sabah*

[roselindg@gmail.com](mailto:roselindg@gmail.com)

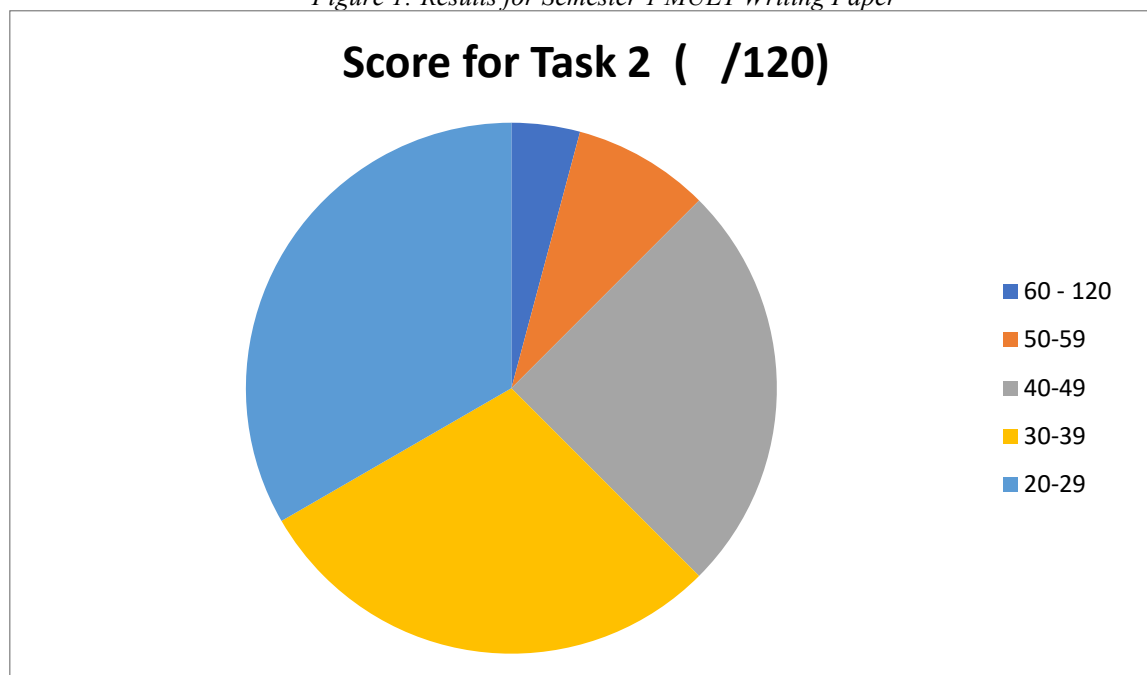
### Abstract

For Malaysian English language learners, stepping into tertiary education often means the reality of writing academic essays, either in argumentative or discursive style, which most students may have evaded in secondary level. However, the students favour narrative or descriptive essays more. As a result, many students encounter difficulties in presenting a satisfactory piece of academic essay, and this is most apparent in the introductory paragraphs. This action research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using the GIST mind map to enhance Form 6 students' performance to write an academic introductory paragraph. The participants consisted of six Form 6 students, all basic users according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) level. They were exposed to the four components in an academic introductory paragraph once a week for a period of 3 weeks. In this study, the mind map of GIST refers to an acronym for 4 main components in an introductory paragraph, namely General statement(s), Issue, Stand and Thesis Statement. Data collected and analysed stemmed primarily from introductory paragraphs written by the six students in the pre-test and post-test stages, as well as introductory paragraphs written by using the GIST mind map as an intervention. A follow-up questionnaire was then given to further investigate the effectiveness of the GIST mind map. Essentially, the findings indicated that the GIST mind map has led to considerable positive effects on students' performance in writing academic introductory paragraphs. This, in turn, has significantly contributed to enhancing students' writing skills and also, their language acquisition process.

**Keywords:** GIST mind map, MUET, academic introductory paragraph

### 1. Introduction

The inception of the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) paper for local university entry in 1999 (Majlis Peperiksaan Malaysia, 2019) has made it obligatory for students in local tertiary colleges to sit for Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing papers. The latter has necessitated the students to write academic argumentative or discursive essays, in Task 2. Nevertheless, our students' Semester One Trial Exam (Task 2) indicated a worrying trend :-

*Figure 1: Results for Semester 1 MUET Writing Paper*

*Source: MUET Writing Paper Score for Task 2, Unisza 21, Kolej Tingkatan Enam Tawau, 2022*

Based on Figure 1, only one in 24 students achieved above 60/120. Some students even failed to grasp the components in writing an academic introductory paragraph. Consequently, it has an indirect negative repercussion to students' MUET results.

### 1.1 Significance of Study

According to Smith (2022), a good introduction indicates one's general background and planning to the essay. Thus, our research only aimed to aid students to improve writing academic introductory paragraph. By introducing the GIST mind map, it was hoped students can clearly visualise the 4 main components, i.e. G – General Statement(s), I – Issue, S – Stand, and T – Thesis Statement, their sequence and organisation.

### 1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions harnessed this research :

- i. Does the GIST mind map enhance students' performance in writing an academic introductory paragraph?
- ii. What are the students' perceptions on the effectiveness of verbal explanations and the use of the GIST mind map?

## 2. Related Literature

### 2.1 Mind Map for Visual Learners

The research is an interventional tool innovated from Fleming and Mills's VARK Model of individual learning styles (1992), focusing on presenting graphic representations through a mind map for "visual learners" to visualise the sequence and components in an introduction paragraph clearer. Sousains (2016) also claimed mind mapping encourages learners to create personalised visual representations in language acquisition.

## 2.2 Mind Map Aids Organisation

Al Naqbi (2011) argued that mind mapping could help students to plan and organise ideas for writing. Additionally, Fotheringham (2018) cited that in language learning, mind map helps organising one's thoughts before writing.

## 3. Methods

### 3.1 Target Group

The participants chosen were six college students (5 females and 1 male) from a mixed-ability MUET class. Their Semester One trial exam showed poor range of scores, 26 – 45/ 120 marks. They are all categorised as basic users in the CEFR level (Majlis Peperiksaan Malaysia, 2020).

### 3.2 Data Collection

A variety of methods were used: -

*Table 1: Methods*

Data Collection	Target Group	Steps	Purpose
Pre-test	6 students	Students wrote an introduction for a question, "Online information is deceiving and unreliable".	To assess their performance in writing an introduction <b>before</b> intervention.
Post-test 1 (verbal interventions)	6 students	After verbal explanations on the GIST components, students wrote an introduction using the same topic.	To assess the performance <b>after</b> verbal explanations.
Post-test 2 (Using the Gist mind map)	6 students	After introducing the GIST mind map, students wrote an introduction on "Technology has reduced man's ability to think".	To assess the performance <b>after</b> the intervention of using the GIST mind map
Questionnaire	6 students	A questionnaire with 6 questions was given.	To collect data on students' perceptions on i) their schemata in academic essays; ii) the effectiveness of verbal explanations; and iii) using the GIST mind map

The GIST mind map is shown as follow :-

Table 2: The GIST Mind Map

**The GIST MIND MAP**

Action Research : Using the GIST Mind Map to improve writing introductory paragraph

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Class : \_\_\_\_\_

Topic : "Technology has reduced teenagers' ability to think." Do you agree?

G1
↓
G2
↓
G3
↓
Issue
↓
Stand
↓
Thesis Statement

To enable scoring system, each component written would warrant one point, thus allowing a maximum of 4 points achieved.

#### 4.0 Results and Discussion

Table 3 clearly indicates the components that students scored. Student D and E showed an improvement in Post-Test 1, indicating they may display traits of auditory learners. In contrast, after the intervention of the GIST mind map, both groups showed a significant improvement. 2 students in Group 2 achieved all GIST components in Post-Test 2.



Table 3: Analyses of the GIST components in 2 groups of students' introductory paragraphs

Group 1 :												
Stages of writing	Student A				Student B				Student C			
	G	I	S	T	G	I	S	T	G	I	S	T
Pre-test	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Post-test 1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Post-test 2 : Using the GIST mind map	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
Group 2 :												
Stages of writing	Student D				Student E				Student F			
	G	I	S	T	G	I	S	T	G	I	S	T
Pre-test	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
Post-test 1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	2/3	1	1	1	1/3
Post-test 2 : Using the GIST mind map	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1/3

KEY : **G** – General statement (s)

**I** – Issue

**S** – Stand

**T** – Thesis statement

The mean scores of the pre-test and post-test are shown in Table 4 below. In Post-test 1, in which mere verbal explanations were given, an increase of 0.67 in the mean score was indicated. However, with the intervention of the GIST mind map, an increase of 1.05 in the mean score was recorded.

Table 4: Mean Scores from Pre-test and Post-tests

Writing an academic introductory paragraph	No. of participants	Mean Score	Difference
Pre-test	6	1.5	--
Post-test 1	6	2.17	+ 0.67
Post-test 2 (Using the GIST mind map)	6	3.22	+ 1.05

Below are students' actual work produced in pre and post-tests. In the pre-test, student A and D only wrote one sentence within 15 minutes. In post-test 1, student E was able to complete almost all components. In post-test 2, Student D and E were able to complete all 4 components. From all the tests, Student D had shown the most tremendous improvement, proving the effectiveness of the GIST mind map in his process of learning to write an academic introductory paragraph.

