

## Evidence-based Language Teaching Strategies in **ESL or EFL Contexts**

How do I make my English lessons and activities interesting with very low budget audio-visual aids? This book attempts to give you the answers. The authors are English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers who formulated practical ideas that were carried out at their schools in different parts of Malaysia. In each chapter, the difficulties faced by either the teachers or the pupils are described. Following these, some step-by-step ideas or intervention are given and elaborated to guide teachers in tackling pupils' specific difficulties in language learning. The pros and cons of these interventions are also discussed. Where necessary, pictures and illustrations are given to help readers to visualize the shared ideas and events. Jargons are kept to a minimum to ensure effortless and more enjoyable reading.

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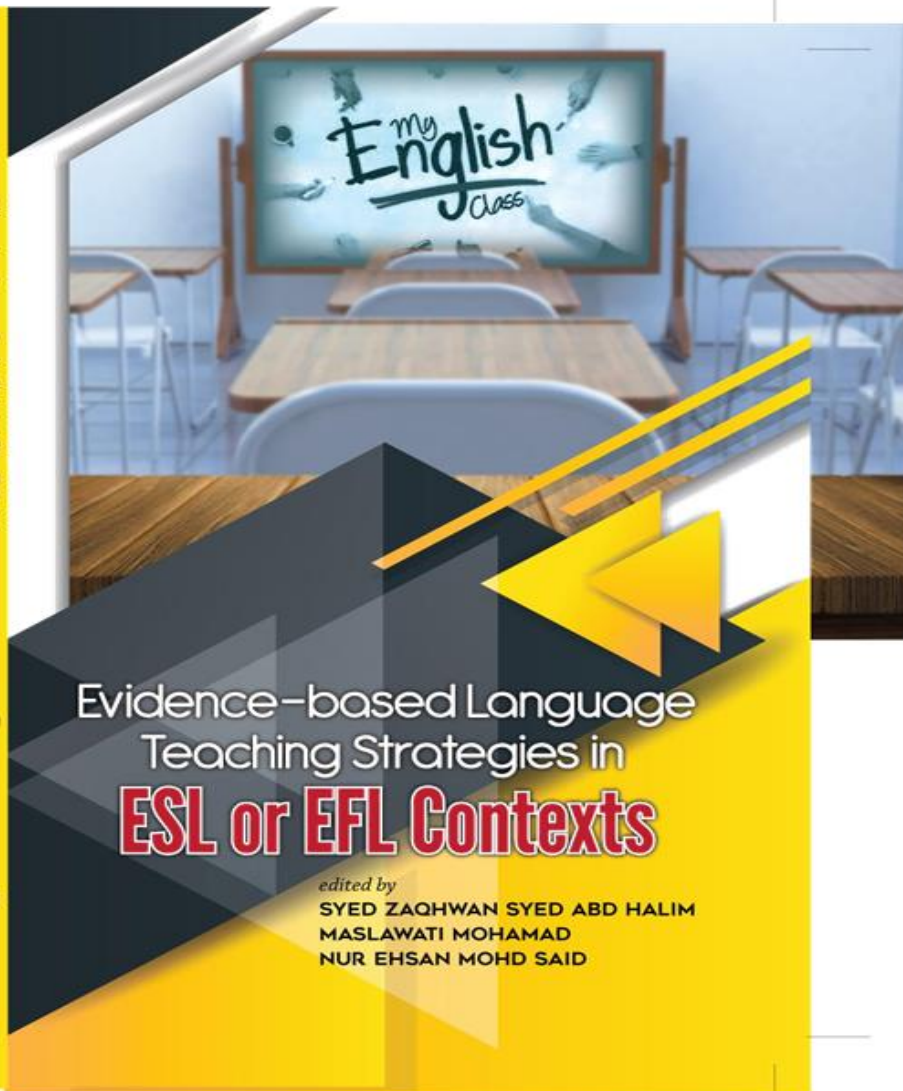


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edited by  
**SYED ZAQHWAN SYED ABD HALIM**  
**MASLAWATI MOHAMAD**  
**NUR EHSAN MOHD SAID**

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## Contents

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*List of Tables & Figures ... 7*

*Preface ... 9*

- CHAPTER 1 Phonics Intervention in Linus Remedial Class ... 11  
*Azman Hariffin, Abby Zainal Ariffin, Erlinda Racha Walter Unjah, Maslawati Mohamad*
- CHAPTER 2 Learning Content Development System (LCDS) ... 19  
*Peterus Balan Sing, Wan Shafika Omar, Pui Kuet Poh, Yvonne Asong anak Anthony, Sharon Lawai, Maslawati Mohamad*
- CHAPTER 3 4CS: Column, Categorise, Catch-On, and Communicate ... 31  
*Nur Maisah Abdul Aziz, Nazrah Sarbini*
- CHAPTER 4 Kahoot and Padlet in an ESL Classroom ... 42  
*Chong Xin Txin, Ting Sie Yuan, Ting Suk Hua, Grace Wong Lyn Syn, Johnny Ling Leh Wui*
- CHAPTER 5 Building Confidence in using English through Public Speaking ... 56  
*Ngu Mee Kok, Maslawati Mohamad, Syed Zaqhwani Syed Abd Halim*

CHAPTER 6 Improving Pupils' Higher Order Thinking Skills through  
Language Arts Exhibition ... 62

*Turkasshini Raja Saigaran, Mohammad Noori Shah  
Kalilur Raheem, Hamidah Abdul Hameed, Noryani  
Abdul Ghani, Maslawati Mohamad*

CHAPTER 7 Improving Pupils' Spelling Ability using a Spelling  
Book ... 69

*Turkasshini Raja Saigaran, Mohammad Noori Shah  
Kalilur Raheem, Hamidah Abdul Hameed, Noryani  
Abdul Ghani, Maslawati Mohamad*

CHAPTER 8 Skype in ESL Primary Classroom ... 76

*Syed Zaqhwan Syed Abd Halim, Maslawati Mohamad*

*References ... 89*

*List of Contributors ... 99*

*Index ... 103*

## List of Tables & Figures

---

TABLE 1.1	Description of the strategies ...	16
TABLE 3.1	Lesson Plan ...	40
TABLE 4.1	Pupils' perspective on Kahoot ...	49
TABLE 5.1	Results of the questionnaire ...	60
TABLE 8.1	Lesson plan used for the lesson ...	80
FIGURE 1.1	Pupils wrote in the air the letters they were introduced to ...	14
FIGURE 1.2	Pupils practise demonstrating the letters with their body in a phonic song ...	15
FIGURE 1.3	A pupil is introduced to letters with pictures ...	15
FIGURE 1.4	Examples of picture cards with sounds ...	15
FIGURE 2.1	Sample of pupils' writing (Year 4) ...	20
FIGURE 2.2	Sample of pupils' writing (Year 3) ...	20
FIGURE 2.3	Flowchart of the mental processes ...	21
FIGURE 2.4	Steps taken to implement the creative project ...	23
FIGURE 2.5	Participants using the LCD software ...	23
FIGURE 2.6	An overview of the user interface of LCDS ...	25
FIGURE 2.7	Text and image used to create an eLearning Course lesson in LCDS ...	25
FIGURE 2.8	Each topic is followed by games and exercises to test and reinforce pupils understanding of the content ...	26
FIGURE 2.9	Online hypermedia used as additional input to support and enhance eLearning Content ...	26
FIGURE 2.10	Sample of pupil's work (Year 4) ...	27
FIGURE 2.11	Sample of pupil's work (Year 3) ...	28
FIGURE 4.1	Sample of students' drawing on Padlet ...	47
FIGURE 4.2	Students' Scores (Kahoot) ...	50
FIGURE 5.1	Bar graph the questionnaire results ...	60
FIGURE 6.1	Activities during Language Arts Exhibition ...	67
FIGURE 7.1	Spelling errors made by pupils ...	73
FIGURE 7.2	Big Spelling Book created by a teacher as a sample for pupils ...	74
FIGURE 7.3	Pupils carrying out the activity ...	74



## Preface

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*How do I create an interesting and innovative activity for my pupils?* is possibly a question that teachers around Malaysia frequently contemplate particularly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Learners are expected to be communicative, critical, creative, and collaborative to compete in the job market and to survive as an individual. Therefore, it is imperative for the 21<sup>st</sup> century innovative pedagogy to include effective teaching strategies that are driven by empirical evidence that teachers themselves have discovered from actual implementation in the classroom. However, not all teachers have access to publication opportunities so as to disseminate these findings to the world and in turn inspire other practitioners especially the novice ones. Thus, the Faculty of Education of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia took the initiative to help teachers to share findings from real language classrooms with the community of practice by compiling a collection of English language teaching projects. Over the years, postgraduate students of the TESL programme at the faculty, in partial fulfilment for a course called *Psycholinguistics in Language Teaching*, are required to plan and execute a creative project in language classrooms. It is designed as a form of classroom intervention to develop new and creative methods to tackle problems faced by primary and secondary schools in an ESL context.

The editorial team believes that it would be a complete waste if these amazing language learning projects are kept from public and become inaccessible to practitioners particularly those in Malaysia. Readers with limited time who often find it challenging to browse the internet for suitable language activities to be implemented in their classrooms will appreciate this book that comprises 8 chapters with creative projects that were carefully selected. The projects were carried out on students from multiple age groups, education and family backgrounds, and from different parts of Malaysia. One of the goals in writing this book was to illuminate some of those language learning difficulties through the introduction of detailed interventions that are interactive and fun. However, it must be noted that the interventions proposed may not guarantee success across language classrooms in the country as there are other external factors influencing learning growth that must be taken into account.

The book discusses language learning difficulties and their possible intervention as well as the steps taken in conducting the project. The steps are written in detail with sufficient examples so that crucial information is not misinterpreted. Details that were deemed irrelevant to the theme, *Interventions for Language Learning Difficulties* were removed and careful attention has been paid to reduce jargon to avoid confusing readers. Also highlighted in each chapter are the strengths and weaknesses of the projects. All credit to the writers of the chapters for identifying specific language learning problems and designing intervention to accommodate relevant language learning theories. Throughout the book, the theories are explained at a minimum and thus, readers are encouraged to read the works of key theorists and prominent writers discussing the respective theories to better understand them independently. Finally, it is hoped that readers especially other practitioners may benefit from the book and will continue experimenting with research-based teaching and learning activities in facilitating ESL learners to master and apply effective language skills in their daily lives.

## Chapter 1

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# Phonics Intervention in Linus Remedial Class

Azman Hariffin, Abby Zainal Ariffin, Erlinda Racha  
Walter Unjah, Maslawati Mohamad

### Introduction

Remedial programme for English primary education in Malaysia began in 2010 as it was featured through the *Literacy and Numeracy Screening 2.0* (LINUS 2.0) programme (Ministry of Education 2010). The programme can be described as an instruction or educational programme designed to assist primary school pupils in fulfilling the expected literacy and numeracy competencies (Richards 2015; Ho 2016). Generally, remedial education is targeted at any pupils with or without special needs. The primary characteristic of the pupils is they belong in the category of learners with poor achievement, regardless of the reasons (Fadel & Khaled 2013). Even for pupils with high intelligence, there is a possibility that they can be underprepared especially if their education was interrupted (Chujo et al. 2013).

In remedial education, the teachers play an important role, which is to offer a positive educational experience for the pupils by planning, organising, and developing it through continuous advice and support. They may also encourage communication and facilitate discussion to encourage the growth of pupils' positive experience. Besides, they may include a diverse form of instructions which may resolve communication problems among the pupils (Chew 2015).

In this programme, the Year One pupils (aged 7) will go through a special screening using LINUS Assessment for their literacy and numeracy skills. Initially, it was carried out three times a year until changes were made several years later. In 2012, LINUS 2.0 was introduced by adding

English Language Literacy (LBI) as a new component into the programme (Norfairios et al. 2013). Extending the inclusion of English language in LINUS 2.0 is due to the success of LINUS in improving the basic literacy and numeracy skills among the primary school pupils. The LINUS 2.0 works by streaming pupils who fail the screening into remedial classes until they have improved the skills after several subsequent screenings. However, if they are still unsuccessful up to Year Three, they will be referred to specialists for diagnostic evaluation. If they are identified as special needs pupils, they will be placed under a special education needs programme (Harun & Khadijah 2014).

The research participants formed a small group of pupils in the remedial programme of the school. The pupils were chosen based on their poor performance in LINUS 2.0 Screening. Despite coming from multifarious background, the pupils exhibited similar traits. One interesting case was Pupil A who had never attended school until he was 9 years old. It was difficult for him to cope up because the Malaysian education system assign pupils in classrooms according to their chronological ages. As such, the child had to enter Year 3 class due to his age despite not having gone through schooling for Year 1 and 2, which was borderline impossible for the teacher to teach him using the Year 3 syllabus. This was the reason he was placed in the remedial programme. In the remedial class, he learnt basic literacy and numeracy. However, as he needed to learn at a fast pace, effective intervention was crucial.

As Pupil A had never attended the fundamental years of schooling in his life, he struggled to catch up with the learning he had missed. He demonstrated poor language skills. This situation would affect his academic performance adversely. He experienced unresolved language difficulties and significant difficulties in spoken and written aspects of language. However, he developed a positive attitude over time although he was still behind his peers in terms of vocabulary growth. National Coalition for the Homeless (2007) suggests that a low socioeconomic background will generally produce a child with less developed language skills. Those who enter school at a later age often fall behind their peers although they progress. In order to overcome this problem, it is suggested that a remedial programme should be offered to the pupils.

## The Underlying Theories

The Verbal Association technique was applied to ensure effectiveness of instruction. Verbal Association is a type of coding connection in which different learning modalities of kinaesthetic, auditory, and visual are addressed through the use of stimulus and response such as writing in the sand, matching the words on cards and saying the words aloud. Other than that, repetition is also applied throughout the process that enhances learners' memories of the words learnt.

Through this technique, we are able to modify the pupils' behaviour using the stimulus which manifests the application of the Behaviourism theory. The activity puts emphasis on coding connection as mentioned by Reynolds (1975). He suggested that an individual usually makes an association between a particular behaviour and a stimulus. The pupils are able to associate a stimulus with the appropriate response. For example, when the teacher makes the shape of an "s" in the air, the pupils will articulate the sound "s". Whenever the teacher makes any shape of any letter, the pupils will produce the correct sound of the letter or phoneme.

In addition, the teacher also applies the rewarding system to enhance the effectiveness of the activities, e.g. rewarding the pupils' success with a candy or with a simple praise. Through that, the pupils are motivated even more and enhance their effort in memorising the alphabets. Gradually, they will be able to improve their learning. The reward system is also to control the pupils' behaviour during learning. Furthermore, learning needs to be reinforced so that they can retain new information that is learned. By approaching spelling from a behaviourist view, mastery can be accomplished by de-contextualising skills and segregating skills to ensure understanding. The knowledge of the basic rules and exceptions of spelling as well as practice in applying these rules will enable pupils to spell new words.

## Strategies: Meet the Letters

It is important for English remedial teachers to set a target language for the remedial programme (Chujo et al. 2013). Besides that, it is also suggested that the remedial tasks and activities be kept simple and suitable with the pupils' proficiency level. The existing curriculum is complicated for the remedial pupils. A simple and focused programme must be carefully

planned and organised to ensure that it is feasible for these pupils to reach the targeted learning outcomes. Introducing the pupils with letters and sounds is one strategy that has been chosen for the ‘Meet the Letters’ project.

The activity is based on a suggestion proposed by Gupta (2013) which focuses on the importance of instructions when dealing with the teaching of English language literacy. In ‘Meet the Letters’ programme, the remedial pupils were introduced to the selected letters which were “c”, “a”, and “u”. The pupils also learnt the sounds /k/, /æ/ and /ʌ/, which are represented by the letters learnt, respectively. They also learnt through repetition and forming the letters. The selection of the activities was made by adapting the suggested activities from the LINUS 2.0 Module Book by *Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum* (2014). The assessments were adapted from Bachman and Plamer (1996) and *Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum* (2014).