Figure 2: Students' Introductory Paragraphs

Actual students' Work	
<p><b>Pre-test</b></p> <p><b>G1</b> In this modern era, google is the platform that people can search on information.</p> <p><b>A</b></p> <p><b>D</b> Nowadays, we can get any information everywhere.</p> <p><b>G1</b> People nowadays prefer to add online information to their knowledge.</p> <p><b>B</b> It is an introduction for the following topic: online information is deceiving and unreliable.</p> <p><b>G1</b> Nowadays, many people used online information as a source. There is a lot of information in many types. For example, for study matter such as information for study. Students will enter to do exercise or work. They will use online information better than searching for a book at library.</p>	<p><b>Post-test 1</b></p> <p><b>C</b> (Online information is about the information that we don't understand try to search in online. Nowadays, the young people use the online information to do their work. This is because they want to copy and give more ideas than they search for info. For example, they use social media such as google to find the information. Then many people are argue the fact about use to social media. This is because the online information have advantages and disadvantages. Also, when they use to find another information this it can be be about all the info. Hence, many transfer into a social media in the day...</p> <p><b>D</b> (Nowadays, online information used by people as a source of information. In the past, people only had the library to collect information while now, there is a lot of technology that may help people to find information. However, contain online information has their disadvantages, which is deceiving and unreliable.)</p> <p><b>E</b> In the era of modern technologies, people prefer to looking for online information. This is because a long time ago, people used to walk or interview other people if they want to know some information. Different with people nowadays who are only searching information by social media such as whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter. However, some people argue that online information is deceiving and unreliable. I totally agree with the statement online information is deceiving and unreliable. This is because fake news spreads too fast, people are confused with the information given and...</p>
<p><b>Post-test 2</b></p> <p><b>D</b></p> <p>Technology has reduced teenagers' ability to think. I think a lot of technology nowadays that may help us do any work.</p> <p>G2: technology has their advantages and disadvantages while using it.</p> <p>G3: At example, if people use a gadget wisely they may collect a lot of good and important information.</p> <p>Issue: However, there still have side effects while using technology which is technology has reduced teenagers ability to think.</p> <p>Stand: I agree with the statement that said "technology has reduced teenagers ability to think."</p> <p>Thesis Statement: there are some aspects of technology that may lead teenagers' ability to think reduced such as (website) (artificial intelligence) and (social apps).</p>	<p><b>E</b></p> <p>Topic: Technology has reduced teenagers' ability to think. Do you agree?</p> <p>G1: In this era, technology is important to every human.</p> <p>G2: This is because students or workers will searching for information on internet.</p> <p>G3:</p> <p>Issue: However, technology has a disadvantage which is it reduced teenagers' ability to think.</p> <p>Stand: I totally agree with the statement that "technology has reduced teenagers' ability to think."</p> <p>Thesis Statement: This can be seen especially through modern technology such as (laptop) (mobile phone) and (computer).</p> <p>-2 GS -1 I -1 S1 -1 S2 -1 S3 -1 S4 -1 S5 -1 S6 -1 S7 -1 S8 -1 S9 -1 S10 -1 S11 -1 S12 -1 S13 -1 S14 -1 S15 -1 S16 -1 S17 -1 S18 -1 S19 -1 S20 -1 S21 -1 S22 -1 S23 -1 S24 -1 S25 -1 S26 -1 S27 -1 S28 -1 S29 -1 S30 -1 S31 -1 S32 -1 S33 -1 S34 -1 S35 -1 S36 -1 S37 -1 S38 -1 S39 -1 S40 -1 S41 -1 S42 -1 S43 -1 S44 -1 S45 -1 S46 -1 S47 -1 S48 -1 S49 -1 S50 -1 S51 -1 S52 -1 S53 -1 S54 -1 S55 -1 S56 -1 S57 -1 S58 -1 S59 -1 S60 -1 S61 -1 S62 -1 S63 -1 S64 -1 S65 -1 S66 -1 S67 -1 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All methods consistently showed affirmative results to both research questions in 1.2, thus supporting the effectiveness of the GIST mind map.

## 5.0 Conclusion

Conclusively, the GIST mind map is effective to enhance students' performance in writing an academic introductory paragraph. In essence, it should be employed as one of the intervention tools to cater for classes with diverse learning styles (Anderson & Adams, 1992). Further research will be necessary to capitalise on the benefits of the GIST mind maps in other aspects, such as teaching to write body paragraphs and conclusion, as well as its applicability in academic writing in other disciplines. Undoubtedly, it can be a catalyst in a positive language acquisition process.

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# MNEMONIC HIGH FIVE: A PROOFREADING STRATEGY OF BE FORMS LINKING VERBS IN WRITING

Chia Wen Fong

*SJKC Kuo Kuang 2*

[kareyfong@gmail.com](mailto:kareyfong@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Mnemonics are learning strategies or techniques that improve retention and understanding of information and concepts in human memory. As language learning places less emphasis on explicit grammar- focused teaching in the English lessons, pupils tend to struggle using the correct linking verbs for different subjects when they write sentences. Though this phenomenon is commonly attributed to their language development process, mnemonics can help them understand the use of these verbs and quicken pupils' understanding of language patterns used in their writing. Mnemonic High Five is a proofreading language device used to check the grammar of their own sentences after writing is done and engage their understanding on how different linking verbs are used with different subjects. This self-formulated mnemonic technique has been used for the past eight years in my lessons. I have found it effective for pupils struggling with the correct use of linking verbs in their writing in a fun manner. It allows pupils to build a fun concept in their mind about the use of the correct grammar. In this showcase, I will be sharing how Mnemonic High Five is used so that pupils are able to apply the concept of sentence making without feeling frustrated about using the wrong grammar. Mnemonic High Five is the combination of my knowledge in language teaching and linguistics which hopefully adds to strategies in language learning creativity.

**Keywords:** mnemonic, proofreading, grammatical patterns, writing

## 1. Introduction

Mnemonics are learning strategies or techniques that improve retention and understanding of information and concepts in human memory. Mnemonics help to improve working memory by facilitating more effective information chunking (Derks-Dijkman, 2022). They are also proven to be effective in education where research is done in different subjects to show their effectiveness in learners (Schmitt, 2014). Mnemonics can be learning strategies that facilitate learners to develop better awareness of how languages are communicated.

## 2. Related Literature

Mnemonics are not widely used as many proclaimed they are more of a gimmick which do not foster deep learning (Worthen & Hunt, 2011). However, mnemonics have been known to improve learning memory among students in various fields in terms of recalling chunks of information. Some findings suggested that students were able to study difficult course materials more effectively when they make use of mnemonics provided by instructors (McCabe et. al., 2013; Putnam, 2015). The effectiveness of mnemonics depends on how frequently it can be used and the usefulness in practical learning situations. Mnemonics in medical education enhance diagnostic skills among medical students (Leeds, et. al, 2020). In language learning settings, language mnemonics such as keywords, songs, chants and rhymes which have been

known to assist language learning as they build mental images of vocabulary and meanings (Shapiro & Waters, 2005; Dikmans et. al., 2020). Therefore, mnemonics are suitable to use in information acquisition at the initial stage of learning novel knowledge such as the correct use of grammatical structures in English. Learners are able to develop better understanding of how language structures work when ‘diagnosing’ language structure patterns. Though they are effective, mnemonics should not be the core of knowledge acquisition as they are effective only at reducing working memory of certain aspects in language acquisition.

The borrowing of words and fusion of English language structure became what it is today with inconsistencies in the language structures that we call grammar. In Malaysia, the mother tongues of many Malaysians have different language structures in the way meaning and speech are communicated. English is not the mother tongue of most Malaysian children. It is actually a ‘fluid language’ used in communities in different parts of Malaysia. The fluidity of the language is shown in different levels of language exposure that exist among local communities in different parts of the country shaped by colonisation history. Those in the urban areas pick up the language better than those in the suburb and rural areas; the ones whose family members are proficient English speakers also tend to master it better than those without any guidance from the family. Therefore the average Malaysian schooling children have been known to struggle expressing their ideas with perfectly correct English grammar as their familiarity with the language use may only be limited to the formal education settings such as primary schools and secondary schools. Incidental acquisition of language grammar takes up a long time and is prone to numerous times of trials and errors to get them right only if they have consistent exposure to English. As language learning places less emphasis on explicit grammar- focused teaching in the English lessons, most pupils tend to struggle using the correct linking verbs for different subjects when they write sentences because they are not familiar with how the language structure is communicated. Though this phenomenon is commonly attributed to their language development process, mnemonics can help them understand the use of these verbs and quicken pupils’ understanding of language patterns used in their writing. Mnemonics such as iconic gestures are proven to be effective in language learning (So et. al., 2011).

### 3. Method

I hold the view that learners who are not native speakers of English are able to advance and improve their mastery of English by learning effective mnemonics. This specific mnemonic that I have formulated is used to ease the understanding of my pupils (aged between 9 and 10 currently) when they activate their mental grammar-checks of the content they are expressing such as in sentence construction. Malaysian pupils could develop linguistic awareness of how English is communicated through this particular mnemonic strategy I have created. Mnemonics are powerful cognitive tools that could lower the mind barrier of understanding concepts and nature of languages. They are able to understand grammar without having to learn the complex mechanisms that are taught in linguistics of the language as they approach language structures by ‘diagnosing’ it. As how Leeds et. al. (2020) research has shown to improve medical students’ diagnostic skills in medical condition, language learners are able to diagnose what goes wrong in the sentences they have written. Therefore, I have utilised the mnemonic strategy I have developed as a proofreading strategy so that pupils could focus on checking on the technicalities of the language structure only after they have expressed knowledge about the context and content in English in their writing. It can be categorised as an iconic gesture as my pupils are taught to create mental images of the grammatical items by looking at their hands. This allows them to create strong and impressionable mental images of the linking verbs used when they check their writing Figure 1 shows how pupils are taught to remember forms of be



as linking verbs by visualising forms of be verbs: am, is, are, was, were being represented by different fingers.