In the first week of this project, the pupils learned the letters and sounds and also to identify the sounds in words introduced to them. Pupils were introduced to the letters for the first time and were asked to write in the air with their fingers as largely as they could. In the second week, the teacher introduced the letters with pictures as guidance. Pictures are added as a supplementary tool to help pupils to associate the sounds they have learnt in Week 1. In Week 3, the teacher introduced the act of demonstrating the alphabets with their body. This is to recall the letters they have learnt and act as a reinforcement of the shapes of the letters.



FIGURE 1.1 Pupils wrote in the air the letters they were introduced to



FIGURE 1.2 Pupils practise demonstrating the letters with their body in a phonic song



FIGURE 1.3 A pupil is introduced to letters with pictures

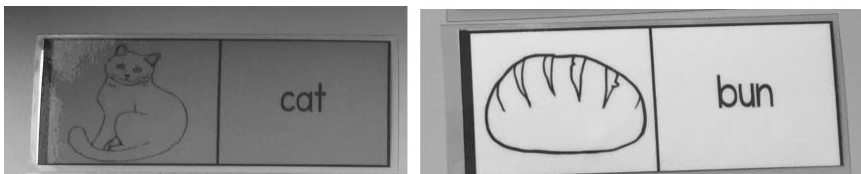


FIGURE 1.4 Examples of picture cards with sounds

TABLE 1.1 Description of the strategies

Activities	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Day 1	<p>Meet the Letters</p> <p>Introduction to letter 'A' and sound /æ/ - teacher demonstrates the letter and sound Teacher says "A, /æ/ &amp; pupils follow repeatedly. Repeat steps with letter U and C.</p>	<p>Meet the Letters II</p> <p>This time teacher introduces the letters with pictures as guidance. Similar to Day 1 of Week 1 activity, pictures are added as supplementary tool for the second week.</p>	<p>Meet the Letters III</p> <p>Teacher lets the pupils practise saying the words that they have learnt. Pupils learn to demonstrate the letters with their body.</p>
Day 2	<p>Write the letter in the air and articulate the letter and sound</p> <p>Teacher demonstrates &amp; the pupils follow repeatedly. Teacher introduces one letter at a time.</p>	<p>Write letters on the board</p> <p>Similar steps to Day 2 of Week 2 Activity. However, this time the pupils write letters on the board.</p>	<p>Practice:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write missing letters for each word based on the pictures given</li> <li>2. Spell words correctly based on pictures or what is said by the teacher.</li> </ol>
Day 3	<p>Teacher shows examples of words with /æ/ sounds. Only CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words are used. Repeat steps with /ʌ/ and /k/ (initial) Sounds E.g.: /æ/ = bag, pan, man, mat, pat, rat, bat, sat, etc. /ʌ/ = bun, fun, run, sun, etc. /k/ = cat, can, cut, cot, cop, cap</p>	<p>Practice – Repeat the words that the pupils learnt the first week. Teacher shows incomplete words and pupils fill in missing letters.</p>	<p>Practice:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pupils continue practising to complete missing words and spell words correctly with the teacher's guidance.</li> </ol>

*cont.*

cont.

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Day 4	Assessment – Teacher shows word cards and asks pupils to read the words shown. Only targeted sounds are assessed.	Assessment – Pupils are given a worksheet, completing missing letters. Teacher says the words and pupils complete the missing letters based on the teachers’ instructions	Assessment – Reading – teacher shows 4 words and the pupils read them. Pupils are given a pass if they can read 3 out of the 4 words Writing – pupils write 4 words based on the pictures given. Pupils are given a pass if they can read 75 percent of the given words.
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## Strengths

### *Air-Writing*

Air-Writing activity is a teacher-led activity where the pupils motion the letters in the air using their arms movements. Pupils also verbalise loudly the letters they are writing. The physical act of air-writing the letters as well as saying the words leaves a big cognitive impression (Itaguchi et. al. 2015) and helps to cement the word in the pupils’ memory. Air-writing helps pupils to remember the letter formation which is a motion-oriented ‘memory’. This exercise also gives the pupils some valuable practice in writing that will be useful later on in their learning process. As some of the pupils in the Remedial Class have never attended any year of schooling before, this activity also helps with the kinaesthetic reinforcement of the writing exercise (Itaguchi et. al. 2015). It helps to strengthen pupils’ arms and shoulder muscles in preparation for handwriting (Chen et al. 2016). At the same time, it is easier for the teacher to see whether the pupils are really writing the letters or just waving their arms around.

### *Phonics Picture Cards*

The use of phonics picture cards offers pupils a fun and easy way to associate the letters (graphemes) learnt with their sounds (phonemes). Pupils can remember the exact letter patterns and sequence that represent various speech sounds with the use of phonics picture cards (Moats 2000). In the planned activity, the teacher used the picture cards to show examples of letters to form words. This helps pupils to build phonetic foundation by applying the basic rules of spelling the learnt words.

### Weaknesses of the Project

There are some shortcomings of this project that we managed to identify during the intervention to the pupils. As four of the pupils have just entered school at the age of 8 and 9, they had difficulty coping with their friends' academic progress. When they failed to compete with their friends, they gave up trying. Thus, the teacher had to conduct the intervention at a slower pace. These activities seemed effective for the pupils in the first two sessions. However, repetition eventually made the rest of the pupils bored. During the phonic activity, due to the use of picture cards, pupils at times were heavily reliant on the pictures or cues from the teacher. Some pupils also tend to overgeneralize the spelling of the words. These happened after a few sessions. Therefore, the teacher had to find other creative ways to manipulate the phonics flashcards.

### Conclusion

Pupils in the remedial programme for English need more support than just participation in the activities. A background check helps to understand pupils' problem in improving English literacy. Teachers too, have to be creative in getting their pupils to be interested in the activities. Teachers have to provide the reading purpose to help pupils in finding meaning in whatever they are trying to learn.

## Chapter 2

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# Learning Content Development System (LCDS)

Peterus Balan Sing, Wan Shafika Omar, Pui Kuet Poh, Yvonne Asong  
anak Anthony, Sharon Lawai, Maslawati Mohamad

### Introduction

In the Malaysian education system, the teaching of English focuses on four major skills mainly listening, speaking, reading, and writing and grammar is a specific component that is emphasised across these language skills. Writing is one of the most challenging skills for English as Second Language (ESL) learners to master. Even to the native speakers, producing a coherent, fluent, and extended piece of writing is considered the most difficult task to carry out as a manifestation of language performance (Nunan 1999). Writing is not a skill whereby every speaker develops naturally (Brown 2001) but the written products are often the results of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that require specialized skills. For ESL teachers in Malaysia, in addition to the inherent challenge of writing due to its nature as described earlier, there is another hurdle to tackle; a single classroom consists of learners with varying proficiency levels, making lesson planning and activity implementation even difficult. In order to cater to the needs of the mixed-ability learners, teachers have to continually be creative in selecting the teaching and learning techniques so that the learners can fully comprehend most, if not all, of the lesson. The following creative project attempts to embrace this belief.

## The Problem

As English language teachers, we noticed that our primary school pupils share one common problem in learning English, i.e. constructing simple sentences as the pupils' sentences often do not adhere to the subject-verb-object (SVO) rule. This will pose problems particularly in writing compositions in *Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah* (UPSR) Paper 2 as language errors are penalised by the examiners, resulting in deduction of marks. The following are some samples of the pupils' writing.

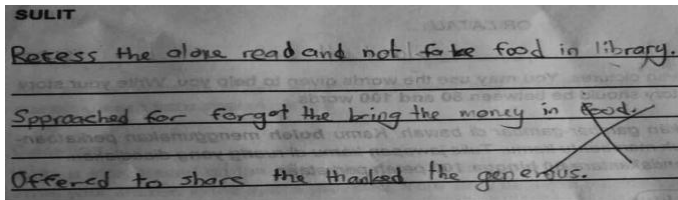


FIGURE 2.1 Sample of pupils' writing (Year 4)

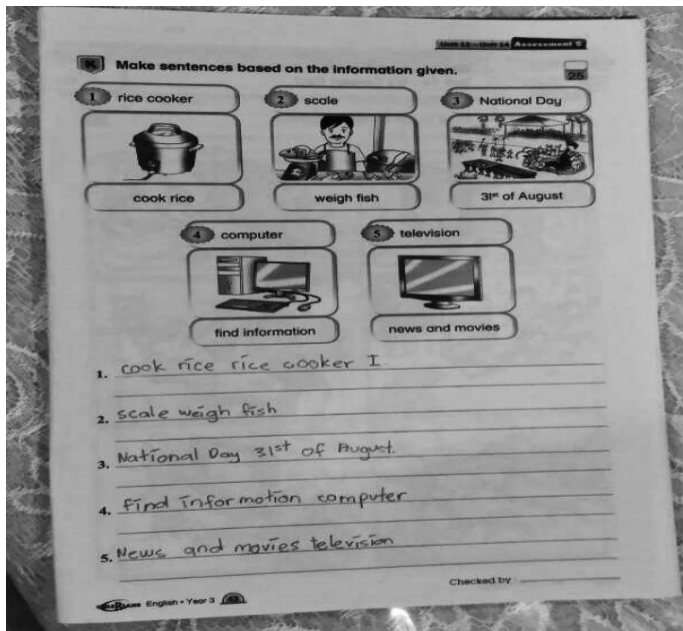


FIGURE 2.2 Sample of pupils' writing (Year 3)

Figure 1.1.1 and Figure 1.1.2 show that the sentences do not adhere to the SVO sentence patterns. The Subject, Verb and Object of the sentence were not in correct order.

Nordquist (2017) states that subject, verb, and object (SVA) are the basic units to form most sentences in English. Hence, the primary objective of this project is to help pupils construct simple sentences using the SVO agreement rule accurately using a classroom intervention programme called *Learning Content Development System (LCDS)*.

## Underlying Theories Related to LCDS

### Cognitivism

The Cognitivist Theory by Piaget (1990) emphasises inner mental activities and thus, learning is seen as a mental process. Below is the flowchart of the mental processes involved.

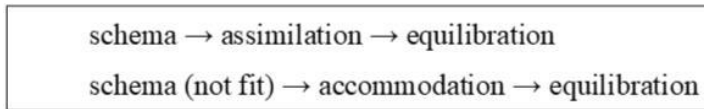


FIGURE 2.3 Flowchart of the mental processes

The process of cognitive development occurs when pupils make sense of things around them using the existing knowledge, or also known as the schema. The process of assimilation takes place when pupils connects new information with their prior knowledge effortlessly to achieve a mental state of equilibrium. However, when they respond to a new situation that do not fit the scheme, the process of accommodation is engaged to create a more appropriate structure in helping them to achieve equilibrium. In this project, we let pupils develop prior knowledge through prepared notes. A few examples were given to help them to build schema on the SVO agreement. As they answered the exercises, pupils assimilated and accommodated the information given until they have reached equilibrium.

## Technology Acceptance Model

We employed LCDS as it adheres to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davies (1989). This theory suggests that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are two main factors that cause people to accept or reject information technology. Davies defines perceived usefulness as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance. In our project, the teacher informed the pupils about the importance of LCDS in helping them to construct sentences. The participants knew the importance of constructing grammatically correct sentences and thus, they had a purpose of using LCDS.

Apart from that, the participants also embrace the information technology by perceived ease of use. Perceived ease of use is defined as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be an effortless endeavour. Most of the participants, regardless of their background, were familiar with gadgets such as laptops and smartphones. In using LCDS, the participants were also guided by the teachers to access the software programme.

## Behaviourism

Thorndike (1898) proposed the Laws of Learning. In this project, The Law of Exercise was integrated into our project due to its suitability and relevance. Thorndike's law of exercise consists of two parts: the law of use and the law of disuse in which case connections or bonds made in the brain cortex are weakened or loosened. The law of use explains that the more often an association is used, the stronger it becomes. The project provided systematic practice for the participants in sentence construction so that they could have a stronger association. Throughout the process, we provided guidance by getting the pupils to be familiar with the sentence patterns.

## Strategies

We devised a few strategies in order to overcome pupils' writing problem. Several steps were developed in this strategy.

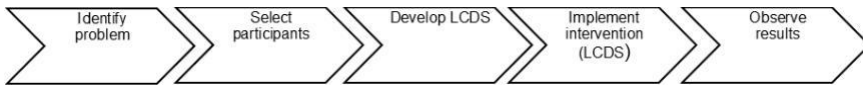


FIGURE 2.4 Steps taken to implement the creative project

### Identify Problem

Before producing our creative project, we compared the problems faced by our pupils. The common difficulty that our pupils faced was constructing simple sentences without adhering to the SVO rule.

### Select Participants

Our next move was to select our participants for this project. The participants selected were Year 3 and Year 4 pupils due to their early grammar exposure to writing, particularly to simple sentences. Due to the small number of participants, the teachers decided to conduct the activity beyond school hours, either in the staff room or at the teachers' quarters. Throughout the project, we guided and assisted pupils by using the LCDS technique, mainly for the Subject-Verb-Object sentence structure. The following are evidence of our participants using the LCD software.



Participant 1



Participant 2



Participant 3



Participant 4

FIGURE 2.5 participants using the LCD software

## Develop LCD

Before developing the LCD, the teacher firstly set the course outline so as to adhere to the pupils' proficiency level. Two modules were designed. The first module comprised notes and exercises for low proficiency pupils and the second module for high proficiency pupils. Doing so would render no pupils left behind.

LCD was chosen as the intervention because it was considered relevant to the problem we were facing. LCD allowed us to design specific study notes and language exercises to address the pupils' needs. In addition, LCDs gave us the freedom to pick and select suitable vocabulary items that we would like to expose our pupils too. LCD was also selected because of its offline feature. Since all the group members were teaching at both rural and urban schools, LCDs was accessible by all the pupils. Not only that, with the games and exciting activities present in LCD, fun learning was made possible among the pupils.

## Essential Elements of LCDs and eLearning Course

LCDs as a software programme essentially contains many interesting, interactive elements or templates through which teachers or instructors could organize or design learning contents. These contents could then be shared over LMS (Learning Management System), or used as they are (eLearning Course or Learning Snack). LCDs comes with a pre-set number of templates and teachers can build their teaching-learning contents around these templates. Each eLearning Course or Learning Snack consists of three main divisions: the module, the lesson, and the topic. The module is the central theme of the course and the subsequent parts will explore more on the theme.

As indicated in Figure 3.2.1, the eLearning Course created was on grammar intervention for writing S-V-O sentences. The module was divided into four lessons, and each lesson had between two and three topics. Additional lessons and topics were added or removed according to their suitability using the icon bar on the left-hand side. In the eLearning Course, we elaborated each component for S-V-O sentence pattern with examples. Several elements were incorporated to build the module such as images and pictures, sound, animation, videos, and hypermedia. More interactive elements such as games and simulations were also integrated in

the eLearning Course. We believe by presenting our intervention in such a way, it would leave a more profound impact through a meaningful learning experience that combined comprehensible input with the elements of fun learning.

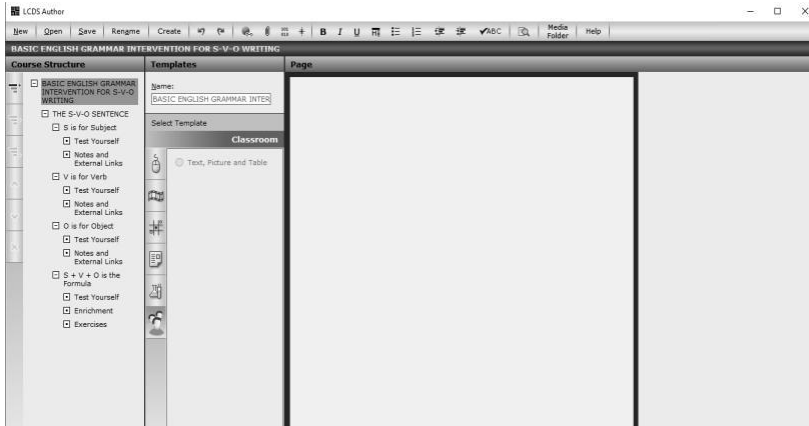


FIGURE 2.6 An overview of the user interface of LCDS

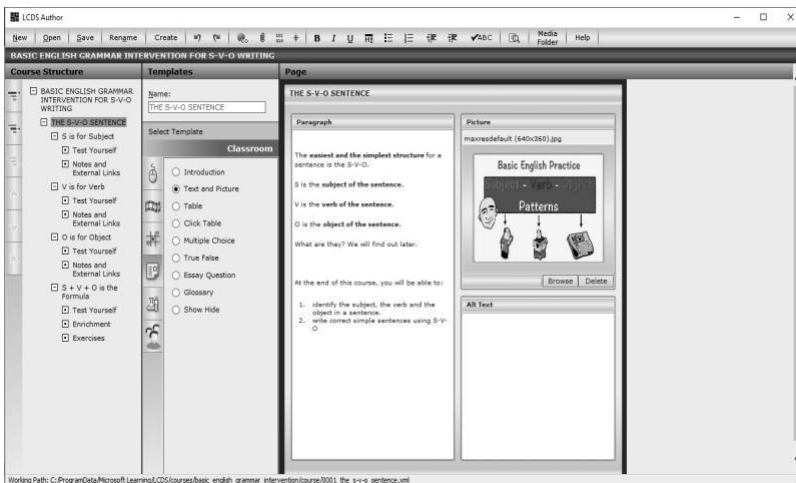


FIGURE 2.7 Text and image used to create an eLearning Course lesson in LCDS

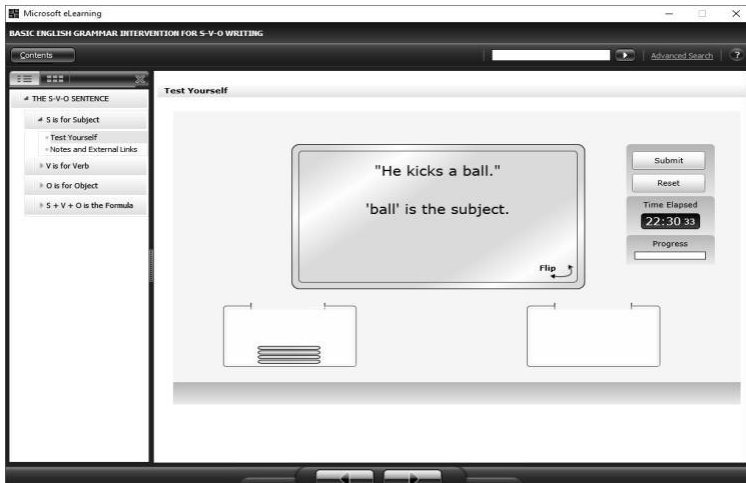


FIGURE 2.8 Each topic is followed by games and exercises to test and reinforce pupils understanding of the content

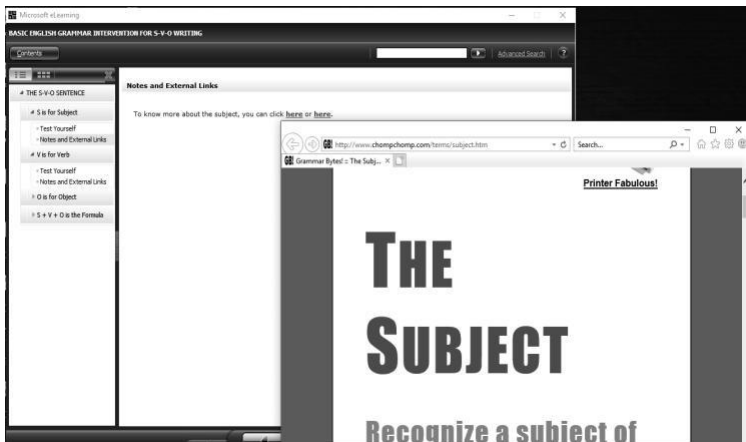


FIGURE 2.9 Online hypermedia used as additional input to support and enhance eLearning Content

A major issue that the group had identified in the process of designing and creating the eLearning Course was internet access and accessibility to each participant because they were stationed all across Sabah and Sarawak. Some of the locations had limited to no internet access, and thus, ease of use and content development had to be taken into consideration.

Both online and offline hypermedia were included in the eLearning Course to accommodate both possible situations. Online hypermedia was hyperlinked to enable access to online materials and offline use HTML web pages were downloaded and embedded in the eLearning Course. This would offer a satisfactory solution to the internet access issue faced by some of the group members.

### Implement intervention (LCDS)

Before implementing the course with selected participants, they were given a brief overview of LCDS and the learning outcomes. Subsequently, we continued with the implementation. Throughout the process, we guided three pupils using the LCDS.

### Observe Result

After using the LCDS, we administered new exercises for the pupils to answer. This step was intended to identify whether LCDS would yield any improvement. Then, we collected the exercises and analysed their written exercises.

### Post-LCDS Intervention

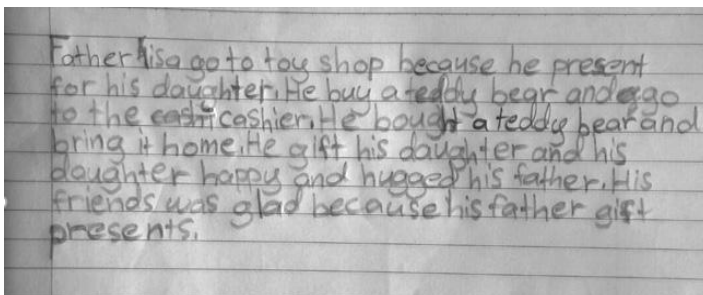


FIGURE 2.10 Sample of pupil's work (Year 4)

Figure 3.3.1 and Figure 3.3.2 show that the pupils were able to identify the subject, verb and object of a sentence and managed to arrange them correctly as compared to their initial writing. A few errors were still visible

in their writing as the other aspects and mechanics of writing (spelling, pronouns, SVA and Tenses) were yet to be emphasised.

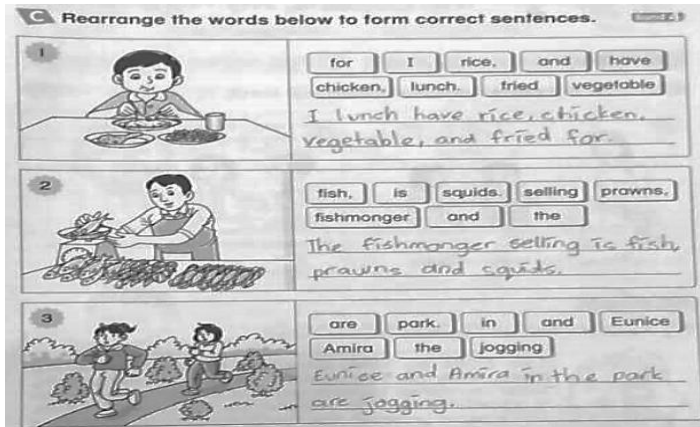


FIGURE 2.11 Sample of pupil's work (Year 3)

## Strengths

There are a few strengths of using LCDS in order to help pupils construct correct sentences using the SVO patterns.

1. LCDS provided an alternative learning experience for pupils – especially those who with limited internet access in the rural or remote areas. It allowed the pupils to still interact using the technology in order to learn.
2. This project was also catered for pupils with varying proficiency. In the present project, most of the participants were remedial pupils, but LCDS could also be developed for average and proficient pupils. Teachers need to add on other exercises for pupils with different proficiency.
3. LCDS would allow kinaesthetic, auditory and visual learners to maximise their learning experience. They could listen to songs, watch videos and answer quizzes and exercises in a single module. All they need to do is click on activities that they prefer.
4. The module developed also aimed to assist pupils in being independent learners. The teacher's role was only to facilitate learning. Pupils were

given the autonomy to be in charge of their own learning by attempting the right module.

5. It saves time when carrying out the activities as teachers only need to fill in the information that they need into the software programme.

## Limitations

There were a few drawbacks identified as we implemented the project:

1. Customizing activities beyond the pre-determined templates was challenging. Teachers need to follow the structure and limit exercise to the type of activities provided in the software.
2. The software requires a Windows-powered laptop or PC. The 1Bestari netbooks (given to each school by the Ministry of Education) were not used due to the large capacity of the software.
3. Formats of the content needed to adhere to specific file types only. Not all file types were suitable to be used in the module. Therefore, some videos, pictures and song files had to be converted before they were being incorporated into the software.

In addition to mechanical challenges, there appeared to be some challenges in terms of logistics as follows:

1. As each member was geographically dispersed, we had to take turn in developing the content of the project, resulting in a longer time frame to complete the e-learning module before it could be used.
2. We also had to conduct the project beyond the usual teaching hours and had to select a limited number of participants due to the nature of the project (ICT-based that focused more on remedial pupils).

## Conclusion

This project was an attempt to help pupils in order to write sentences correctly as an early intervention programme in preparation of their exam. Through this project, we noticed the huge potential of LCDS implemented against the time constraint. LCDS could be used to assist teachers in developing teaching and learning materials for pupils and was found to

be both teacher- and pupil-friendly. It also provided an alternative to ICT-based lessons. However, careful attention needs to be paid in planning the content of the lessons as it demands a certain level of teacher's creativity when dealing with the preset template.

## Chapter 3

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# 4Cs: Column, Categorise, Catch-On, And Communicate

Nur Maisah Abdul Aziz, Nazrah Sarbini

### Introduction and Problem

Limited vocabulary often results in ESL learners struggling to comprehend written texts, let alone to digest information. To many learners, their inability to understand what they read is often frustrating and it eventually thwarts their reading interest. Ironically, reading is a key source of increasing word knowledge (Anderson & Nagy, 1991) and being demotivated by reading activities would definitely reduce their chance to improve their vocabulary.

In the ESL context of Malaysia, reading is a skill that is emphasised during English lessons and mainly tested in examinations and tests. For instance, *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM), a public national examination at the end of learners' Fifth Form allocates a special section to test pupils' reading comprehension in Paper II of English 1119. Pupils are required to answer several questions based on comprehension texts which bears 10 marks. Following this is a question on summary that awards pupils 15 marks, details which are to be extracted from the same text. Failure to make sense of the passage will jeopardise the possibility of obtaining a high mark from the total 25 marks.

Rich vocabulary helps learners to appreciate a reading passage and literary works. Many local teachers believe that defining words explicitly before reading is an effective technique to ensure vocabulary growth and enhance reading comprehension. However, studies have reported contradicting findings. Stahl and Fairbanks (1986), for instance, found that when instructional reading strategies neither involved word definitions nor multiple repetitions of learning the definitions of target words, reading comprehension was not significantly affected.

ESL educators need to vary the techniques in boosting pupils' vocabulary. In view of the Six Key Attributes in the Malaysian Education Blueprint Year 2013-2025 which outlines the government's vision for pupils to be at least bilingual, it is imperative that a teacher be resourceful and creative to ensure the vision is fulfilled. In addition, teachers are requested by the Ministry of Education to tap pupils' capability to think critically and creatively to the maximum. Learners need to not only be trained to acquire knowledge, but to also connect the acquired knowledge with existing knowledge and to create new knowledge. Presented with such high expectations, the common practice in ESL classrooms that constantly train pupils to search for definitions of words and to use them in a sentence before reading may no longer be adequate, particularly when studies have suggested that the practice gave no positive effect in facilitating pupils' comprehension of texts that contain those words (Kameenui & Simmons, 1991). Allen (1999) suggests three reasons as to why strategies that solely focus on word definitions are not as effective as teachers would have hoped. The first reason relates to the property of most English words which have multiple definitions and at times, meanings of a particular word are dependent on the geographical context where a learner lives. The second is also partially related to the first reason – as a word can contain several usages, learning only one definition may not always be accurate in a given context. The final reason is due the fact that memorising definitions of words may not always help learners to use them appropriately in context.

On a similar note, Daniels and Zemelman (2004) note that learners gained more by working with the words learnt, e.g. by examining them in a meaningful and relevant context and by reflecting on the accurate use of the words. Therefore, pupils must be led to the right direction so that they can expand their vocabulary in increasing their ability to understand reading texts. Due to these reasons, 4Cs which is short for *Column*, *Categorise*, *Catch-on*, and *Communicate* is expected to be useful an effective intervention programme. It aims to teach vocabulary in a meaningful way to equip learners with better strategies in comprehending reading texts.

## Underlying Theories

Teachers can assist pupils to increase their vocabulary by providing instructions that help them understand the value and relevance of the

words under study (Bintz, 2011). Throughout learners' fundamental years of learning, teachers need to strategically select and provide reading materials which are not only appealing to the pupils but also useful. In the present project, the teacher gave the Fourth Form (aged 16) learners a text which they needed to know and learn in anticipation of lessons for the following year (Fifth Form). As the teacher explained this, the pupils instantly displayed interest to delve into the reading passage which was a synopsis of the novel 'Dear Mr. Kilmer'. This reaction is considered conforming to John Watson's theory of Behaviourism that states human beings often give predicted responses to a stimulus. In this context, the stimulus is the synopsis and teacher's explanation of how important the reading passage is in preparation for next year's lessons and as expected, pupils gave an immediate positive response.

In the next activity, the teacher asked the pupils to categorise the words they encountered in the reading text into three categories: *'difficult words that I know'*, *'difficult words that I sort of know'* and *'difficult words that I do not know'*. The process necessitated pupils to use their previous knowledge and promoted pupils to develop a strategy to learn new words and new concepts as they acquired specific word learning abilities through the technique. This is in line with Harmon (2002) who stated that pupils must establish strategy awareness in expanding their vocabulary. Furthermore, the categorising technique stimulated pupils' existing knowledge. In the Constructivism theory of Piaget's, it is claimed that people produce knowledge and form meaning based on their experiences. The pupils used their prior knowledge to categorise the words according to the labels per instruction. The teacher became a facilitator whose role was to aid the pupils to arrive at their own understanding and conclusions. The practice also helped the pupils become critical thinkers.

When the teacher explained to the pupils how to use contextual clues to predict the meaning of certain words, the teacher was embracing Vygotsky's sociocultural approach to cognitive development. It focuses on the role of culture in the development of higher mental functions. In the intervention, the teacher employed an approach comprising Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that emphasised scaffolding. ZPD refers to the range of tasks that a student is yet to perform independently but can be achieved with the help and guidance of others. There are two levels of ZPD. The first is the actual development level which is the lower limit of tasks one can perform independently. This level was relevant to the

classroom teaching instruction when pupils categorised the words before the teacher explained how to use contextual clues to work out on meanings. The second is the level of potential development which is the upper limit of tasks that pupils can perform with the assistance of a more competent individual and that is usually the teacher. Manifested when the teacher demonstrated to the learners how to use contextual clues, scaffolding also took place in this instance as the teacher allowed the pupils to work independently after the explanation.

The next strategy used by the teacher was to ask the pupils to come to the front of class and to write the categorised words on the blackboard. Getting pupils to move around in the classroom may positively impact the pupils' performance as pupils become less restless and more focused on learning. Bodily movements also help to increase oxygen level to the brain that consequently enhances learning ability. In the following activity, the teacher initiated the discussion of word meanings. Once again, the teacher took the role of a mentor and facilitator by asking about the meanings that the learners derived from the contextual clues. The learners were allowed to discuss with their friends and it falls in line with the role of social interaction in the development of cognition by Vygotsky (1978). Higher mental processes within individuals are influenced by social processes. Interaction with teachers and friends help learners to develop and maximise their cognitive skill and in turn help them to learn new vocabulary.