*Figure 1: Mnemonic High Five and the representations for each finger*



The steps of gesturing the Mnemonic High Five are as follows:

- i) Open up the palm (either one of your hands)
- ii) Use the forefinger on the other hand to point at each finger on the hand with the palm widely open (Start with the thumb by saying the chant aloud). The chant is as such: “ am, is, are, was, were. am – I am; is – he, she, it is or one ; are – you, we, they are or many; was – same as is ; were same as are”

Pupils are to make a mental representation based strictly on the order of the ‘be’ forms shown in Figure 1 in order for it to be an effective and understandable iconic gesture. They do not necessarily need to know these are forms of ‘be’. They just need to know that all these ‘be’ forms have the same meaning when they use them in sentences. Knowing which ‘be’ forms to use depends only on the singularity or plurality of the subject in the sentences.

- iii) Next pull the thumb, forefinger and middle finger and say “present tense”. Then, pull the ring finger and pinkie (little finger) together and say “past tense”.

This next step of dividing the first three fingers apart from the last two fingers can elevate pupils’ realisation that forms of ‘be’ must be selected based on the timeline when the event happens or when the situations are in a certain manner.

- iv) Pupils can start checking for grammar mistakes in their writing which they had finished prior to using this mnemonic strategy.

Mnemonic High Five can only be utilised only when pupils have expressed their ideas in the language as it is more relevant for pupils in the formal education to learn how to be competent in English communication (Alamri, 2018). To refine what they express, pupils should be equipped with the knowledge of how to check on their grammar and sentence structures which indirectly train their metacognitive awareness when they are learning how to express the language. This strategy can free up the memory workload on what to focus first in language learning especially in young children. The routine of using Mnemonic High Five allows pupils to cultivate a mental order of how they could reduce mistakes in the expressions of their ideas in English by using this proofreading strategy.

#### **4. Discussion**

Though the effectiveness of this method is not documented formally. This short article is the start of sharing some of my teaching strategies in getting young learners interested in learning English. When pupils are given some cues on how to master the language in a simplified manner, it could indirectly motivate them to cultivate intrinsic interest in using and learning the language more meaningfully. As Mnemonic High Five involves hand gestures, it allows pupils to activate their metacognition awareness by marking the forms of be meaningfully. My mnemonic strategy is similar to the research conducted by (So et. al., 2011) where a formal experiment on hand gestures is conducted effectively to mark parts of speech that are supposed to be highlighted. Both adults and young children were able enhance memory recall of language structures by encoding gestures in their language learning. The pupils I have taught before were able to understand and realise how forms of 'be' verbs are used in sentences without meaningless rote memorization. However, for this mnemonic strategy to be effective, I have consistently established a routine of using this mnemonic to check on the grammar they are using after they have attempted to express themselves in English. This is done so that pupils are able to engage in deeper understanding of grammatical parts which are the toughest to master as there are no meaningful encodings which could help them retrieve grammatical patterns of English from their memory. It is also convenient for teachers to teach this strategy and for pupils to master it as it does not require any teaching aids before a lesson. It can be used anytime when there is a need to remind pupils of the grammatical mistakes they often commit. Further research will be conducted to explore the extent of effectiveness of my mnemonic strategy in language learning as this showcase is the start of more formal research on good quality and effective mnemonics that can be used by learners of English of all ages.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In short, Mnemonic High Five is used so that pupils are able to apply the concept of sentence making without feeling frustrated about using the wrong grammar. Mnemonic High Five is the combination of my knowledge in language teaching and linguistics which hopefully adds to strategies in language learning creativity. It is with hope that educators in the field of language teaching will benefit from using this mnemonic strategy to help English language learners to cope with the stress of getting their grammar right.

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# USING AMJ STRATEGY ON GOOGLE JAMBOARD IN TEACHING WRITING IN THE PRIMARY ESL CLASSROOM

**Tu Wan Chun**

*SJKC Yuk Chin, Tawau, Sabah.*

[g-76269301@moe-dl.edu.my](mailto:g-76269301@moe-dl.edu.my)

## **Abstract**

A Google Jamboard is a virtual whiteboard where users can brainstorm ideas live with others. Teachers can start a Jamboard during a Google Meet session on a computer with their learners. Google Jamboard allows teachers to collaborate with students in real time. It is indeed useful for a brainstorming exercise to gather learners' ideas for a solution to a problem. There are a lot of tools included in this Google Jamboard for teachers to use during teaching and learning process. For example, Pen, Marker, Highlighter and Sticky note tool.

In the primary ESL classroom, teaching low proficiency learners in constructing meaningful and purposeful sentences is not an easy task for teachers, especially during the pandemic where learners were not allowed to attend classes in the school but to join online lesson at home. Thus, applying Add-More-Jam Strategy by assigning more relevant and necessary jams in Google Jamboard through Google Meet is an effective way in teaching writing using parallel method to learners virtually. Add-More-Jam Strategy (also known as AMJ Strategy) is used to improve learners' engagement and writing performance in virtual learning.

Keywords: Google Jamboard, parallel method, Jams

## **1. Introduction**

In Malaysia, schools were closed on a certain period beginning 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 due to pandemic and this has brought significant disruptions to the education. Pandemic affected school learners in many ways especially on classroom teaching and learning. To keep learners learning, the Ministry of Education launched MOE and promoted e-learning platforms for teachers and learners. Online school has been implemented. Learners learnt through virtual platforms such as Google Meet, Telegram, WhatsApp, and others. Teaching from face to face had switched to face to screen.

The flexibility of a virtual learning environment turns out to be a problem for learners who are lack of self-discipline or with weak motivation. For many learners, one of the biggest challenges of online learning is the struggle with focusing on the screen for long periods of time. With online learning, there is also a greater chance for students to be easily distracted by social media or other sites. Thus, it is imperative for the teachers to keep their online classes crisp, engaging, and interactive to help learners stay focused on the lesson.

As a result, as primary school teachers, I discovered through my online teaching lessons that learners were less engaged to our online lesson and this has led to poor academic performance, especially writing, which is the most challenging language skill in primary

school. Therefore, this research is aimed to find out the effectiveness of Add-More-Jam Strategy on Google Jamboard to attract learners' attention to overcome the students' learning problems during virtual learning period.

## 1.1 Significance of Study

According to (1992) Fleming and Mills, The VARK model of learning styles suggests that there are four main types of learners: visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic. The idea that students learn best when teaching methods and school activities match their learning styles, strengths, and preferences grew in popularity in the 1970s and 1980s. Kinesthetic learners learn best through Hands-on learning opportunities. While Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences divides human intelligence into eight different types instead of looking at a single ability. The eight types of intelligence described by Gardner include: musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic. Both the VARK model and Theory of Multiple Intelligences mentioned about Kinesthetic learning style, which match most of my learners' attitude toward learning. This study aimed to investigate whether AMJ Strategy with a lot of hands-on activity would enhance learners' engagement and performance in online learning.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study,

1. Can AMJ Strategy help to improve ESL learners' engagement in writing activities?
2. How does AMJ Strategy improve ESL learners' writing performance?

## 2. Related Literature

### 2.1 Using Jamboard as a Virtual Learning Platform for English Parallel Writing

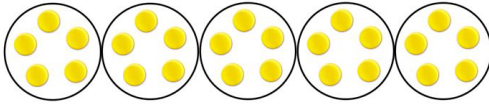
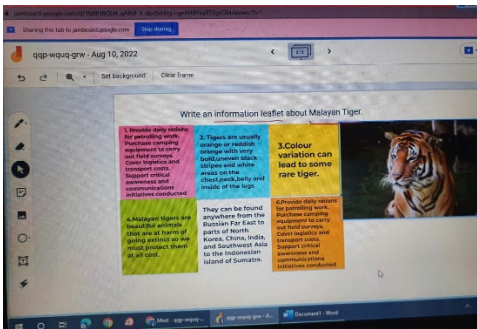
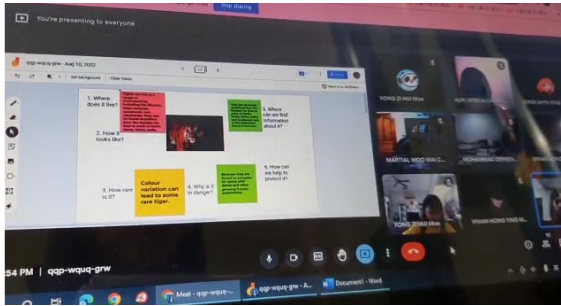
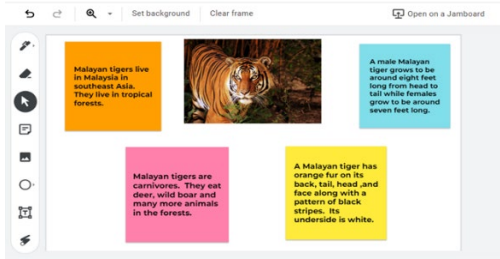
Jamboard (<http://jamboard.google.com>) is an interactive, collaborative whiteboard application, and part of the Google Workspace for Education suite of tools. It is a versatile free online web space that serves as visually attractive tool for teachers and students to start with their new Jam before presenting ideas. Teachers and students can work together using different flavour of Jams, like backgrounds, like graphic organizers, brainstorm ideas, ask questions, or add notes to the Jam. Google Jamboard offers a variety of markup features that collaborators can use for a variety of classroom purposes.

### 2.2 Using Add-More-Jam Strategy as learning strategy

The idea of AMJ Strategy innovation was derived from adding a jam in Google Jamboard developed by Google to work with Google Workspace, formerly known as G Suite. It was officially announced on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2016. AMJ Strategy is designed to encourage every learner to take part actively in learning virtually as each small group of learners are assigned a piece of jam to work on instead of being a passive listener, who listen to the teacher to describe pre-make jam or only a few active learners giving respond to teacher's jam.

### 3.2.1 Steps of AMJ Strategy Intervention

The steps of AMJ Strategy are:

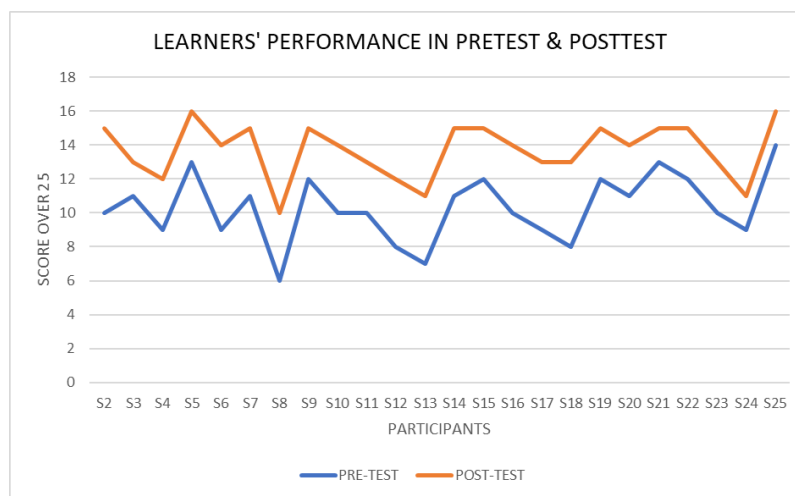
Step	Instructions	Illustrations	Purposes
1.	Teacher divides learners of 25 into 5 groups	 <p>25 divided into groups of 5 forms 5 groups. 5 groups of 5 = 25 ✓</p>	To ensure every learner has the opportunity to work on the jam
2.	<p>Assign a jam of writing topic to each group differently to search related information collaboratively through google search engine in the Jamboard under the same theme.</p> <p>For example, jam about tiger, giraffe, elephant which are under the theme of wildlife.</p>		To make sure chances are given equally to the learners and they can collaborative actively.
3.	Every learner in their groups type in the sticky note and paste to their group jam before teacher shows jam by jam to all learners for class discussion.		To hold learners' attention longer
4.	Finally, learners do writing exercise after the sharing and discussion.		To make the piece of writing become meaningful after learners put their hands together to work on the Jams.

### 3.3 Instruments

Learning outcomes were measured by means of pretest and posttest, while students' perceptions of AMJ Strategy were gathered by survey.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The finding of the implementation of AMJ Strategy is learners show positive and encouraging results. There is improvement in writing skill and they enjoyed the learning process very much as everyone is given chances to work and share ideas. The graph shows the different min score of Pretest and posttest which is positive 3.28. These answered both research questions which are - can AMJ Strategy help to improve ELS learners' engagement in writing activities? And how does AMJ Strategy improve ESL learners' writing performance?



MEAN FOR PRETEST=9.88 MEAN FOR POSTTEST=13.16 DIFFERENCE= +3.28

Survey on using Google Jamboard in ESL classroom		Timestamp	Score	Name
* Required		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Achilleus Iscer Junin
1. Name *		8/15/2022 15:30:39	9/15	Declan Lim
2. 1. Enjoy your lesson		8/15/2022 15:41:21	10/15	Ting Xin Ling
Mark only one oval per row.		8/15/2022 15:44:35	10/15	Fun Xin Tau
Strongly Disagree <>		8/15/2022 15:50:19	10/15	Chan Min Hao
Disagree <>		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Alin Serena Chung
Neutral <>		8/5/2022 14:39:33	9/15	Chok Shyn Ying
Agree <>		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Chung Zheng Lam
Strongly Agree <>		8/5/2022 14:39:33	9/15	Crystal Lim Hsi Yee
3. 2. Motivation to learn English		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Daniel Hazel Bin Darial
Mark only one oval per row.		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Deston Lim Ze Foong
Strongly Disagree <>		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Elisya Laryne Binti Labbai
Disagree <>		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Eva Lim Xiao Xuan
Neutral <>		8/5/2022 14:39:33	9/15	Farah Nursuhaini
Agree <>		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Jethro Len Jian Wei
Strongly Agree <>		8/5/2022 14:39:33	8/15	Joan Lim Jia Yi
4. 3. Collaboration with classmates		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Juwita Yuhani Binti Jusman
Mark only one oval per row.		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Martial Woo Wai Cheng
Strongly Disagree <>		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Mierzan Bin Muslianshah
Disagree <>		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Mohammad Derren Qhalif
Neutral <>		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Muhammad Aiman Bin Osman
Agree <>		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Ng Yu Heng
Strongly Agree <>		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Pang Yung Lerk
5. 4. Opportunity to share and present creative ideas		8/5/2022 14:39:33	9/15	Ribka Jane Richard
Mark only one oval per row.		8/5/2022 14:39:33	10/15	Samuel David
Strongly Disagree <>				
Disagree <>				
Neutral <>				
Agree <>				
Strongly Agree <>				
6. 5. Independent Learning				
Mark only one oval per row.				
Strongly Disagree <>				
Disagree <>				
Neutral <>				
Agree <>				
Strongly Agree <>				

## 5. Conclusion

The findings suggest that AMJ Strategy can be used as an effective teaching method to attract learners' attention and improve learners' engagement in writing lessons during the process of learning virtually. It is recommended that AMJ Strategy can be used in teaching ESL learners in reading skill to improve their skills in answering comprehension questions.

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# ADAPTING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN SOPHOMORE LANGUAGE CLASSES

Gurmit Kaur Labh Singh<sup>1</sup> and M Kamala Palaniappa Manickam<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>INTI International College Subang, INTI Language Center

<sup>2</sup>INTI International College Subang, INTI Language Center

[\\*gurmitk.lsingh@newinti.edu.my](mailto:gurmitk.lsingh@newinti.edu.my)

## Abstract

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” said Nelson Mandela. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is paradoxically full of challenges but also opportunities. The challenges are not isolated or contained in a small geographical area. However, many of our youngsters, unaware of these challenges, live in a cocoon focusing mainly on completing their education and getting a well-paying job. As this myopic attitude does not prepare them to face the future, Global Citizenship Education (GCED) could be used as a tool to prepare the young learners of today to become responsible problem-solvers of tomorrow. In language classrooms, GCED allows students to explore and analyse topics of their choice in greater depth. This enables them to recognise that our world is so interconnected that one’s choice and action may have an impact on other people and / or on the environment. In our sophomore language classrooms, we adapted GCED to create an awareness among our students on local and global issues. In this presentation, we would like to share how we engaged our students to learn about some of these issues and to generate creative solutions. Some of the solutions were truly brilliant and creative. Though the students initially found GCED challenging, they became more appreciative of the opportunity to explore relevant and current issues.

**Key words:** Global citizen, Global citizenship education, Language learning, English language, Sustainability

## 1. Introduction

An educator’s job is to prepare the students for employment and a successful career. Equipping the students with necessary skills and knowledge to be employable and productive has been the main task of an educator. Educators in institutions of higher learning around the world are under pressure to create students with necessary employability skills and soft skills to ensure that they become productive members of the nation. Language instructors are no exception to this. Hence, in language classrooms too, the students are drilled into writing effectively, speaking confidently amongst developing other skills.

This challenge is further compounded as today’s youngsters are surrounded by too many distractions such as social media, gaming and Netflix that keep them occupied. The technological advancements and the related gadgets and apps enable them to exist in their own cocoon of friends, entertainment and surroundings. They relish the outcomes of globalization but rarely do they consider themselves as global citizens. The fact is the real world out there is very complex, unpredictable and fast changing. The challenges are too many and too frequent. Are we preparing the students to face these real-world challenges? Thus, are we equipping them with the necessary tools to face the unexpected situations and to be part of the solutions?



### 1.1 Research questions

This paper focuses on adapting Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in Sophomore language classes. Thus, the research questions discussed are:

- i. How best to integrate GCED in Sophomore language classes?
- ii. Does GCED help in inculcating a global citizenship mind-set among the learners?

## 2. Related Literature

Global citizenship is defined as awareness, caring, and embracing cultural diversity while promoting social justice and sustainability, coupled with a sense of responsibility to act (Blake et al., 2015). Atlantic Council for International Cooperation's *Global Citizen's Guide* (2014) defines Global citizenship as understanding the interdependency and interconnectedness of the globalized world, being aware of the diversity, social justice and equity, and finally being ready to think critically, exercise political rights, and act on injustices.