For unfamiliar and difficult words, the teacher coached the pupils to predict the meanings by providing sentences and situations that could be associated with the words. The teacher also provided the word definitions and antonyms. If they failed to do so, the pupils were instructed to look up the definitions in a dictionary as a last resort. A dictionary can be an essential source of information about words in a language (Walz 1990) and they will also become autonomous learners who strive to find appropriate interpretations of unfamiliar words in sentences without teacher's assistance (Miyanaga 2007). This relates to Hull's Drive Reduction Theory as pupils were driven to search for the definition of words to reduce the state of tension of the 'not-knowing' in their quest for improving vocabulary knowledge.

The pupils were then instructed to work in groups of three and to produce a sketch script. They were expected to use the newly-learnt words in the dialogue to enhance understanding and to retain the vocabulary. Vocabulary growth occurs when learners are immersed in learning words through a variety of ways and are personally and actively involved in constructing

word meanings (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003). Therefore, the pupils in the present study were also required to act out the sketch of which they wrote a script earlier on. The activity was devised as such so that the pupils were actively engaged in interactive word learning experience. These were directly related to Vygotsky's theory. Social interaction among the group members plays a fundamental role in the pupils' cognitive development in their quest for word meaning construction. The more advanced peers in the group assisted the weaker ones to progress in the lesson.

Additionally, scaffolding also took place. The teacher, as a mentor, determined which newly-learned words were to be used by the pupils in their script. The teacher also decided on the theme of the sketch which is based on the belief that the pupils still required assistance to achieve the objectives of the instructions. If they were to decide which words to use and what theme to adopt, it would be time-consuming for them to complete the tasks given. Knowing the pupils' ability level, the teacher allowed them to only explore their newly found knowledge within their ZPD by encouraging and advancing their interactive learning with assistance.

Pupils were instructed to complete the later tasks in groups as it creates an environment where pupils explain concepts to and coach each other. Pupils get the opportunity to learn from the peers which may make more sense to them than teacher's instructions. Collaboration and cooperation may also produce better results. Other than developing communication and teamwork skill, group work improves understanding through additional discussion and explanation. Pupils also pool their expertise, knowledge and skills (Webb 1989). By actively involving themselves in the discussion, pupils also adopted the role of active learners as opposed to being mere passive listeners.

Creative and critical thinking skills were nurtured in the process of learning. The pupils were required to write a script for a sketch and later act out the script in groups. The 'discovery learning' provided opportunities for pupils to explore and experiment, thereby encouraging new understanding. Despite going through the same learning experience, each individual will interpret their experience according to an understanding and meaning that are personal to them. By writing the script, pupils pooled their resources and explored their understanding through an active and continuous process. Pupils also have to assimilate and accommodate new information with their current understanding. They also have to reflect on their own experiences when writing the script which falls in line with the formal operation stage of Piaget's theory. This is the highest level of thinking and

pupils are capable of transcending concrete evidence. The learners at this stage are able to concentrate their thoughts on things that may not exist (Lazarus, Kanner & Folksman 1980) and are hypothetical in nature.

When the pupils role-played the script, their self-confidence was harnessed. Pronunciation of words and diction could be improved too. Pupils actively participated in their own learning. Learners need to use ideas, skills and information through relevant activities such as role-playing to gain effective learning which implies a teacher needs to adapt instructions to the learners' developmental level as suggested by Piaget. Hence, the teacher in the present study facilitated learning by providing a variety of experiences. Role-playing activity was a possible platform other than providing concrete 'hands-on' experiences to help the pupils acquire knowledge after the writing of the script.

At the end of the instructional period, pupils were given a reward as the group with the best storyline that portrayed meanings of the newly learnt words accurately. Watson through his Behaviourism theory believes in positive and negative reinforcement in the classroom to encourage pupils' participation. At the end of the study, the teacher had achieved the objectives and the pupils had gained valuable knowledge.

## Strategies and Implementation

These strategies were carried out in a mixed-ability classroom, comprising Fourth Form pupils.

Strategies of carrying out 4Cs:

1. The pupils were firstly given a reading passage entitled 'Dear Mr. Kilmer'.
2. They were then given 15 minutes to read and understand the content of the passage.
3. Later, they were handed a handout that contained 3 columns. The columns were labelled 'the difficult words that I know', 'the difficult words that I sort of know', and 'the difficult words that I am clueless'.
4. The pupils were asked to fill in the columns individually with the function words they could find from the reading passage and categorise the words accordingly.
5. To assist pupils with the task, the teacher explained what was expected of them. The pupils were supposed to fill in the first column with words

- considered difficult but are known to them. The second column was to be filled with difficult words that they might not know but could still guess the meaning, and the third column with words that they did not know and could not guess the meaning at all.
6. The teacher explained some strategies to the pupils as to how they could guess the meaning of certain words by considering contextual clues, such as adjacent words, analysing affixes and checking whether they are loan words.
  7. The pupils were given another 15 minutes to fill out the three columns.
  8. Later, the teacher instructed each student, one by one, to come to the front of the class and write the words they have in their columns on the blackboard. Each student contributed one word for each column.
  9. The teacher discussed the answers with the whole class. Each word was deliberated and the pupils explained to the teacher the meanings of the words. The teacher facilitated by agreeing if the meanings given were correct, disagreeing tactfully if the meanings given were incorrect, and giving clues of the definitions of the words through examples of sentences or situations and even synonyms for the sort of known words if the pupils provided inaccurate answers.
  10. For the words under the category of 'clueless', the teacher allowed them to look up the meaning in the dictionary. This was done only after they could not find any contextual clues to guess the meaning of the words.
  11. After they discovered the meanings, they would work in groups of 3 members for a role-play activity.
  12. The pupils wrote a script for a sketch that lasted between 7 and 10 minutes to showcase the newly learnt vocabulary. They had to create a storyline that could accommodate all the words given in the right context.
  13. The teacher listed out all the words (about 15 to 20 newly learnt words) that they must use in the script and also determined the theme of the role playing, e.g. a traveller lost in the woods.
  14. The pupils were given 20-30 minutes to complete the task.
  15. They were given another 10 minutes to practise before performing in front of the class.
  16. Each group took turn to perform their sketch in front of everyone.
  17. The teacher rewarded the best group that used all the words in context accurately and with the most creative storyline.

## Strengths

Upon reflection, the class instructions were successful. The teaching and learning process was admittedly time-consuming, but we were happy to note that the learning objectives were achieved and the pupils were actively involved in line with the requirement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning theories.

The teacher acted as a mentor and the pupils were responsible for their own learning. Being insightful, the teacher applied many teaching approaches in ensuring that the pupils' ability to grasp the skill or knowledge was maximised. The pupils worked individually in the beginning through discovery learning and they were given the opportunity to hone their critical thinking skills by connecting existing knowledge with new knowledge through the process of accommodation. Soon after, the pupils worked in small groups to explore their understanding. Less competent pupils would develop their knowledge with the help from able peers. The role-playing activity built the pupils' confidence and the activity was engaging and meaningful to pupils. In addition, they were given opportunities to practise their English in a safe environment and vocabulary was taught in a meaningful way.

The teacher also gave clear goals to the pupils about what to be achieved with a relevant reading passage to them, while also emphasising the importance of understanding the content. The teacher had accomplished the lesson objectives by ensuring all the pupils participated in their learning process through individual and group work. The teacher was aware of the pupils' ZPD and consequently, she applied the scaffolding concept in the classroom instructions, e.g. by allowing collaborative learning (group work and role-play) and coached the pupils along the way, offering assistance only when the need arose. Thus, the pupils became active learners under the facilitation of the teacher.

## Limitations

The lesson was time-consuming. The activities, even though they were engaging, fun and motivating, took 4 periods to conduct. Part of the challenge lied in the words that were categorised by different pupils in different columns. For example, 'correspondence' as a word was foreign to some but was adequately understood by the others. When this happened,

the teacher needed input from the peers who understood the words to help their struggling friends. It benefited both groups of learners at that particular point.

During the role play, some groups did not manage to use all the must-use words given. Time constraint was the main reason given for it when brainstorming the script. Some students misinterpreted several words and subsequently, they misused the words for the particular theme in the role play.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are in order. The instructional time for English as a subject in schools should be extended to accommodate planned activities by teachers. The aspired high level of proficiency among pupils by the government begs the pupils to undergo a maximum exposure to the English language on a daily basis. Therefore, teachers and pupils of the English language should be allocated ample time to carry out teaching and learning activities to achieve the learning objectives.

After conducting classroom activities some pupils were still struggling at times to formulate the required abstract thinking and conceptual reasoning. To cite an instance that supports this claim is when the pupils misinterpreted the correct word usage in a given situation during the lessons. The teacher may reinforce pupils' understanding through remedial activities in the following class with the pupils. Peer-correction may also be carried out. Teachers in general are advised to avoid correcting students' mistakes on the spot and to be selective because incessant negative comments will demotivate pupils and affect their enthusiasm.

The teacher may also revisit the reading passage that bases the flow of activities and to a certain extent, it serves as a way to check the effectiveness of the vocabulary instructions given in the class earlier. If they are able to understand the reading passage well before the teaching and learning of the words, it indicates that the previous class learning objectives have been achieved.

TABLE 3.1 Lesson Plan

Subject: English                      Period/Duration: 1 <sup>st</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> (2 hours)	
Date: 14/11/2017                      Lesson: Reading /Vocabulary                      Form: 4 Arif	
Objectives: By the end of the lesson, the pupils should be able to: 1. Identify meanings of difficult words found in a reading passage 2. Write a dialogue in groups of three 3. Role-play the dialogue with the group members	Notes: 20 out of 22 pupils achieved the objectives
Preparations: 1. Pupils are informed beforehand that they would learn reading and vocabulary 2. Teacher prepares and photocopies handouts 3. Teacher asks permission to use 4 periods for the lesson from the school administrator	-
Materials: 1. Reading passage (handout) 2. Handouts with columns to categorize words	-
Resources: 1. Dear Mr. Kilmer (Reference book) – Sasbadi Sdn. Bhd. 2. Effective Strategies for Teaching Vocabulary – K12 Reader	-
Instructions: 1. Pupils are to read the passage given. 2. Pupils are to identify and categorise words according to ‘the difficult words that I know’, ‘the difficult words that I sort-of know’ and ‘the difficult words that I am clueless’. 3. Pupils are to write their answers on the blackboard. 4. Pupils are to discuss the meanings with the teacher. 5. Pupils are to refer to the dictionary. 6. Pupils are to form groups of 3 members and write a dialogue using the new words learnt. 7. Pupils are to role-play the dialogue.	Teacher explained the instructions clearly and repeatedly to ensure understanding
Assignment and Activities: 1. Pupils read the passage given. 2. Pupils identify and categorise words according to ‘the difficult words that I know’, ‘the difficult words that I sort-of know’ and ‘the difficult words that I am clueless’. 3. Pupils write their answers on the blackboard. 4. Pupils discuss the meanings with teachers. 5. Pupils refer to the dictionary. 6. Pupils form a group of 3 members and create a dialogue using the new words learnt. 7. Pupils role-play the dialogue.	Pupils were involved actively  Teacher coached and supervised

*cont.*

*cont.*

<p>Evaluation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Number of difficult words they know the definitions</li><li>2. Number of words managed to be incorporated in the dialogue</li><li>3. Number of words they use correctly (based on the context) in the dialogue</li><li>4. Best dialogue with the best story line</li><li>5. Best role-playing</li></ol>	<p>The best performing group was rewarded as a form of reinforcement</p>
<p>Others:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Teacher was satisfied with the learning outcomes.</li><li>2. Teacher would continue the discussion of the reading passage given earlier in the next lesson.</li></ol>	<p>-</p>

## Chapter 4

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# Kahoot And Padlet in an ESL Classroom

Chong Xin Txin, Ting Sie Yuan, Ting Suk Hua, Grace  
Wong Lyn Syn, Johnny Ling Leh Wui

### Introduction

In the state of Sarawak, Malaysia, rural learners with low learning motivation are reported to suffer from low academic achievement and poor English language mastery (Ling & Chen 2016; Suliman & Yunus 2014). Motivation is believed to be key in ensuring active learner participation in the classroom which will in turn serve as the foundation for learning in their journey of knowledge building (Al-Ghamdi, 2014; Gardner, 2010; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). The role of motivation in learning is accentuated by Hall (2011: 134) who claims that “it is difficult to imagine anyone learning ... without some degree of motivation”. Essentially, motivation is a construct that is manifested by a conscious decision to act which leads to a continuous and sustained behaviour by an individual towards achieving a goal (Al-Ghamdi, 2014; Williams & Burden, 1997). Thus, it is crucial for teachers to effectively engage and maintain learners’ interest in the learning process until learning goals are achieved. It is also necessary that the goals set by the teacher to be within the learners’ reach, particularly those who are yet to achieve adequate language aptitude.

In the context of this study, the participants from the rural areas of Sarawak were identified to have exhibited low motivation in learning English literature as a subject. A perpetual state of low motivation as such was thought to eventually result in negative cognitive and affective learning attitudes in the classroom, causing less enthused participation in the classroom. If the spirit of learning literature is not embraced wholly by the students, a student’s grade of the English Language paper will

be jeopardised. The literature component carries 15 marks in Section D of Paper 2 in the Malaysian Higher Certificate (locally known as SPM) examination (Nor Hashimah Isa & Che Ton Mahmud, 2012). Thus, in the teaching and learning of Literature, teachers need to employ effective strategies so as to help rural students increase their motivation in reading literary texts.

A study was conducted by involving five rural secondary schools in Sarawak from the areas of Tatau, Belaga, Song, Bintangor, and Bintulu. Five students were selected from each school which made the sample comprise 25 participants (male n=8; female n=17). The participants were identified to be homogenous in terms of their age, locality, academic achievement, and learning motivation. They were all 16 years old (Form Four) who studied at rural schools in Sarawak with a recent grade between C (50-54) and C+ (55-59) in a school-administered English examination and were found to have low motivation in learning literature. Students in the Fourth Form nationwide are required to learn two short stories and one drama text as partial fulfilment of the subject.

On further observation and discussion with the subject teachers, the student-participants were noted to lose interest very quickly when learning literature as evidenced by a display of the following behaviours: i) they would not finish reading any chapter that they had started, ii) and during lessons that dealt with the novel, they refused to participate in activities assigned by the teachers. A few students avoided to read the texts by creating distractions in the classroom. When requested, they displayed reluctance in carrying out the reading tasks as well, citing their weakness and failure to understand the texts as the reasons. Despite realising that the literature component is important as it is covered in the national examination, most of the participants did not exhibit any interest to read the novel. The nonchalant attitude and refusal became the basis for the subject teachers' concern as the students were mostly likely to face difficulties when studying a novel in their Fifth Form if the attitude persisted. Thus, the present project aims to conduct creative activities to invoke learning interest and reading motivation in literature among the students.

## Problems

Two major problems faced by the participants in relation to the learning of literary texts were identified based on classroom observation and discussion

with subject teachers, namely i) low text comprehension proficiency and ii) low reading motivation level.

In the English Literature Component, novel, of all the literature components, was identified to be the least interesting and least comprehensible to rural secondary school students (Suliman and Yunus, 2014). Similarly, the research participants were also found to have low level of comprehension in reading literary texts (Form Three novel, two Form Four short stories and drama), which was thought to stem from i) difficulty in understanding the vocabulary in the text, ii) length of the chapters which were found to be too long, leading to frustration, as well as iii) cultural and social barriers in understanding the texts (Nor Hashimah Isa & Che Ton Mahmud, 2012).