The concept of GCED is not definitive, but it broadly "entails being aware of responsibilities beyond one's immediate communities and making decisions to change habits and behavior patterns accordingly" (Schattle, 2009, p.12). GCED strives to inculcate values, skills, attitude and behavior in learners which they require to build an inclusive, peaceful, tolerant, secure and sustainable world (UNESCO, n.d). It is especially relevant in a fast changing world, where it has become imperative for individuals to contribute positively to promote peace, stability, and respect for others and the environment (UNESCO, n.d). In line with this, GCED contributes to sustainable development in the context of higher education.

As a lingua franca, the English language has a global dimension (Oxfam, n.d. A). Reading and reflecting on global issues, and interacting with people from various communities around the world using English as a medium of learning and communication opens several doors to learners (Oxfam, n.d. B). Adapting the Global Citizenship approach to teach English provides the students with innumerable, varied opportunities for real-life learning that enables them to be aware of and act upon local as well as global issues.

## 3. Methods

As we began to teach Sophomore language classes, two factors motivated us to adopt GCED. First, in a course where the students had to do secondary research and present their researched information through writing and presentations, the challenge was how could we come up with novel, suitable and interesting topics for each writing piece and each presentation.

Second, we were concerned about how little some students knew about the issues around them. At college level, students are expected to be well-informed and concerned about social, national and global issues. Unfortunately, this was not the case. The students were mainly focused on their core subjects. Beyond that, they were detached and indifferent to the issues around them. These concerns made us look into ways of modifying our approach, and found that GCED suited our purpose.

Students were given a general theme, for instance, *Combating Poverty* in the first class of the semester and were required to do preliminary research and decide on a specific topic under the theme. Once the specific topic was approved, the students started researching it in depth and used relevant information for each assessment. The first assessment involved them working in

small groups with a relevant governmental / non-governmental or non-profit organization. In the case of *Combating Poverty*, the students worked with KPKT (Kementerian Perumahan dan Kerajaan Tempatan). They were required to research on how the issue or the problem happens in our country and to present suitable recommendations to the organization. In the next six assessments, the students were required to look at the issue from different angles. For instance, in their informative speech, they were required to assimilate information like what, when, where, how - about the issue whereas writing assessments required them to research further on the topic. The students were required to explore the topic thoroughly, analyze critically what they have read and present the findings.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Some of the students admitted being ignorant or indifferent to the issues at the beginning of the course. However, the students demonstrated an improved awareness of the issues as the semester progressed.

The following student reflections and samples of presentation slides show that their understanding improved significantly as they did the research and completed their required assessments.

- I have to admit that I initially **did not have much knowledge on the topic of urban poverty**. However, **after completing intensive research on single mothers ... I managed to gain significant insight** regarding numerous issues that affect the urban poor community.
- **I didn't even have any idea about the refugee crisis**. Through this project, we can all agree that we finally opened up to the side of the world that we have neglected - migrant and refugee problems. **It's a global crisis that affects not only the origin countries nor resettlement countries, but all of humanity, yet very little exposure and coverage talks about it.**
- ... has **impacted me by teaching me how dangerous and prevalent sexual harassment is** in the educational institutions in Malaysia, including the horrifying effects, **especially with how many adults and students do not understand the meaning of consent**. Essentially, although I had some idea ..., **I had no idea of the true extent of it.**
- Lastly, when researching solutions to help the LGBTQ+ community in Malaysia **I discovered an abundance of mistreatment and lack of basic human rights which had impacted me emotionally leading me to want to continue to seek justice** for the community here in Malaysia.

Students' sample work on *Combating Poverty:*Students' sample work on *Anti-bullying and Anti-harassment*

## Students' sample posters



## 5. Conclusion

Overall the course design proved to be highly suitable for incorporating GCED as it allowed the students to explore the same topic from various dimensions. Throughout the semester, the students could research about the topic in-depth and increase their awareness about it. This helped them in critically analysing the topic from various perspectives and forming their own opinions on how the issue should be dealt with. They were able to internalize and reflect on what they had researched. This enabled them to realize that the issues and the effects are not isolated or distant, but could have an impact at the global level.

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# USING W&I STRATEGY TO IMPROVE MALAYSIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS' VERB TENSE PERFORMANCE IN WRITING

Khong See Moi<sup>1</sup> and Noraini Said<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Kolej Tingkatan Enam Tawau, Sabah*

<sup>2</sup>*Universiti Malaysia Sabah*

[seemoi2015@gmail.com](mailto:seemoi2015@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Making frequent verb tense mistakes in writing is one of the learning difficulties faced by most of the Malaysian college students. They often shift tense and form irregular verbs incorrectly in their writing and the tense mistakes have become fossilized errors despite frequent grammar drills and writing practices. In this showcase, we share our physical teaching experience on employing the Write & Illustrate Strategy (also known as W&I Strategy), which is a visual-cue based grammar instruction to improve college students' verb tense in writing, particularly in simple past tense using a digital tool and an online messaging application – Padlet and Telegram. It is considered as an evidence-based techno-pedagogical classroom practice. The objective of the research was twofold: first, to investigate whether W&I Strategy would improve students' verb tense performance in writing and second, to identify students' perceptions on the use of W&I Strategy towards grammar in English language learning. 16 college students were involved and they were given a 30-minute weekly W&I writing lesson for four consecutive weeks. Data sources comprised the means of pre- and posttests, questionnaire and Mentimeter Word Cloud. The findings showed very encouraging results. We found that students had positive experiences with W&I Strategy, and it increased student engagement and facilitated grammar learning on the verb tense effectively. This insight offers pedagogical implications for both ESL teachers and students to develop techno-pedagogical skills for a more meaningful and an engaging virtual and physical language learning atmosphere.

**Keywords:** verb tense mistakes, visual-cue-based grammar instruction, verb tense performance in writing, techno-pedagogical classroom practice

## 1. Introduction

Using correct grammar is the most challenging writing skill to be acquired for many ESL (English as a second language) learners, especially Malaysian college students in the Malaysian University English Test (MUET), which is a formally taught subject at all form six colleges in Malaysia to prepare students for their university admission. However, acquiring grammar accuracy in writing is laborious and protracted to many ESL learners. This is undoubtedly true for college students who are of low English proficiency level that they always need their lecturer to correct them since they have limited ability to function in the English language. Making frequent verb tense mistakes in writing is one of their learning difficulties. The students are still confused with the choice of tenses appropriate for letter or email writing. It has been observed that they often shift tense from simple past to simple present and form irregular verbs incorrectly in writing as illustrated in the italicised verbs of the following sentences, 'They *walk* to school yesterday.' and 'I *sweeped* the floor just now.' The tense mistakes have become fossilized errors despite frequent grammar drills and writing practices done in school. The problem might occur due to the lack of inmost knowledge of the rules or concepts of verb



tenses, particularly in simple past tense. Other than that, it could be affected by the interference of their mother tongue (Khong & Noraini, 2021). Therefore, in this showcase, we share our physical teaching experience on employing the Write & Illustrate Strategy (also known as W&I Strategy) to improve college students' verb tense in writing, particularly in regular and irregular verbs of simple past tense using Padlet and Telegram Chat as the virtual learning platforms during the COVID-19 endemic.

### **Significance of Study**

According to Charanjit et.al. (2017), students need to master grammar rules in order to write effectively. This supported the study by Stapa and Izahar (2010) who also stated that learners have to master English grammatical rules effectively and accurately in order to produce an error-free piece of writing. The problem of making verb tense mistakes may lead to a negative impact in students' academic achievement or their employment opportunities in the future. Hence, the outcomes of this study can be significant to ESL learners as it represents an effort to participate in improving teaching writing in ESL classrooms by offering a visualisation strategy using a digital tool and a messaging app, namely Padlet and Telegram. This study was an attempt to investigate whether W&I Strategy would improve students' verb tense performance in writing. Besides, it aimed to identify students' perceptions on the use of W&I Strategy towards grammar in English language learning.

## **2. Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study,

- i. Does W&I Strategy help improve students' verb tense performance in writing?
- ii. What are the students' perceptions on the use of W&I Strategy towards grammar in English language learning?

## **3. Related Literature**

### **Collaborative Learning Theory**

Collaborative Learning Theory is the theory that Padlet and Telegram have in common in the learning field. This theory enables the teacher to create an appropriate learning environment for learners with crucial elements of a successful teaching and learning process such as motivation, interaction, cooperation and enthusiasm. It emphasizes the group interaction in the context of the writing classroom. The teacher plays the role of a facilitator instead of a class leader whereas the learners should work collaboratively to achieve the learning outcome. Padlet (<http://Padlet.com>) provides essential features such as collaboration, providing and receiving feedback, equal opportunities for participation, enough time to think and correct their mistakes, inserting photos and other documents, and exchanging information (Haris et.al., 2017; Ali et.al., 2018). Similarly, Faramarzi, et.al. (2019) depicted that the Telegram app encourages collaborative learning and pursue the negotiation of meaning. Therefore, learners can help each other without any inhibitory feeling.