To ensure learning success, it is imperative that students have high motivation and a positive attitude towards the text (Zubaidah & Shaidatul, 2015). However, the research participants were found to be lacking reading and learning motivation pertaining to the literary texts which could negatively influence the students as they would feel forced to learn and consequently, their learning of the subject is merely to pass the examination (Pishol & Kaur, 2015). Moreover, due to the low level of text comprehension, the participants could not participate in the more challenging mental activities (Zubaidah & Shaidatul, 2015), resulting in them being passive listeners as they relied heavily on the teachers to provide input during the learning process (Suliman & Yunus, 2014). The situation might also lead to frustration and a build-up of negative attitude towards literature when the process of learning becomes dry and demotivating (Ghazali, Setia, Muthusamy & Jusoff, 2009; Govindarajoo & Mukundan, 2013).

Driven by these problems, different strategies were planned to be carried out to increase the participants' motivation in reading and learning novels as well as to improve their overall comprehension of the text. These in turn would help to prepare them for the learning of a novel in the subsequent year (Form Five).

## Strategies

The strategies taken to solve the problem were driven by three major theories: Mowrer's Two Factors, Behaviourism, and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Mowrer's Two Factor theory posits that

discomfort or fear is a classical conditioned response due to adverse stimulus. In such situation, avoidance is often opted as a means of reducing level of anxiety (Weis, 2017). However, avoidance does not guarantee a break from the fear unless treatment is given (Woo & Keatinge, 2016). As treatment, the strategies used in this project sought to diminish reading anxiety of English literary text among participants due to the fear of not comprehending the language.

The strategies applied were also related to Behaviourism which associates learning with a particular behaviour that carries a consequence (Woodlard, 2010). Thus, successful transfer of learning requires operant conditioning to modify the behaviour by using either positive or negative reinforcement (Pastorino & Doyle-portillo, 2012). Hence, the applied strategies emphasised presenting positive reinforcement in the hope of motivating students to read.

TAM describes that the tendency towards the usage of technology system is influenced directly or indirectly by two major factors that consist of user's perceived usefulness and perceived ease of the system (Lai, 2017). When users possess the belief that such system is beneficial and it does not require much effort from them, it will affect their actual behaviour, driving them towards the use of technology (Amer Al-Adwan et al., J. 2013). In addition, as reported in the studies conducted by Granito and Chernobilsky (2012) and Groff (2014), the millennial generation tend to perform optimally when technology is embedded in their learning as they are competent and comfortable with technology. This is likely influenced by the tools used in digital medium such as audio-, visual- and text-enabled features. The 2.0 Web tools change the learning atmosphere significantly, rendering lesson to be more enjoyable, exciting and motivating (Gedera et al., 2015; Groff, 2014; Parvin & Salam, 2015). Driven by this, this project adapted Web 2.0 tools to extend students' attention and motivation in reading the novel by utilizing two online platforms, which were Kahoot!, a type of gamification and Padlet, a web-based learning tool.

### Gamification: Kahoot!

In online gamification, the existence of reward elements such as being listed in the leaderboard, receiving badges and points served as a motivational tool that build learner's interest to complete a certain task (Figueroa Flores, 2015; Kiryakova et al., 2014; Zarzycka-Piskorz, 2016).

Driven by the urge to get the rewards, learners also develop a sense of competitiveness and the desire to win and master the knowledge while playing the game (Lister & College 2015; Zarzycka-Piskorz 2016). Thus, to serve as a motivation booster for students' reading, Kahoot! which is a type of online gamification was chosen. It is a platform where a series of multiple-choice questions is made into games with integrated videos, images and diagrams to promote learning engagement.

The implementation of the strategy began in the present study by giving the participants the first chapter of the novel, Captain Nobody, one of the novels studied as a Form 5 literature component in Malaysian Secondary School as a prerequisite prior to the first meeting. They were given 3 days and expected to read the novel before the meeting without being briefed about the game. On the day of meeting, Kahoot! was introduced and using provided electronic devices (mobile phones and laptops), the game was played individually. The result (in terms of ranks) was reviewed at the end of the game and a copy of Chapter 2 from the novel was distributed for further reading and they were told of another round of Kahoot! in the next meeting. In the Second Round (Chapter 2), the game was played in groups as the pupils competed against each other. After the completion of the strategy, a set of questionnaires adapted from Deci & Ryan (2007) was distributed to them to evaluate the participants' interest on Kahoot!

### Web-based learning: Padlet

To ensure that interest in reading the novel was sustained, we decided to embed Padlet as a second strategy in their learning. Padlet is a Web 2.0 tool functioning as a virtual noticeboard which could include multimedia files and documents (Basal & Aytan, 2010). It also serves as a platform for discussion, encouraging collaborative learning among learners as they obtain new ideas from the shared knowledge (Dewitt et al., 2015). According to Deni & Zainor (2015), Padlet has not only successfully enhanced students' processing and connection with the subject content, but it also improved students' answer quality, stemming from the dynamic interaction and constant sharing of ideas as they learnt from mistakes.

Hence, to motivate students to read the novel further, a collaborative project using Padlet was devised. Having participants from different demographic backgrounds, a "*Padlet Gallery*" was created – an adapted activity from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning, *Gallery Walk*. To conduct the

activity, Chapters 3 to 7 were given to the students for preparatory reading before coming to the third meeting. During the meeting, they were asked to design a drawing to depict one of the assigned chapter and was later uploaded into Padlet to form a gallery with a brief summary of the chapter. In the gallery, the students commented on each other's work as well as sharing their thoughts about each chapter. Such was the original plan, but due to time constraint students only performed the first round of discussion in Padlet. After the activity, the participants had to answer a questionnaire to evaluate their interest in using Padlet.

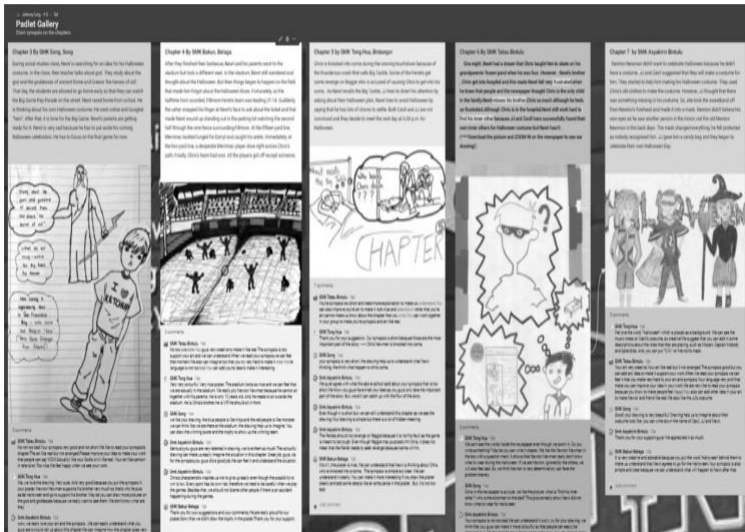


FIGURE 4.1 Sample of students' drawing on Padlet

## Strengths of the Intervention Programme

### Fun Learning

Contrary to the conventional teaching methods, Kahoot and Padlet are technological tools that are capable of promoting fun learning. Based on our observation, the pupils were easily engaged in the teaching and learning process when new and fun activities such as Padlet and Kahoot were introduced.

With upbeat background music and colourful layout, Kahoot managed to grab the pupils' attention and motivate them in learning. It managed to cater to the various learning needs of students through imagery, visual cues, and learner-friendly questions (Brand & Brooker, 2015). Kahoot is fast-paced and therefore it creates a sense of excitement when students are playing with it. The pupils in the present study loved to compete with each other and Kahoot has definitely provided a platform for them to have a friendly competition. In the project, it was observed that the pupils were enjoying themselves in laughter while Kahoot was carried out. Besides, from the survey answered by the participants, it indicated that all 25 participants enjoyed playing Kahoot games for the literature lesson as shown in Table 1.

On the other hand, Padlet is a fun learning tool that allows the students to share their creative works with the others. Halsted (2014) stated that through Padlet, students were given the chances to generate more creative ideas and its versatile results not only impressed the students but also the teachers. In Padlet, students may alter the design, layout, colours and fonts. Compared to some other similar platforms such as Blogger, Facebook and WeChat, Padlet gives more freedom to the users in varying the ways to present videos, documents and pictures. In this creative project, the students were noted to show great interest in exploring Padlet as most of them had never heard of it. All the participants agreed that they enjoyed the activities in Padlet and 96% of them agreed that Padlet managed to capture their attention while they were learning literature.

TABLE 4.1 Pupils' perspective on Kahoot

GAMIFICATION: KAHOOT						
QUESTIONS	PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES					TOTAL
	Not True at All	Not True	Somewhat True	True	Very True	
B1 I enjoyed playing the games in literature lesson very much.	0	0	0	3	22	25
B16 I would describe the games in literature lesson as very interesting.	0	0	0	3	22	25
B20 I would be willing to play the games in literature lesson again because it has some value to me.	0	0	0	5	20	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	0	0	0	17	83	

## Tracking of Students' Work and Understanding

Kahoot is a type of formative assessment as it provides an analysis of students' performance after the quiz. After each quiz, teachers may download the analysis with students' score as shown in Figure 1. Also, teachers are able to track students' responses to each question through the analysis.

CAPTAIN NOBODY			
Played on	2 Oct 2017		
Hosted by	JLLW88		
Played with	5 players		
Played	15 of 15 questions		
Overall Performance			
Total correct answers (%)	37.84%		
Total incorrect answers (%)	62.16%		
Average score (points)	4840.40 points		
Feedback			
How fun was it? (out of 5)	5.00 out of 5		
Did you learn something?	100.00% Yes	0.00% No	
Do you recommend it?	100.00% Yes	0.00% No	
How do you feel?	* 100.00% Positive	* 0.00% Neutral	* 0.00% Negative

FIGURE 4.2 Students' Scores (Kahoot)

By referring to the students' scores, researchers are able to identify the level of students' mastery of each element or topic. Apart from that, students are able to do self-evaluation through Kahoot. After answering each question, the pupils received immediate feedback and the pupils knew whether they answer the question correctly or not. This would ease the pupils' learning progress as research by Walker (2012) shows that formative feedback assists students in gaining significant and successful learning experience.

On the other hand, through Padlet, teachers were able to monitor the progress of pupils' work. The time of pupils posting the task is shown on Padlet and hence teachers are able to track students' punctuality in completing the task. Moreover, pupils provided feedback and comments on each other's work. In this study, after students finished their commenting, the researchers read through the comment and evaluated students' understanding and mastery towards the particular topic. The pupils could check their learning progress by referring to the feedbacks and comments given by their peers. Also, self-assessment exists as students are exposed

to a wide spectrum of responses from others (Fuchs, 2014). By realising their own mistakes and understanding more on the content of the novel, the pupils showed gradual improvement in their learning progress besides displayed increased motivation in participating.

### Collaborative Learning

Another advantage to using Kahoot is that teachers can easily use the quizzes that have been made by the others and teachers may share the quizzes with each other. In addition, students may create their own quizzes in a group. After that, they may give an attempt to answer the quizzes created by the other groups. Based on the researchers' observation, while playing Kahoot Games, the pupils were able to exchange their knowledge and learn from their peers. Besides, the pupils competed with each other individually in the first round and as groups in the second round. It is reasoned that Kahoot acts as a formative assessment when played individually and while it is played as a group, collaborative learning happens (Tracey and Mehler 2017).

For Padlet, Hole (2017) states that it plays a great role in collecting ideas collaboratively. In this study, the pupils were able to brainstorm and discuss their ideas together as a group, learn and develop new ideas through Padlet, and lastly exchange opinions and feedback via the tool, which eventually established collaborative learning among pupils (Dewitt et al., 2015). Through Padlet, the pupils learn from each other's comments and they managed to get different feedbacks from their peers. Also, in this research, it is observed that pupils are keen to know others' perception towards their work. Thus, seeing the variety of responses allows opportunities for peer learning.

### Limitations

#### Lack of Equipment and Network Connection

During the implementation process of Kahoot, each student of pupils was given an electronic device (smartphone or laptop) as the pupils were required to submit their responses individually by answering the 15 questions given. Since all the five schools involved are in the rural area,

one of the main challenges the researchers encountered was the lack of equipment and network connection. As described by Sufean (2014), unlike the states in Peninsular Malaysia, the rural and remote areas of Sarawak are still lacking in basic infrastructures. Such infrastructures include water and electricity supply, roads as well as internet connection in schools. This situation is undoubtedly true. Even though all five schools are equipped with water and electricity supply, some of the schools do not have enough facilities in terms of computers or laptops. Hence, the researchers had to opt for another alternative of borrowing smartphones and tablets from the teachers in the school in order to carry out this strategy.

In the first attempt of conducting this strategy, two out of five schools failed due to the poor internet connection. When the devices were all set up, PUPILS were unable to join the game created and thus the game had to be postponed to another date. In certain schools, the researchers could not rely on the internet connection in school and chose to use their own mobile data to support all 6 devices instead. If this strategy is to be carried out in the future, the problem of lack of equipment and internet connection need to be solved beforehand. Through this study, we can see that this strategy is not suitable to be conducted in a huge classroom which consists of more than 20 students. As pointed out by NomsaMndzebele (2013), it is a problem to teach using computers when the classroom is very large while at the same time the school does not have enough computers.

Unlike Kahoot, pupils worked in groups of five in the Padlet activity. Hence, all five participants, who were from the same school, could share one computer or laptop when carrying out the activity. Participants were asked to read Chapter 3 to 7 of the novel *Captain Nobody*, draw a poster and write a short synopsis based on the chapter assigned. Participants then shared their work on the wall of the Padlet account where other participants could view it and provide feedback.

However, through this study, we can see that this strategy only promotes learning in schools but not outside of the classroom. This is because most of the participants are from low-income families and thus cannot afford to own a computer or laptop at home. As a result, after uploading their work, the pupils could not respond to comments and provide feedback immediately. They will have to wait for the next session with the researchers in order to carry out the follow-up activity. This results in time consumption and participants will gradually lose interest as it takes too much time to complete just one activity. This is further supported by Sonika et. al. (2014) who found out that most students “lose attention and concentration during lengthy teaching-learning activities”.

## Shortcomings in Assessments

It is undeniable that Kahoot is indeed a convenient tool to assess students' learning. However, its feature only allows multiple choice questions to be created. As a result, questions of higher order thinking skills, which is usually open-ended, cannot be constructed to test students. PUPILS are only required to select one correct answers out of the four options given. This will contribute to the inaccuracy of the assessment as pupils can make a simple guess or just try their luck when they do not know the exact answer.

Apart from the lack of assessing higher order thinking skills, assessment using Kahoot can be misleading. Kahoot quiz results are determined by the correct answer selected as well as the speed in responding. A person will get the highest mark if he or she answers a question correctly with the fastest speed. However, in some cases, the participant who has the fastest response may not be the one who shows the best comprehension. Instead, the results might be affected by the speed of internet connection, the gadgets or one's reading speed.

On the other hand, Padlet has its weakness in conducting an assessment as well. Unlike Kahoot where the results of the participants are shown immediately after the game, Padlet requires more time for assessment. Assessment can only be done by looking at the comments and responses provided by the participants in order to conduct evaluation based on various scoring criteria such as task fulfilment and creativity. Therefore, time consumption in providing assessment is the downside of this strategy because immediate feedback is more encouraged in classroom as it decreases students' failure rates and has a positive effect on student engagement and motivation (Sancho-Vinuesa et. al., 2013).

## Recommendations

### Outdoor Learning

In this creative project, both Kahoot and Padlet had been held only in class. While classroom is more conducive and suitable for a learning process to take place, sitting in the class day in and day out could be boring and demotivating for students. Incorporating outdoor learning into Padlet

could be a good alternative as a new learning environment creates a sense of enjoyment and excitement in the learning process and hence boosts students' motivation in learning. For instance, in learning about the novel *Captain Nobody*, the pupils could be required to go out and take pictures of local settings that resemble the settings in novel such as stadium, hospital as well as street, and discuss the similarities and differences between local and novel settings. This could bring positive impacts on students' learning, as discussed by Jeffrey (2006), 65% of the respondents agree that outdoor learning enhances their learning process. In addition, researches state that outdoor learning does not only motivate students in their learning, but it also has massive impacts on teachers' motivation and students' behaviour (Plymouth University, 2016).