### **Using Visual learning and Visualization as learning strategies**

Visual learning constitutes a vital process of 'input and interaction' for the learner ensuring that his or her needs, necessities and aspirations are taken into account and by making him or her involved, produce genuine learning (Philominraj et.al., 2017). In addition, Sharti and Buza (2017) concluded that visualization through visual imagery has been an effective way to communicate both abstract and concrete ideas since the dawn of humanity. Moreover, the findings of their research indicated that visualization motivates students to learn, making them



more cooperative and developing their skills for critical approach. Furthermore, Yong (2020) stressed that visualisation is a powerful tool for education in its broadest sense which facilitates language learning.

#### 4. Participants

16 college students consisting of 8 males and 8 females were selected for this study. Their English proficiency were of elementary and intermediate levels at CEFR A2 and B1 respectively. They were given a 30-minute weekly W&I writing lesson for four consecutive weeks.

#### 5. Write & Illustrate Strategy (W&I Strategy)

W&I Strategy is an intervention innovated from the ideas of WitS Strategy (Khong & Noraini, 2020) and PVC Strategy (Khong & Noraini, 2021) based on Howard Gardner's theory of visual-spatial intelligence, which is considered as an evidence-based techno-pedagogical classroom practice for grammar learning. It enables students to produce visual cues to consolidate word-meaning and word-form connections and provides opportunities of writing practice with the grammar knowledge, particularly in the regular and irregular form of simple past tense using Padlet and Telegram Chat as the virtual learning platforms.

#### 6. Stages of W&I Strategy

There are three stages in the implementation of W&I Strategy, namely pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing. The details of the stages are shown in Figure 1.

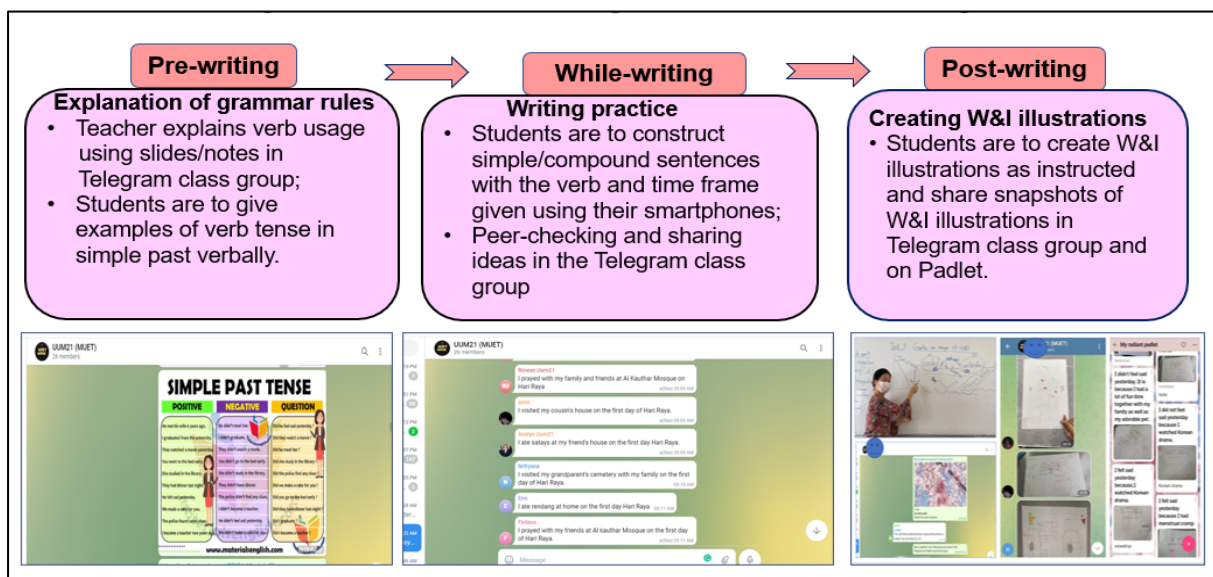


Figure 1 Stages of W&I Strategy

#### 7. Steps of W&I Strategy Intervention

There are six crucial steps in creating an W&I illustration. The steps are shown in Figure 2.

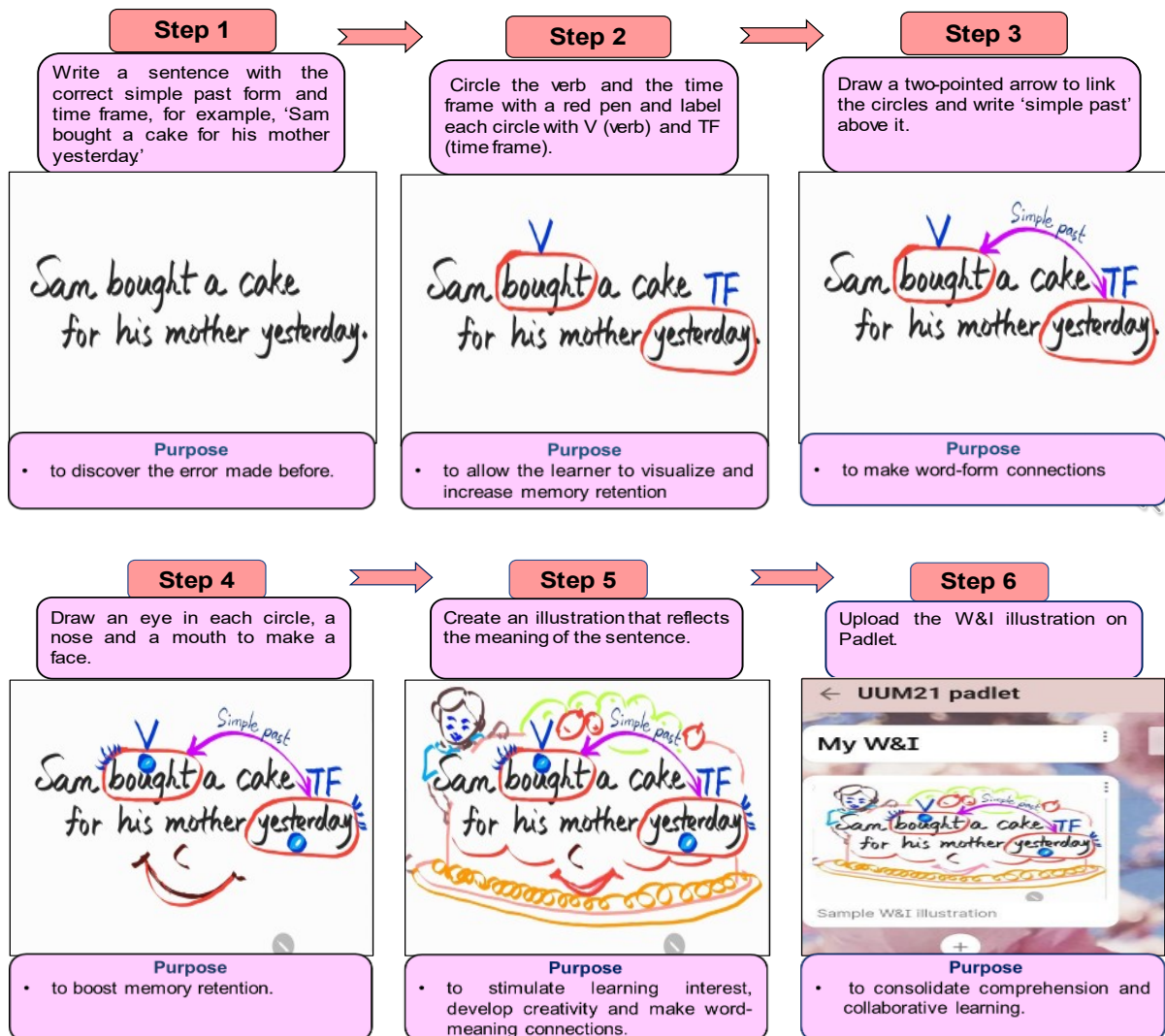


Figure 2: Steps of Creating a W&amp;I illustration

## 8. Instruments

Learning outcomes were measured by means of pre- and posttests, while students' perceptions of W&I Strategy were gathered by questionnaire and Mentimeter word cloud.

## 9. Results and Discussion

The research questions were answered as the findings of the study showed very encouraging results.

*Table 1: Mean scores obtained from the pre-test and post-test*

Instrument	No. of Participant	Mean Score
Pre-test	16	16.74
Post-test	16	23.05
	Difference	+6.32

The mean scores of the pre-test and the post-test for the participants shown in Table 1 above indicated an increase of 6.32 points. It showed that W&I Strategy helped the students improve their verb tense performance in writing effectively.

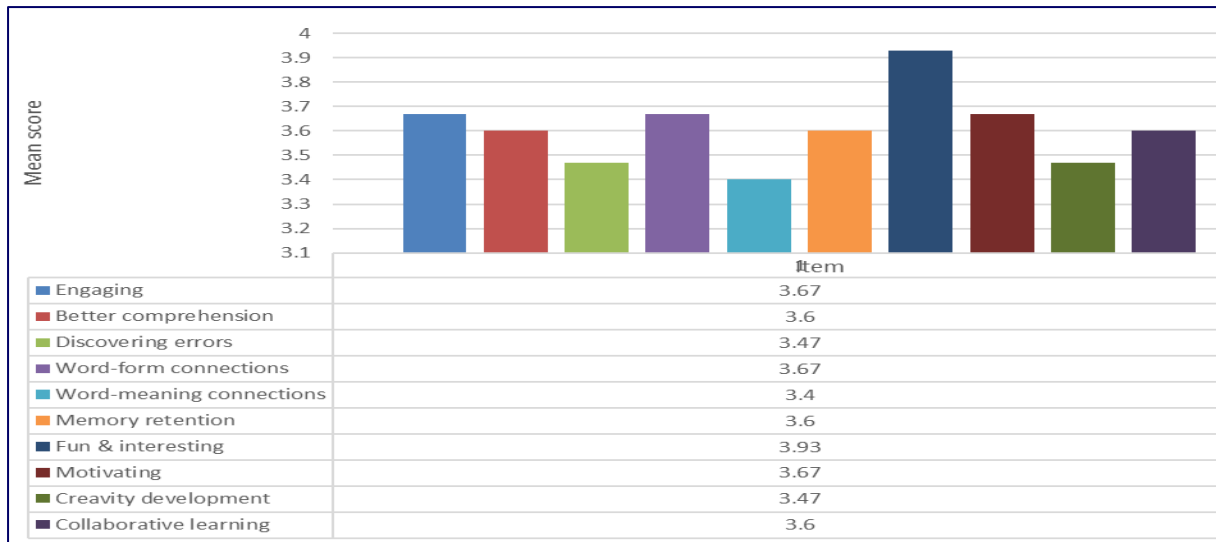


Figure 3: Mean scores obtained from students' responses to questionnaire

As depicted in Figure 3, the mean scores of students' responses to ten items of the questionnaire were higher than 3.2, indicating the highest level of agreement for each item - 'strongly agree'. The results indicate that W&I strategy offers an effective way to improve language learning in grammar, particularly the simple past tense in many aspects, i.e. engagement, comprehension, error discovery, making connections, memory retention, learning interest, motivation, creativity and collaborative learning.

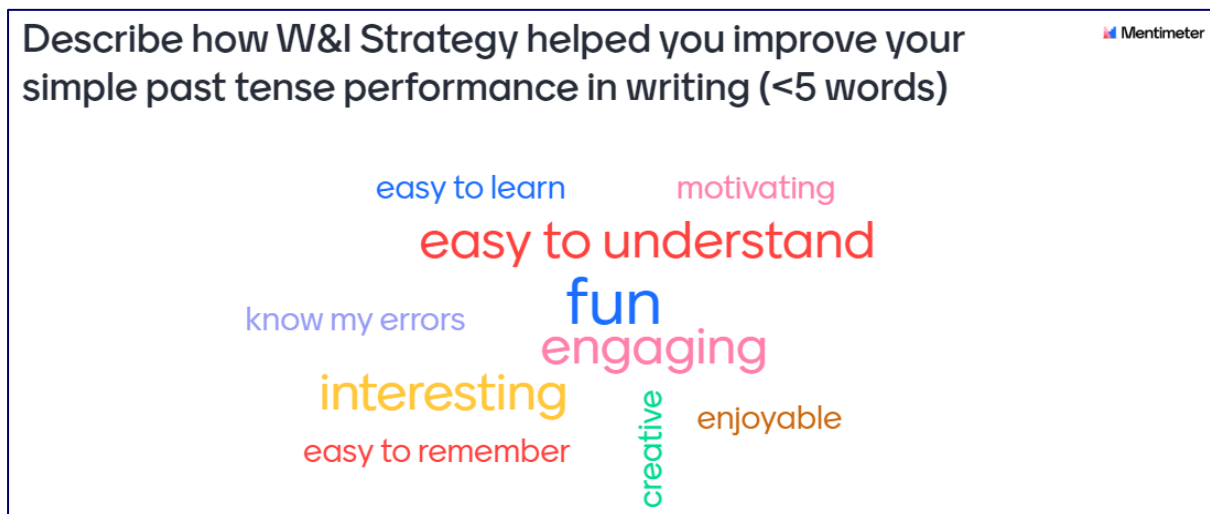


Figure 4: Students' responses on Mentimeter Word Cloud

The words and phrases displayed in Figure 4 such as 'fun', 'engaging', 'interesting', 'easy to understand', 'easy to learn', 'motivating', 'easy to remember', 'know my errors', 'creative' and 'enjoyable', are arranged in a descendent order according to the frequency of common words or phrases added. It showed that the students were positively inclined towards the use of W&I Strategy in learning grammar.

## 10. Conclusion

The findings indicate that W&I Strategy can be used as a visual-cue-based grammar instruction to help improve ESL learners' verb tense performance in writing using Padlet and Telegram in a virtual learning environment although the teaching and learning process is conducted

physically. To conclude, we found that students had positive experiences with W&I Strategy, and it increased student engagement and facilitated grammar learning on the verb tense effectively. This insight offers pedagogical implications for both ESL teachers and students to develop techno-pedagogical skills for a more meaningful and an engaging virtual and physical language learning atmosphere.

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# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIY(DO-IT-YOURSELF) AND 3R (REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE) VIDEO PROJECT TO ENHANCE PUPILS' SPEAKING SKILL

Ang Pei Sun

*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina) Phui Choi,*

*34600 Kamunting, Perak.*

[peisun\\_ang@hotmail.com](mailto:peisun_ang@hotmail.com)

## Abstract

Integrating art into the ESL classroom is not only fun and memorable, but it's a wonderful way to help your students learn English. It creates an interesting and enthusiastic learning environment where students are free to express themselves with the language. Stone painting is an ancient and unique art where stones are painted with acrylic or watercolours and transformed into beautiful subjects such as pets, insects, fruits etc. It allows students to practice and gain fine muscle control and strengthen their eye-hand motor coordination. This helps to increase students' focus on skills necessary for writing activities. It also provides the opportunity for students to make choices and solve problems. Children make decisions about what colours they use, and how to mix and apply them to the rock. Once they have finished their artwork, they need to display it and record a short description of the colours they used to complete their stone painting. It generates a language of its own through subject-specific vocabulary relating to, for example, texture, colour, feelings and composition. The amazing part is through art, students are encouraged to speak as much English as possible both while they are creating them and when they are finished. Using art as a means for students to communicate and for teachers to incorporate the use of vocabulary in a real-life situation is both rewarding and interesting.

**Keywords:** Speaking skills, 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), DIY (Do-It-Yourself)

## 1. Why Oral Presentation?

According to research from Yahaya et al (2011), many Malaysian employers claim that our graduates are unable to communicate in English. The majority of the students passed the English exam, but not all of them can communicate successfully in English. For most learners of the second language, speaking is considered the hardest of the four language skills to be learnt. English is the world's most studied language — around 20% of the world speaks English. Knowing how to speak English can open different doors of new life, starting from travelling more easily, to communicating with more people, handling information easier and even getting better jobs. Speaking is a difficult skill to master because one must think swiftly, and answer immediately, maybe with little bother and hesitation. Besides, lack of confidence in the English language is the main problem for learners to use the language. The majority of students refused to speak because they were afraid of speaking in English (Nejat et al., 2019). Another factor is the educational system in Malaysia always puts a greater emphasis on accuracy than fluency. When learners are afraid of grammar mistakes, they will stop to use the language in their daily life conversations. Mother tongue interference is another factor too. The students felt more comfortable when they interacted in their own native language than in the English language.



## 2. Why Speaking Skill Important?

Speaking is a fundamental ability that all language learners should master in addition to their other abilities. Malaysian students' lack of communication skills in using the English language has become a national issue that we should pay attention to. In Malaysia, the expertise of the ESL is crucial in order to establish a generation with good global communication. In the 21st century, Malaysia faces new challenges due to globalization, liberalization, internationalization and the development of information and communication technology (ICT). To overcome these challenges, the Ministry of Education of Malaysia implemented 21st-century learning in the year 2014. Communication, cooperation, creativity, and critical thinking, sometimes known as the 4 C's, were highlighted as crucial factors to achieve the purpose of 21st-century learning (Ahmad, 2017). Communication is one of the factors of the 4Cs of 21st-century abilities. The role of educators in the 21st century should be to help every student to learn how to learn. It inspires **creativity**, encourages **collaboration**, expects and rewards **critical thinking**, and it also teaches our students not only how to communicate, but also the power of effective **communication**.

## 3. How to Improve Speaking Skill?

First, surround our students with the English language: English is everywhere. No matter where they live, they can find menus, marketing materials, books, movies, road signs, and more in the English language. The more they immerse themselves and pay attention to these daily pieces of English, the stronger their foundation will be. The creation of speaking opportunities and a conducive environment has been proven to be working in other studies.

Second, encourage our students to think in English. This will not come naturally, but we can train students to think in English by first translating the thoughts in their heads. This is because they always try to avoid speaking the target language and instead express themselves in their own language when they find it difficult to communicate their views in English. The environment is seen as one of the factors contributing to students' lack of competency because they come from a non-English speaking community. Due to this, they should frequently practice using the language in daily life to improve their English-speaking skills with friends or even with strangers, they can always find someone who speaks English to practice with.

## 4. How I Improve my Students' Speaking Skills?

As specified in the *Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Negara Malaysia 2013-2025* (MOE, 2012), it aspires that students in Malaysia should acquire six main characteristics for them to complete the global stage. These main characteristics are knowledge, thinking skills, leadership skills, bilingual proficiency, ethics and spirituality and national identity. To instil these characteristics, MOE (2012) suggested 11 elements which should be present in a 21st-century classroom. These 21st-century learning elements are collaborative learning, collaborative (group work), student-centred learning, skill-based, formative assessment, process-based, learning to live, skills for life, practical, higher order thinking skills and community-based.