### Positive Reinforcement

One of the unique features found in Kahoot is the ranking system. Every time a game ends, the players' scores will be displayed and they are ranked from the highest to the lowest, thus creating a sense of achievement and competition among the participants. In order to boost the participants' motivation, positive reinforcement can be applied in the form of rewards. For instance, the teacher who carries out this strategy can award the top three achievers of the game with some rewards. As pointed out by Rezaul Hoque (2013), students who receive positive reinforcement exhibit a higher level of participation and portray a higher level of interest and satisfaction during the teaching and learning process. In addition, positive reinforcement can be applied in Padlet as well. The group or individual which manages to complete a task within the allocated time frame and shows the best understanding towards the task may be rewarded.

### Conclusion

Based on the study conducted, the two technology-based learning tools (Kahoot and Padlet) successfully elevated participants' motivation level in learning the Literature component by providing a fun and enjoyable learning experience. To illustrate, the reward feature in Kahoot made learning competitive by resembling a game while Padlet offered an interactive virtual learning platform which incorporated various learning

opportunities. Apart from that, there were additional benefits such as efficient monitoring of students' understanding as well as collaborative learning for all types of synergy: between teachers, between teacher and students, and between students. Nevertheless, the shortcomings of implementing these learning strategies included potential problems arising from the lack of equipment and almost non-existent network connection especially in the rural areas as well as possible faulty in assessment which may influence the evaluation process of students' understanding.

In conclusion, despite some shortcomings, both learning tools – Kahoot and Padlet – could act as effective platforms which transformed a rural classroom environment into a 21st century learning as the use of such learning tools motivates even rural students in the learning of Literature texts, which was reported to be the least interesting component in English lessons among students from the rural areas. Such tools have successfully engaged the student-participants through different activities which required all four English language skills (i.e. reading, listening, speaking, and writing) to be used and practised that eventually resulted in improved comprehension of literary texts as well as increased motivation in reading and learning of the texts. As rural students are becoming increasingly familiarized with electronic devices at present, the potential of these interactive and collaborative learning tools in pedagogical contexts is worth further investigation in other areas of Sarawak.

## Chapter 5

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# Building Confidence in Using English through Public Speaking

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Syed Abd Halim

In all national-type Chinese schools, also known as vernacular schools, Mandarin is mainly used as a medium of instruction and conversations in schools (Hazita, 2016). English is taught as a second language in all Malaysian schools and is also a compulsory subject in both primary and secondary levels. According to Wendy (2012), many Malaysian students hesitated to speak English with their teachers and friends in and /or outside the classrooms. Therefore, they felt awkward and uncomfortable when asked to converse in English.

Public speaking is one of the most important life skills and involves a great number of practices. However, talking in front of groups in general can be difficult for a lot of people, but it is nothing to be ashamed of. Many people have a fear of public speaking, whether from stage fright, anxiety or phobias (Stein et al., 1996). Likewise, many pupils are unable to speak confidently. They are reluctant to converse during presentations or voice out their opinion in public. Based on the observations and interviews with pupils participated in this research, they stated that they were hesitant to speak with their teachers and friends in or outside the classroom because they were worried about making mistakes and feeling embarrassed. This was due to the negative physical response, such as a smirk, that they received from more proficient speakers.

Meanwhile, some pupils stated that they felt self-conscious about their speaking ability because they have negative presumptions about proficient speakers' views towards them as being slow learners, incompetent and dull. Pupils need to be aware that making mistakes are parts and parcel of language learning, whereas their teachers need to constantly encourage them to continue learning. More so, pupils do not have the necessary

platform to take part in English language related activities and competitions in schools. This is due to most activities and competitions conducted in Mandarin.

## Related Theories

### Drive-Reduction Theory

According to Drive-Reduction Theory (Clark, 1943), drive enhancement is a major aspect in promoting language learning. “Drive” is a state of arousal or tension triggered by a person’s physiological or biological needs. Hull, the proponent of this theory, stated that drive gives rise to an individual’s motivation. Based on this theory, pupils are more motivated when one of four conditions are present: when they feel competent enough to complete the task at hand; when they see a direct link between their actions and an outcome and have some control over whether or how to complete a task; when the task has interest or value to them; and when completing the task brings rewards, such as a sense of belonging to a group or the approval from someone that they care about and respect. Therefore, it is important for pupils to be motivated, especially when it comes to language learning. Hence, teachers need to create an environment in which their pupils are motivated to speak in public.

An empathic teacher can motivate reluctant students to explore their maximum potential through consistent encouragement and self-assurance (Zou, 2006). In order to overcome the fear of public speaking, motivating the pupils is vital. Motivation can be referred to as the desire, need, or drive that contributes to and explains behavioural changes. In this regard, the pupils changed their behaviour concerning public speaking from anxiety to confidence. According to Wallace and Oxford (1992), motivation is the process of generating actions, sustaining them, and regulating the activity. In general, motivations can be either intrinsic (arising from internal factors) or extrinsic (arising from external factors).

### Constructivist Theory

According to Driscoll (2005), the proponents of constructivist theory suggest that pupils tend to build knowledge as they attempt to understand

their experiences. Fraser (2012) indicated that pupils are not empty vessels to be filled with knowledge. Pupils can select and pursue their own learning. Therefore, classrooms that emulate this intervention will be more effective in preparing pupils for life-long learning. The goals of constructivist approaches to learning are to promote reasoning, critical thinking, understanding and use of knowledge, which includes self-regulation (Yee & Wong, 2015). Constructivist instructional methods are often defined as forms of pupils-centred learning (Ernst & Monroe, 2006). Both intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientations reflect the values or goal preference of an individual (Pintrich, 2004). Adopting Pintrich's definitions in this study, the term intrinsic goal orientation is defined as the pupils' desire to engage in learning because of challenge, curiosity, and mastery, while extrinsic goal orientation is the motivation that causes pupils to participate in learning for reasons such as rewards, performance, evaluation and competition. The intrinsic motivation is their own self achievement to overcome their fear to speak publicly.

## Strategy

Each class was given a chance to draw lots and pick one ethnic group as their topic. The ethnic groups consisted of Malays, Chinese, Indians, Ibans and Kadazans. The pupils would work as a team consisting of 5-8 pupils to gather significant information based on the selected ethnic groups. During the event, pupils would need to collectively present their information in the form of public speaking, action songs or role play to the panel of judges and guests. Awards would be given to the three highest scoring teams.

In order to carry this activity effectively, the teacher and pupils were given specific roles. One or two teachers were assigned to each class. The teachers were the class facilitators. They will be responsible in providing necessary information related to the project from time to time. Upon discussion with pupils, teachers were the mediator to provide the necessary items to be used during the project.

The pupils' responsibilities include reporting their progress weekly to their respective teacher. They would need to think critically and creatively in presenting their work. Pupils would need to conform to the rules and regulations of the project; any violation of the rules will result in disqualification from the project.

The aim of this project is to create awareness on the importance of the English language within the multi-ethnic society in primary Chinese school. Furthermore, it caters to the development of language skills within Chinese school community.

### Objectives

1. To create awareness on the importance of communicating in English among pupils.
2. To motivate and boost the interest among pupils in learning the English language.
3. To provide freedom of speech and cultivate creativity among pupils by bringing out their speaking skills and talents.

### Strengths

One of the strengths of this project is that pupils were motivated in English language learning. According to the conducted survey, most of the pupils strongly agreed that the project was fun and interactive, thus enhancing their experience in learning English. The IC1N project was not only educational but was also fun and made learning exciting. In addition, pupils developed their communication skills. Pupils learned to interact and mingle around with their peers while preparing for the project. Besides these two strengths, the pupils also developed personal and cooperative skills. Pupils learned to work as a team by becoming either a team player or a leader in the group. The relationship among classmates grew stronger, as well. The project provided pupils with the opportunity to discover their strengths and abilities by conquering new challenges, thinking creatively and solving problems. Finally, pupils built up their confidence and self-esteem in public speaking. By taking part in the project, pupils became better speakers by practicing and at the same time improving their public speaking experience.

TABLE 5.1 Results of the questionnaire

Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	Neutral	Agreed	Strongly agreed
1	2	3	4	5
Questions				1234 5
ICIN Project was fun and interactive.				3 32
The project provides an opportunity to develop and enhance my speaking skill.				5 30
I don't have any fear to communicate in English.				1 4 30
The project makes my relationship with my classmate stronger.				2 33
The project provides opportunity for us to think critically and creatively in presenting our work.				4 31
The project was fun, and we enjoyed the process with our friends.				2 33

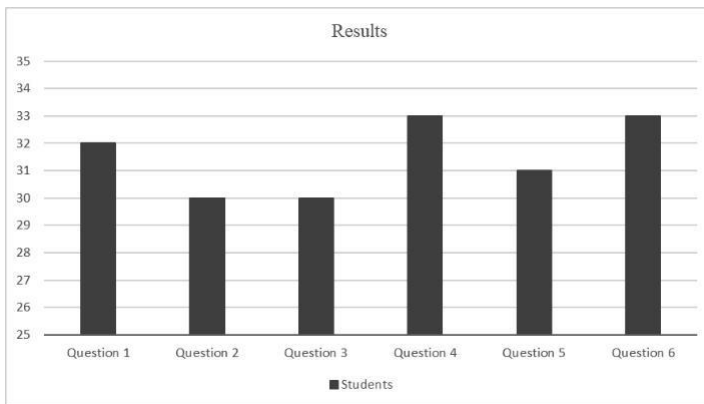


FIGURE 5.1 Bar graph the questionnaire results

## Limitations

The first limitation concerns time constraint. The overall process involved time and effort in terms of work preparation for both teachers and pupils. Careful planning was needed to ensure the success of the project. The second limitation is due to the small number of pupils involved, as only a limited number of pupils could get involved in the project at any given time. In this case, only 35 of 170 pupils were selected for the project.

## Recommendations

First, this project or any projects of its kind should be included in the school yearly plan, as more activities related to English language need to be implemented in school. Second, more pupils should be involved in the project, as well. Third, teachers could come out with different themes related to the projects. For examples, pets, favourite cartoons, etc.

## Conclusion

Motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is a key factor in the success of pupils at all stages of their education. Teachers can play a vital role in instilling motivation in our pupils, although it is much easier said than done, as all pupils are motivated differently. It takes time and a lot of effort to get a classroom of children to be enthusiastic about learning and living up to their true potential. Pupils who are bored or inattentive to learning are unlikely to benefit from their studies. On the other hand, pupils who are motivated to learn will gain greater achievement and show better understanding of the concepts being taught and learnt.

On the other hand, there are easier ways to combat the fear of public speaking. When talking in public, one can practice deep breathing exercises to relieve stress before presenting, or instead of making eye contact with someone, stare at the back wall, just above the heads of the people when you look up from your paper. This will give the illusion that you are looking at the crowd but prevents you from feeling nervous. Pupils should also be encouraged to take part in activities related to public speaking to explore their maximum potential.

This project has given positive impacts on pupils' learning, advancement of knowledge, motivation and skills. Pupils now speak more confidently, and the project has increased their language proficiency as well.

## Chapter 6

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# Improving Pupils' Higher Order Thinking Skills Through Language Arts Exhibition

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### Introduction

Since the implementation of the new KSSR curriculum in Malaysia, there has been a high demand for thinking skills and problem-solving skills to be integrated in classroom activities (MOE 2012). These demands are meant to equip primary school pupils with the necessary skills and knowledge to be globally competent. Despite the demands, teachers also face several challenges in ensuring pupils reach the required level of competence. This creative project is an effort to overcome a problem faced by primary school teachers. The KSSR Standard Assessment Document (2014) specifically requires a teacher to assess pupils regarding higher order thinking skills in which the pupils should be able to think, communicate and collaborate to exhibit the ability to be critical in solving problems. In other words, this requires an English teacher is to create a learning environment where pupils are expected to develop and exhibit these higher order thinking skills. Despite the intended teaching in the classroom, some pupils seem to exhibit a lack of cooperation, communication, and thinking ability during the English language lesson. Upon prompting questions, pupils are not able to answer the questions and are also not able to solve problems and relate to the lesson. This case was observed significantly during the Language Arts Module, which is one of the five main modules in the syllabus. As a result, pupils demonstrated a lack of motivation in learning,

thinking ability to answer questions, and coming up with creative ideas to solve problems or understand certain aspects of the lessons; learning is therefore impaired. There is a need to spark collaborative communication and problem-solving skills among the pupils. Much effort is needed to mould pupils to become active learners in the classroom.

## Related Theories

Based on the social constructivist theory, pupils' learning is about constructing meaning through active participation with the community and activities surrounding them (Brown 2014). Teachers need to provide the contexts for interaction and collaboration in order to spark meaning making and higher order thinking skills. Based on these aspects, a Project Based Learning (PBL) approach was planned. PBL is a means of providing pupils with the ability to engage in an investigation by answering complex questions and finding possible solutions collaboratively to reach the intended goal of the project (Buck Institute for Education, 2017). These aspects of PBL in the social constructivist domain answer to the demands of the classroom scenario at hand. Therefore, this approach was deemed suitable to help overcome the pupils' inability to employ higher order thinking skills.

## Strategy

The organized project-based learning creative project is a 'Language Arts Exhibition'. This project is an effort to address the lack of learning drive, communication and higher order thinking among the pupils. Pupils are required to organize an exhibition of the materials they have produced in the classroom. Besides organizing and managing the exhibition by themselves, pupils have to equip themselves with the ability to create artworks creatively and critically during the lessons throughout the year. Pupils are also required to communicate, collaborate, and present their exhibits. The period for this project-based learning is throughout the year, and the pupils had to take note of the activities they did in the classroom to learn, train and prepare for the exhibition at the end of the year. The teacher played the role of a facilitator and moderator. As for the exhibition, the teacher acts as only the facilitator while the pupils collaborated among themselves to plan, prepare and execute the program.

## Strengths

There are several strengths to the project-based learning performed. These strengths also depict the success criteria of adhering to the problem regarding the lack of cooperation, communication, and thinking ability during the English language lessons.

### Authentic, Realistic Problems and Goals

The utilization of a project as the basis for learning provides pupils with a real-life problem and goal to achieve. There is a sense of ownership to the task and achievement as they reach the desired goal of the lesson. According to the Buck Institute of Education (2017), realistic and meaningful problems can strongly relate with the pupils' personal experience, concerns, interest and issues as they explore ways to complete the project. This was observed when pupils began to take note of the classroom lesson as they found it important to learn, develop relevant skills, and come up with proper solution while learning in the classroom. The idea that they must work to develop and prepare themselves for the upcoming project has made the pupils become aware and well driven to take part in the lesson. The constructivist point of view explains that pupils will learn as they find the lesson relevant to their self and experience (Brown, 2014). This is evident as pupils began to work collaboratively and communicatively to reach the goal together, compared to the previously passive rate of learning.

### Collaborative Learning Sparks Active Independent Learning

Relative to the meaningful content, pupils are required to take part in collaborative learning and dialogue. The meaningful content is shared with the whole class. Being part of the classroom community, each student has a role to play in order for the project to be a success. These roles are personal to the pupils and allow them to engage with the classroom community. Flinders, Uhmancher and Moroye (2013) found that approaches such as project-based learning are good in engaging pupils with collaborative and learner-centeredness work in the classroom. The advantage of project-based learning is how pupils communicate using the language to come

up with solution collaboratively. This was observed as the pupils began to engage in their own groups actively. Each student had a role to play and he or she was aware of the significance of the roles. Pupils worked their way to accomplish the task demanded by the role they played in order to contribute to the group. Pupils engaged in the extensive process of asking questions, finding resources and applying information gathered to fulfil the need of the group task (Buck Institute of Education, 2017). As well as fulfilling the objective of promoting collaborative learning among the pupils, this creative project managed to promote active independent learning among the pupils.

### Development and Promotion of HOTS and Critical Thinking skills

The core of this creative project is to promote higher order thinking skills (HOTS). The ability to think critically has become a considerable demand in primary school learning and it is one of the main issues that needs to be resolved. The utilization of PBL has brought pupils to an entirely different level of thinking. The teacher played the role of facilitator, guide and reference throughout the whole project. Pupils worked on their own to resolve issues and come up with ideas. This aspect is crucial in developing creative and critical thinking skills. Pupils are put in a situation where they have to work together to find information and solutions independently, which eventually helps to train and develop pupils' ability to think critically and creatively (Barrado, 2016). Throughout the whole year, pupils began to perform better at answering higher order thinking questions and coming up with creative ideas. Similar to the statement mentioned by Flinders, Uhmancher and Moroye (2013), pupils will develop 21<sup>st</sup> century thinking skills as they also exhibit the ability to complete task critically.

### Limitations

Despite the advantage of this creative project, there are several limitations that need to be addressed.

### Time Consuming

One of the major issues is the issue of time. The whole project is long-term, and what began in February as the product of the project was finally visible in November. The exhibition utilizes materials pupils create in the classroom throughout the year. Skills and knowledge related to the exhibits and management were also gone through step by step during every English language arts class with the pupils. The time consumption might be the demeaning factor to the teacher and pupils. The long period could negatively affect pupils' motivation and participation in performing a task and taking part in active learning (Sumarni 2015). This was in fact visible and considered as the project progressed throughout the year. An intervening measure taken to address this matter was to constantly provide new materials and approaches in order to provide new relevant information for the pupils to relate to their prior experience and the project. Various teaching approaches were also employed in order to maintain the flow of pupils' participation in completing the project.

### Cost

PBL is not a novel approach nor a foreign one. This approach has been part of the Educational Blueprint (2012) since its implementation, and it is greatly supported by the Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, the syllabus does not specify this aspect in detail. In addition to the recentness of the KSSR Curriculum implementation, PBL is somewhat an 'out of the box' addition to teaching and learning in primary schools. Therefore, the implementation of this project relies mostly on the efforts of the teachers, pupils and parents. Sumarni (2015) also mentioned a similar case whereby the huge cost of implementing a PBL might be a demeaning factor for teachers, pupils and parents. The pupils depicted active involvement as well as the parents. Parents contributed materials and even food and beverages for the exhibition. The teacher on the other hand had to rely on personal expenses to provide relevant materials and tools for the pupils to perform the task and create their exhibits. Proper management of the PBL is therefore required. The teacher took the effort to meet the parents to discuss the expected cost for the project. Upon discussion, the teacher and parents managed to reach a consensus on how the cost of the PBL should be raised and managed.



FIGURE 6.1 Activities during Language Arts Exhibition

## Conclusion

Although PBL requires a lot of time and effort, it has proven to provide pupils with an authentic environment to use their knowledge and skill sets in learning English. Being able to think, communicate and collaborate was an essential part of the project. This project was an effort to address the lack of learning drive, communication and higher order thinking among pupils. With reference to constructivist theory, this project was able to provide active participation among participants through discussion, investigation and presentation. Strengths of the project included the presentation of real life goals for pupils to achieve, independent learning through collaboration and the development of higher order thinking skills (HOTS). There were some limitations with the project, however, the benefits definitely outweigh the shortcomings. The language arts exhibition project promoting HOTS showed promising outcomes and it is highly recommended for educators to use with their learners.

## Chapter 7

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# Improving Pupils' Spelling Ability Using A Spelling Book

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### Introduction

In the second shift of the blueprint, the education ministry aims to ensure that every pupil is proficient in *Bahasa Malaysia* and the English language. Every pupil is also encouraged to learn an additional language (Ministry of Education 2011). At the minimum, pupils should be operationally proficient in using both Malay and English upon leaving school. Hence, in 2011, Malaysia undertook a comprehensive reform of primary education (Tajularipin, Ahmad & Suriati, 2015). The ministry introduced *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah* (KSSR) or Primary School Curriculum Standard to replace the previous *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah* (KBSR). The new system is designed to produce more pupils who are proficient in both languages. Proficient in this context means that the pupils should be able to communicate with peers and adults confidently and appropriately, read and comprehend English texts, write a range of texts using appropriate language, style and form, show an appreciation for the English literature and use correct form of grammar in speech and writing (MOE 2013).

According to Otto (2015), pupils face difficulty in writing in English because they have a better speaking than writing ability. Therefore, a teacher has the responsibility to balance the pupils' ability in both speaking and writing. In Malaysia, paper and pencil tests are considered one of the main ways to measure pupils' ability. Pupils must have the ability to write well in order to get good exam results. In writing, there are many components such as spelling, language structuring, handwriting, punctuation and many

more. All components are integrated to produce a good piece of writing (Morris & Smith, 2011). However, this creative project will focus only on the spelling component.

The issue highlighted in this creative project focuses on spelling common sight words, which are words that readers can recognize in a second and they are considered the 100 most frequently used words when we read, write, speak and listen (Doreen & Dunne, 1991). For instance, you, I, them, on and of are sight words that can be easily found in an article. In another context, some words can be sight words in certain situations. For example, if a person always travels around the country, words like travel, ticket, depart or passport are considered to be sight words for that particular individual, as he or she is familiar with those words during travelling. In the Malaysian context, words that are listed in the Curriculum Standard Document and words commonly used in the textbook are sight words that pupils need to master. As we know, writing is one of the modules in the Standard Curriculum (MOE 2013).

The ability to spell sight words is outlined in the learning standard 3.2.4: “Able to spell common sight words”. It indicates the importance of spelling in developing the pupils’ writing skill. Nevertheless, it is found that most of the pupils have difficulty in spelling the common sight words correctly. Hence, an effort is needed to solve pupils’ difficulty on spelling English words, especially common sight words.

## Related Theory

Based on the Pavlov classical conditioning theory, pupils’ act of learning is a kind of response built up through repeated exposure (Brown, 2014). Teachers need to give drilling exercises in the classroom in order to solve the spelling problem among pupils. The proponents of the classical conditioning theory promote the usage of stimuli to obtain desired responses. In this study, the stimuli are coloured pictures and different coloured syllables. Therefore, this approach is perceived suitable to overcome the pupils’ spelling problem.

## Strategy

Among the three possible causes of the spelling problem are first language interference, lack of understanding between letter-sound relationship

and vocabulary incompetence. The Spelling Book was created by the pupils using coloured A4 paper, printed pictures and written words with different coloured syllables. The teacher's Spelling Book is large in order to accommodate to the large class size. Then, the teacher showed the Spelling Book to the pupils as a reference for them to create their own Spelling Book. The book consists of pictures and words or vocabulary to be memorized. There are blank spaces with missing letters to be filled in after the pupils master the spelling. The Spelling Book was selected because by using a book specifically for spelling, pupils become more focused on the spelling activity. It also serves as a list of vocabulary to be learnt and memorized by the pupils.

In Spelling Book, the pictures help the pupils to memorize the words easier and visualize the image of each word. Maria (2015) stated that the pictures are able to increase pupils' motivation and improve memory retention. Furthermore, pictures could stimulate interaction and bring life to situations which otherwise would be difficult to explain in words, especially if pupils have limited knowledge of English (Gangwer, 2009). Therefore, the pupils could remember the words better by using pictures.

Other than pictures, letters will be written using different colours. This is to help pupils memorize and spell the word syllable by syllable. When pupils try to remember the word, they will be able to visualize the different colour of the words so it will be very beneficial for young learners. Gutierrez (2014) stated that colours are very useful in enhancing the learning process, especially in improving memory retention. In addition, blank spaces with some letters act as a game to test pupils' spelling ability after a certain number of words have been memorized. The games in the Spelling book arouse pupils' interest. Morrison (2011) stated that most elementary pupils love to play. Thus, by adding a game in the book, pupils are given the opportunity to learn and play at the same time. The usage of games is also in line with the pedagogical principles of KSSR that require pupils to learn in fun, meaningful and purposeful ways (MOE, 2013).

## Strengths

### Multiple Sensory Learning

The Spelling Book adopts multiple sensory learning approach, which was quite useful in helping pupils in the learning process. According to

Montessori (2012), multi-sensory learning is the idea of using all senses in helping pupils to reinforce their memory. Hence, by using the Spelling Book, multiple sensory learning is very helpful when a teacher was able to teach this group of pupils effectively.

### Drilling technique

In Malaysia, teachers as well as pupils are very familiar with the drilling technique in the teaching and learning process. However, the typical drilling in the classroom was quite dull and boring according to Nur Faizah (2014). The Spelling Book helps the teacher to reinforce the input given many times without the pupils realizing that the teacher was actually drilling them. Pupils were asked to listen to the words to be spelled. Then, they spelled the words verbally. Later, they wrote the words in the Spelling Book and pasted the picture of the words in the Spelling Book. The teacher was actually reinforcing and drilling the pupils to memorize the spelling many times. The teacher made the pupils use their listening, speaking, writing and visualizing skills simultaneously to help them remember the spelling of the words. This technique proved to be successful because the pupils remembered the spelling and they performed well in the test.

### Limitations

#### Time Consuming

One of the major issues is time. The creation of the Spelling Book itself took almost 30 minutes. Pupils took a long time to understand the given instruction on how to fold the paper into a booklet. The class was very chaotic, as everyone was calling the teacher to ask about his/her book and clarify whether he/she has folded the paper correctly. The time consumption might be a demeaning factor to the teacher and pupils. The long period could affect pupils' motivation and participation in performing the task (Sumarni, 2015). An intervening measure was taken to address this matter. The teacher had to do an experiment with the pupils before implementing the creative project. In order to ensure that the same problem would not recur, the teacher had to demonstrate to the pupils the steps to fold the paper into a booklet in the classroom and then provided them with the

folded booklet. The teacher still needed to show them briefly how to create the Spelling Book. If the teacher does not demonstrate how to make the Spelling Book beforehand, pupils will be unable to do it.

### Size of the Book

Pupils had difficulty with writing in a small booklet that has limited lines to write. Writing for about four times on a blank page would be a challenge for the pupils, as they would be more focused on writing in a straight line rather than memorizing the spelling. As a suggestion, the size of the book should be bigger so that the content of the book is clearer to the pupils. In order to make the writing more interesting, teachers should include word trace forms of the words to be spelled and arrange the spelling of the words in alphabetical order. Some pupils, especially weaker ones, struggle with their penmanship. Thus, by providing a word trace activity in the Spelling Book, the pupils are given the chance to improve their penmanship and at the same time memorize the spelling of the words. By doing so, it enables the teacher to troubleshoot two problems simultaneously.

### Appendices

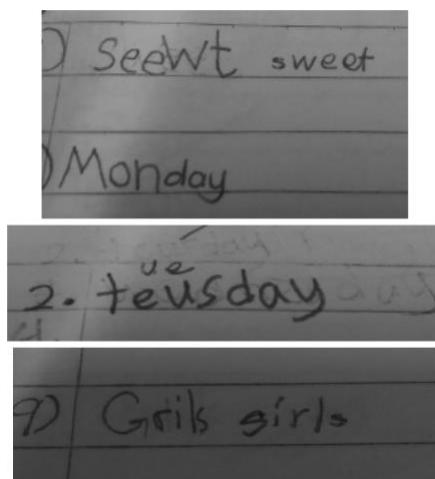


FIGURE 7.1 Spelling errors made by pupils



FIGURE 7.2 Big Spelling Book created by a teacher as a sample for pupils



FIGURE 7.3 Pupils carrying out the activity

## Conclusion

Spelling has become a common problem among pupils learning English and is integral for pupils to construct words and meaning. The Malaysian Ministry of Education has also emphasised the importance of spelling in learning English. The Spelling Book used Pavlov classical conditioning theory to help pupils to memorize the spelling of words. In our opinion, Spelling Book has provided a fun and meaningful approach in employing Pavlov's theory. Through multiple sensory learning and the drilling

technique, the Spelling Book showed promising outcomes in improving pupils' spelling. The limitations can be removed by improving certain aspects of the project. Overall, the Spelling Book has proved its novelty when implemented with this group of primary school pupils.

## Chapter 7

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# Skype in ESL Primary Classroom

Syed Zaqhwan Syed Abd Halim, Maslawati Mohamad

### Introduction

Currently, the integration of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning has become a common practice among educators around the world. The Ministry of Education of many countries has emphasised the integration of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning in the classroom. Findings from the Microsoft Asia Edu Tech Survey (2016) revealed that 96 percent of teachers in the Asia Pacific are already integrating technology in their classroom with 97 percent wish to do more. The survey also revealed that the top three challenges faced by educators in optimizing technology in their classroom are attending training, budget and integration of technology in the lessons. In the current educational environment, educators are able to access educational applications through a different platform for a more immersive and inclusive learning experience. Consequently, Microsoft has introduced ‘Skype in the Classroom’ through the Microsoft Educator Community (Morgan, 2013). This community serves as a platform to connect and share learning experience among educators and experts from all over the world. Nevertheless, it is fairly new in Malaysia and other developing countries. However, there are some Malaysian teachers and educators who are very active in using Skype to virtually connect their pupils with other pupils and teachers half-way around the world. These enable both parties to gain new learning experience and even virtually visit exciting places in the world without leaving their physical classroom.

The application by Microsoft namely ‘Skype in the Classroom’ combines virtual learning with real-life classroom experience and provides meaningful learning throughout the lesson. Imagine walking into a primary school classroom where the pupils are discussing questions to ask of pupils in a class 300 kilometres away. The following day, teachers

from both classes connect their pupils from both classes through Skype. Their pupils could hear and see each other projected to a white screen in real-time. Both groups of pupils seem eager to ask questions and looking forward to learn together. Many teachers in Malaysia had organised interactive Skype sessions as described. Taking advantage of ‘Skype in the Classroom’ where it allowed pupils to interact with guests outside of the classroom, was chosen as the intervention for the researchers’ creative project because the application is friendly to use, easy to set up, fairly new and appealing to the pupils. The researchers, however, focused on connecting pupils within the same country to ensure they were learning a common curriculum and to avoid cultural differences. Most importantly the researchers believe that it could reduce the primary Year 4 (aged 10 years old) pupils’ language learning anxiety. This project is hoped to identify the benefits of real-time interactive lesson using ‘Skype in the Classroom’ towards lowering primary ESL pupils’ language anxiety. Besides, this project was aimed to discover the challenges or limitations of using ‘Skype in the Classroom’.

## Problem Statement

Speaking a second language is already a difficult and arduous task to many ESL language learners. The ability and confidence to speak in English (as a second language) is an issue for non-native speakers not only in Malaysia but all over the world (Vijaindren, 2017). Many teachers in Malaysia have found it difficult to teach English in a communicative way. Motivating pupils to speak in the classroom is challenging. In Malaysian primary school, pupils in primary school would spend six years in learning English as a second language with the objective of being able to communicate using language. However, Malaysian pupils are still weak in speaking the language. The researchers have been teaching this group of primary school pupils for almost two years. In terms of English language learning, the pupils seem to make a rather slow progress. The researchers have identified some of the language problems that hampered the pupils’ language learning progress. The main problem identified was they have high language learning anxiety. Foreign language anxiety is the feeling of worry, uneasiness and nervousness which pupils experience in learning or using a second language (Pinter 2017). Being in a mixed ability classroom, some of the pupils do not have the confidence to converse or use the

language even during speaking lessons. Majority of the pupils from this primary school come from low-income family who live in the People's Housing Program (PHP). The People's Housing Program (PHP) is the Malaysian government initiative to relocate squatters and meet the needs of low-income group (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 2017). With the objective of improving the families wellbeing, the pupils come from a low-income family with a total household income below RM 2,500 per month (Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 2017) are given more privileges like free education and breakfast scheme. As they live in the same housing area, the pupils go to the same government school. These low income people are generally low academic achievers and possess poor command of English language. Thus, they normally converse in their first language, Malay language, with their family members. These pupils neither use English among their peers nor with their family members. They have a poor foundation in English and their parents do not see the importance of learning English. Thus, these factors resulted in the pupils being demotivated to use English. They are not able to fully exhibit their potential because of the demotivating environment they are in.