To achieve all these, I am choosing DIY (Do-it-yourself) and 3R (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) Projects for Oral Presentation to enhance students' speaking skills. I added on recording the presentation using video as in Tik Tok to share their ideas with others, especially during the online learning. For the DIY part, I integrated art into the English language learning process, while for the 3R part, I chose stones and old white shoes for them to complete the task and

reuse the materials. For the oral presentation part, I chose video recording or making a Tik Tok educational video as the mean for students to practice their language and share their creativity or ideas with others.

### **5. Why I Choose DIY, 3R & Video?**

Integrating art into the ESL classroom is not only fun and memorable, but it is a wonderful way to help your students learn English. It creates an interesting and enthusiastic learning environment where students are free to express themselves with the language. Stone painting is an ancient and unique art where stones are painted with acrylic or watercolours and transformed into beautiful subjects such as pets, insects, fruits etc. Shoe painting is an art full of colours and designs and when you can do it in a beautiful way it can add charm to your personality and make you look unique. Both of these activities allow students to practice and gain fine muscle control and strengthen their eye-hand motor coordination. This helps to increase students' focus on skills necessary for writing activities.

It also provides the opportunity for students to make choices and solve problems. Children make decisions about what colours they use, and how to mix and apply them to the rock or shoes. Once they have finished their artwork, they need to display it and record a short description of the colours they used to complete their stone or shoe painting. It generates a language of its own through subject-specific vocabulary relating to, for example, texture, colour, feelings and composition. The amazing part is through art, students are encouraged to speak as much English as possible both while they are creating them and when they are finished. Using art as a means for students to communicate and for teachers to incorporate the use of vocabulary in real-life situations is both rewarding and interesting.

### **6. What are the Impacts in My Classroom?**

English is the third language in all my students' environments no matter at home or at school. For them, the day they stepped into school, English is totally a new subject for them, especially to use the language. When English is not their mother tongue, at first they struggled to learn and use the language. They kept complaining: "English is so difficult; I don't know how to speak English." After implementing the DIY and 3R projects several times, within 3 months, they are capable to communicate with me using simple language. The language they are using is not perfect, but they have the courage to use the language to express themselves. Now, they love English so much. For them, the English period is the time for them to play, explore, try, collaborate, think, express and many others. You cannot imagine how they wait for my class excitedly inside the classroom. For me, this is the best present they give to me.

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## GAMIFICATION: SMART DETECTIVES

**Phoebe Dolores Dora anak Lambros<sup>1</sup>, Nil Tiyanis binti Ramli<sup>2</sup>, Zarith Nur Jihan binti Zaidi<sup>3,\*</sup> and Clarissa Lyn Apiang<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Tun Abdul Razak,*

<sup>2</sup>*Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Tun Abdul Razak*

<sup>3</sup>*Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Tun Abdul Razak*

<sup>4</sup>*Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Tun Abdul Razak*

\* [phoebe23-634@epembelajaran.edu.my](mailto:phoebe23-634@epembelajaran.edu.my)

### Abstract

The use of English language as a medium of communication is very low as students only use English language during lessons in class. Some students find it hard to be fluent in English because it is a foreign language and it puts pressure on them to speak the language confidently in public. Students' active involvement in classrooms is the key to successful learning. Active involvement during classroom activities can increase the learners' understanding of the topic they are learning. However, some learners may get distracted and disengaged during class activity when it comes to English lessons. Therefore, the way lessons are delivered in class should be improvised so that it can help students to acknowledge that English is a fun language to learn. Thus, we have come up with 'Smart Detectives', a gamification type of learning for primary school pupils to have meaningful learning while having fun. The principles of the game include solving mysteries, completing missions in each level, reward systems, goals, and competition among students. The importance of being able to use English in their daily life should also be taught especially when English language helps us to communicate with people from different countries.

**Keywords:** gamification, Smart Detectives, fun, English

### 1. Introduction

Gamification is the integration of game-based mechanics that motivates people to engage in learning and solving problems (Kiryakova et al., 2014). The gamification that we have created is targeted for Primary 3 students to play and obtain a meaningful learning experience during English language lessons. The focus skill of our gamification is reading, and the integrated skill is language arts as it mainly centralises on the adaptation of nursery rhymes, poetry, short story, and other literary piece. Subsequently, the foremost reason for the creation of this gamification is to solve problems for learners who easily get distracted and lose focus when the lesson activity is boring or not interesting to them. Besides that, learners' assumption that learning English language is difficult is the source of this research to instil learners' motivation through an enjoyable activity where they would have the opportunity to win and get rewards. This current work would explain more about our 'Smart Detectives' gamification, the strengths, weaknesses, and application of principles of gamification as well as the result and methods used.

## 2. Smart Detectives

Smart Detectives is a gamification that gives students the opportunity to act as detectives in finding the culprit of certain crimes and issues. The activities would be carried out using English language where students would mostly read and try to solve the crimes using the clues given. Here, students would discuss in groups and cooperate with each other during the implementation of activities to complete the missions and get points to win. Additionally, this gamification is a non-textbook lesson for teachers to use during the teaching-learning process.

For the introduction, teachers could use nursery rhymes, short stories or poetry as the reference material for students. Teachers would firstly go through the literature with students and help them to understand it; if the missions that students would need to complete are related to the literature provided. For instance, if the reference material is a nursery rhyme, then teachers would guide students in singing the song and tell them the meaning of the song. After that, teachers would explain what mystery or crime that students would need to solve in the game. Finding which animal is the culprit that broke down the barn door is an example of a crime that need to be solved.

This gamification consists of three levels where students need to complete to get clues from each level to solve the crime or mystery. In level 1, students would be given a worksheet of Word Search Puzzle for them to complete in groups. Level 2 would be the activity of Missing Words, where they would need to fill in the blanks of the missing words based on the literature. Finally, level 3 would be answering a few questions based on the literature and what they understand from it. Alternatively, level 3 would be multiple choice questions if this gamification is carried out online.

*Table 1: Smart Detectives Activities*

Levels	Mission	Clue given
Level 1	Word Search Puzzle	Details of the whereabouts of the suspects, crime scene, witness, and evidence.
Level 2	Missing Words	A picture of the before and after of the crime scene.
Level 3	Answer questions based on the song, text or other literature. (physically) Multiple choice questions (online)	Interviews of the suspects or the eye-witnesses.

## 3. Strength

Although this gamification has not been tried out in a classroom setting, these are the few strengths that we could see in the creation of this gamification. Firstly, it is low cost in terms of resources. Materials needed are just printed papers for the worksheets of missions and clues. This gamification is also easy to be implemented as teachers could use different types of literature as the base and produce the missions and clues with the same pattern. This gamification could also be conducted both online and offline. In the aspect of the online method, teachers would just provide the game link for students to play and solve the mystery themselves. Moreover, this gamification is visually appealing as we include animation in the worksheet of missions. The use of cartoons and animations would intrigue students' interest to engage in learning which also helps in concentrating (Liu & Elms, 2019).

"Smart Detectives" which mainly focuses on solving problems would also encourage high order thinking skills because students would think critically in finding the relation among

all the clues they received to find the culprit. Finally, this gamification would enhance learners' engagement and collaboration among students. As this gamification is a fun type of learning activity, students would certainly involve themselves in the activity and participate actively. According to Siti Maziha Mustapha et al. (2010), engaging lessons with fun activities is the third highest factor that affects students' participation in class.

### 3.1.1 Weaknesses

On the other hand, the weakness of this gamification is first, it is not environmentally friendly as it requires a lot of paper for the worksheets. The printed papers are for hints of the crime and worksheets of the missions namely Word Search Puzzle, Missing Words and Answer Questions. Next, the activities require a lot of reading which might be difficult for low proficiency students to cope. Lastly, unequal participation might occur as it poses the risk of having a free-rider in the group.

### 3.1.2 Principles of gamification

Principles of games in “Smart Detectives” are apparent through the application of a reward system, levels and goals. As explained above, this gamification consists of three challenging different levels with the goal of solving a crime. In the aspect of the reward system, there will be different points for every group after each level is passed depending on the time consumed to finish the worksheets given. Thus, the overall winner will be determined by adding all the points and the group or individual with the most points will be the winner.

*Table 2: Reward System*

Place	Points
First	20
Second	15
Third	10
Fourth and below	5

## 4. Methods

Although it has not been conducted, we have planned to conduct this gamification in both online and physical contexts. It will be conducted by the three of us during practicum where we will identify the effectiveness of the game, problems that may arise and collect data. Meanwhile, in terms of conducting it online, we have prepared the online version of each level for students to try out later on.

## 5. Conclusion

Smart Detectives activity in primary ESL classrooms can be a stepping stone and closing the gap between the low achiever group learners and high achiever group learners. Moreover, this game will enhance students' active participation in the English language lesson and provide them the insights that they could have fun while learning English. Consequently, students will become motivated and comfortable in learning English.

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**MALAYSIAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING  
ASSOCIATION (MELTA)**

**G-11-2, PUTRA WALK, JALAN PP 25,  
TAMAN PINGGIRAN PUTRA,  
BANDAR PUTRA PERMAI,  
43300 SERI KEMBANGAN, MALAYSIA.**

**[meltaconference2022@gmail.com](mailto:meltaconference2022@gmail.com)  
[www.melta.org.my](http://www.melta.org.my)**

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