Mahvar et al. (2018) state that classroom environment can be a stressful environment. The stressful environment are caused by three major factors namely the pressure to perform academically, bad school facilities and negative peer influence. The first factor is to perform academically. They further explained that many pupils walk into the classroom with the pressure to learn and perform. They further added that these stress-induced environments may explain some of the difficulties of learning and remembering. On average, pupils spend five or more hours in a classroom every day. The second factor is bad school facilities. Generally, most government schools in Malaysia are equipped with a library, visual arts room, music room, science lab and computer lab. However, this school in which the project was carried out, these rooms were not well maintained and unlike other schools, this school is not under the maintenance of the Malaysian Ministry of Works. The deplorable condition of the school contributed to the stressful learning conditions such as poor lighting, broken fans and lamps. Another prominent factor that contributes to the pupils' language learning anxiety is their peer pressure (Pinter, 2017). Peers can bring both positive and negative effects towards learning. Through the researchers' observations, the pupils are terrified to talk in front of their peers. Whenever there is a group presentation or storytelling

activity, they are reluctant to speak and participate. However, these pupils were able to give and receive feedback on their work from their peers by using a combination of their mother tongue and English or they tend to code switch from their first language with the target language, English. For example, the pupils were able to give and receive feedback from their peers during a gallery walk activity. They were able to comments using simple phrases in English although most of the time the phrases are not grammatically correct. It is safe to conclude that the pupils are willing to speak in the target language when they are in a natural setting particularly when they are not being evaluated or observed.

## Skype in the Classroom Session

Many educators in Malaysia are already integrating technology in their work and classroom. This effort is in line with the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) policy. The MOE and Microsoft Malaysia recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to promote the use of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning. The MoU signed between these two parties was to empower educators to incorporate ICT in their teaching and learning, and to prepare pupils for the 21st century. It would also provide teachers with the technological tools and resources to build communities where they could collaborate, as well as share ideas and best practices. Due to this government policy, 'Skype in the Classroom' has been seen by the researchers as a tool to be implemented with their own pupils in order to develop a learning community. Skype could serve as a platform for the pupils to share their ideas and practise speaking English simultaneously.

Socio-constructivist theory underpinned the lesson development. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory helps to promote interpersonal interaction in Skype. It also helps to shape improvements in the learning environment. During social interaction, Vygotsky stated that learners use a language, a cultural tool, to help them to exchange responses, opinions and needs. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development advocates an environment in which learners can learn from others who are more proficient and knowledgeable to assist learning. In this study, 'Skype in the Classroom' is a digital learning platform selected to help the construction of new knowledge among primary Year 4 pupils through social negotiation, cooperation, scaffolding and their previous knowledge.

TABLE 8.1 Lesson plan used for the lesson

	<p>Focus: Listening and Speaking          Theme: World of Stories          Topic: 14. Harmony in The Jungle</p>
DAY Thursday	<p>Content Standards: 1.1          Learning Standards:          1.1.2          Able to listen to and enjoy stories          1.1.4          Able to talk about related topics with guidance</p>
DATE 26th October 2017	<p>Objectives: By the end of the lesson, pupils should be able to:          1. Listen to and enjoy stories.             b. Listen to a story and identify true or false statements.             c. Talk about sang kancil's characteristics.</p>
Subject English	<p>Activities :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pre listening-speaking:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Put up pictures on the board. (jumbled up)</li> <li>ii. Get the pupils to sequence the pictures.</li> <li>iii. Reveal the correct answers.</li> <li>iv. Pupils describe the animals shown in the pictures.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Class Year 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. While listening-speaking:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Pupils work in pairs.</li> <li>ii. Pupils from both classes take turns to read the story.</li> <li>iii. Pupils listen carefully and identify true or false statements through playing Kahoot!</li> <li>iv. Pupils from both classes discuss their answers.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
TIME 9.00 – 10.30 a.m.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Post listening-speaking:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Divide pupils into groups.</li> <li>ii. Tell pupils that they are going to change the story.</li> <li>iii. Ask these questions for group discussion.                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What if the crocodile was clever?</li> <li>• What would happen?</li> </ul> </li> <li>iv. Each group takes turns to present to both classes.</li> <li>v. Teachers gives feedback.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Closure:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Pupils from both classes share Sang Kancil's characteristics in the story.</li> <li>ii. Teachers write pupils' responses on the board in bubble map form.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

Both the classroom teachers acted as facilitators and instructors who guided the discussion outlined in the lesson plan. The researchers observed the lesson as well as interviewing all the pupils from school A after the ‘Skype in the Classroom’ session. The pupils’ interview session was transcribed in verbatim and later being analysed thematically.

A lesson plan was created in line with the Malaysian Ministry of Education’s (MOE) requirement and guidelines. The lesson plan adhered to the English language curriculum in Malaysia. A Malaysian Year 4 primary school textbook was used as the main resource of the lesson. However, there was some adaptations made to some parts of the resource to suit the level of pupils participating in the ‘Skype in the Classroom’ English lesson. The lesson involved two classrooms of Year 4 primary school pupils with the researchers’ school being School A and the other participating school being School B. The pupils selected from School B have the same level of English language proficiency with the pupils from School A. The activities were done simultaneously in real-time with teachers from both classrooms being the mediator for their respective classrooms. The lesson plan for the lesson is as follow:

## Project Report

This was the second lesson that the researchers had conducted using ‘Skype in the Classroom’. There were no technical issues regarding internet connectivity, visual and sound clarity from the online interactions. There were no technical issues from both sides of the classroom. Before the class started, both English teachers had discussed and agreed that one of them would take the leading role throughout the whole session. The other teacher from School A would help to mediate the lesson and facilitated her pupils. However, despite careful planning, there were times when instructions were unclear and this resulted in pupils’ inability to comprehend the instructions. This was because each teacher has a different style of classroom instructions, routines, and teaching and learning management. Pupils were used to listen and follow instructions given by their own teacher.

Pupils from both classes had the same proficiency level in English. The teachers decided to select pupils of an average level of proficiency (CEFR A1) for the purpose of the project. It was observed that they were excited to participate in the lesson. They were active throughout the lesson

and actively participated in all of the activities. Both classes had 15 pupils (to limit the participating number of pupils). At times, during interaction, it was observed that pupils were slow in providing responses to questions asked by the pupils from the other class. The researchers could relate this to Krashen's silent period. The silent period, or preproduction, is a stage in second language acquisition where learners do not attempt to speak. During the silent period, the pupils were actually thinking and generating ideas, words and phrases to speak.

Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) are required by the Malaysia Ministry of Education to be used in the language lesson. HOTS could be applied through activities or questions. The lesson plan above also incorporates HOTS questions but the pupils were not able to comprehend them. Due to their inability to comprehend the questions, they could not provide correct answers. The researchers had to simplify the questions to suit the pupils' level of proficiency. After doing so, the researchers managed to elicit responses from the pupils. Despite the fact that HOTS force pupils to think critically, the researchers believe that in second language learning pupils should be given the opportunity to speak and interact in the target language rather than focusing on problem-solving activities. In this study, HOTS has contributed to the pupils experiencing high language learning anxiety.

Overall, the lesson went on as planned. There were no major setbacks throughout the lesson. However, there are aspects that could be improved in the lesson plan which the researchers will explain further in this chapter. Both teachers played their role very well and having technology-savvy pupils helped the lesson tremendously. The lesson yielded meaningful learning and pupils looked forward to another 'Skype in the Classroom' lesson.

## Strengths and Limitations of the Lesson

### Strengths

From the researchers' observation, pupils from both primary school classrooms A and B were excited right at the beginning of the lesson. They became actively involved with the lesson. One student described the lesson as "*interesting to talk with new people*". The lesson content was relevant

to their lives and had previously existed in their schemata. This has helped the pupils to express themselves using suitable vocabulary to speak in the target language and reduce their anxiety level. However, the pupils were not fluent. They interacted with a lot of pauses and stuttered as they were thinking and trying to retrieve the correct words to use. They also took some time to respond to questions and constantly looking at their friends to help them. Based on the observation by the researchers, 'Skype in the Classroom' also helped the pupils to develop their confidence level. During the interview, the pupils said that they were less anxious to speak in the target language. The pupils added that seeing other pupils from other parts of Malaysia having trouble to speak in English made them more comfortable to use the language. They realised that it is not threatening to make mistakes. The English speaking environment through 'Skype in the Classroom' made these pupils be better speakers as evidenced in the following interview responses:

"I use English during Skype in the Classroom because everyone is speaking English." (S2)

"I have read the story (with the teacher) before... so I know what to say." (S6)

"(Before this) I was shy to speak English, no one is speaking English." (S8)

"Other people (pupils) speak (made mistakes) just like me." (S12)

Majority of the pupils agreed that being involved in the lesson helped them to negotiate meaning through interaction. In a traditional classroom setting, student-to-student interactions are difficult to achieve. From the researchers' observation, 'Skype in the Classroom' is able to promote peer support and feedback among the pupils. Pupils communicate with their peers although minimally, were able to discuss (bilingual) and worked together very well as a group. The pupils managed to help their peers to understand unfamiliar words using a variety of strategies. The most frequent strategy observed was direct translation. One of the pupils who has a better proficiency level in English was seen to provide the necessary vocabularies when other pupils were pausing for a long period. The pupils responded in the interview that they were comfortable and did not mind being corrected by their peers. However, there was also occurrences of pupils requesting for clarification. 'Skype in the Classroom' stimulated communicative situations and provided a real purpose for pupils to

respond. The pupils explained that they did not feel like they were in a normal formal classroom but in real-life non-tutored conversations as could be derived from the following interview responses:

“Everyone (pupils) help me to find words” (S7)

“You (the teacher) do not speak a lot...we speak a lot” (S2)

“I can ask (meaning of word) if I don’t know” (S13)

The lesson was designed to promote collaborative and active discussion. As such, ‘Skype in the Classroom’ was used as a medium to promote discussions in the target language. The researchers’ use topics which the pupils were already familiar with. The constructivist proponents explain that pupils will learn actively if they find the lessons are relevant to themselves and experience (Brown 2014). The researchers’ observations revealed that the pupils were able to work actively in a collaborative manner as they discussed an alternate ending to the story. Pupils began to actively engage themselves in their own groups. The pupils also demonstrated good cooperation among group members during the presentation.

‘Skype in the Classroom’ is a free application available for educators to utilise thus cost-effective. All that was needed to conduct ‘Skype in the Classroom’ lesson were a laptop equipped with a camera, an internet connection, a projector and a speaker. It was also very easy to set up. However, it must be noted that a stable internet connection is vital to ensure a smooth English lesson through ‘Skype in the Classroom’. The teachers utilised their own mobile data to ensure a stable internet connection. Learning from past experience of using the application, the researchers did not face any technical difficulties during the lesson. The real-time video and audio were both clear.

### Limitations

There were a few limitations that arose from the English language listening and speaking lesson via ‘Skype in the Classroom’. The most prominent limitation is the participating pupils always waited for translation from the teachers. These pupils have little or minimal exposure to English at home. During most of the English lessons in the traditional classroom, they would

wait for the teacher to provide the meaning of unfamiliar words. This has become an unwanted habit among the pupils. Although there were improvements in terms of the way they construct meaning of unfamiliar words in this lesson, the dependency of direct translation from the teachers was still high. It was evident in the lesson where pupils directly asked or simply looked at the teachers for the meaning of unfamiliar words. Both classes from School A and School B face the same problem. During the interview session, the pupils revealed that waiting for translation was easier, faster and required less effort.

“(When the) teacher explains, it is easy (to understand)” (S9)

“Sometimes my friends help, sometimes they don’t” (S4)

‘Skype in the Classroom’ requires two or more group of pupils from different classrooms. These classrooms, however, may have different classroom instructions and routines. During the lesson via ‘Skype in the Classroom’, both teachers gave instructions in the pupils’ mother tongue. The reason behind this was to accelerate the lesson as they only had one hour to finish the lesson. However, giving most of the instructions in the Malay language was not in line with the lesson’s objective. It was observed that as the teachers were giving instructions the pupils would reply using their mother tongue.

Another major limitation faced during the lesson was some pupils who failed to comprehend and predict an alternate version of the story. The pupils were required to discuss in their respective groups and come out with a different version of the story they had learnt earlier. This was to promote Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) as well as providing pupils with a meaningful task for them to complete. However, some of the pupils from both sides of the screen could not see beyond what might happen differently in the story. The main objective of the task was for the pupils to use the target language in a meaningful way through discussion and presentation. Failing to come out with an alternate version of the story, has demotivated the pupils. Coming from a low-income family, these pupils have limited access to English reading materials at home especially storybooks. The researchers believed that it may be one of the contributing factors. Even though, the teachers helped the pupils in translating some words, some of them still perceived that the assistance is not sufficient. The pupils responded in the interview where they argued that teachers

gave minimal help during presentation and pupils struggled to convey their ideas.

“The question (task) is hard” (S7)

“We talk (discuss)...but we don’t know” (S11)

“You (the teacher) do not help” (S9)

### Suggestions to Improve the Lesson

After explaining the weaknesses of the lesson, the researchers also provide suggestions on the aspects that could be improved. Teachers may use learning theories to identify and overcome pupils’ language learning difficulties. Besides that, teachers can also use the language learning theories to improve their teaching methods, approaches and strategies. Every classroom has its own routines. During the lesson, pupils from both classes waited for teachers to translate their instructions. They also waited for the researchers to translate unfamiliar words. Apparently, this resulted in a bad habit among pupils as they are too teacher dependant. They do not do much thinking.

Teaching is a matter of creating conditions whereby pupils are able to transact with the knowledge. Thus, learners need to play an active role to make connection between new information and their prior knowledge in their learning process. The proponents of socio-cultural theory state that knowledge is co-constructed and that individuals learn from one another. Language lessons could be improved by combining different level of pupils’ English proficiency in a classroom. Pupils with better proficiency could help to convey the meaning of difficult words rather than waiting for the teacher to translate. In addition, teachers may also introduce unfamiliar words prior to the lesson and thus, pupils could construct the meaning of the unfamiliar words in different contexts. Consequently, by relating the new words to their prior knowledge, they would better understand the lesson.

Throughout the lesson, most instructions were given in Bahasa Malaysia which is the pupils’ mother tongue. Most English teachers in Malaysia use this approach when giving instructions to help accelerate the lesson delivery. However, it hampers the language learning of the pupils. Kundanis (2003) stated that Bandura’s social cognitive theory is

about the process of learning behaviours through observation, modelling and repetition for positive and negative reinforcement. Bandura further stated that a response to a stimulus becomes stronger through exercises and repetition. Teachers need to develop an instructional routine in their respective classroom through exercises and repetition. It may be difficult during the early stage of drilling. Gradually, it will help pupils to understand teachers' instructions in the target language. It is important for participating teachers in 'Skype in the Classroom' lesson to set a common classroom routine so that pupils understand instructions better as well as to avoid the use of mother tongue to deliver instructions.

Another major limitation of this lesson was when a few pupils failed to comprehend and predict a different ending of the story. They could not predict what might happen differently at the end of the story. In Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, children aged 7 to 11 years old starts to use logic. They could not think abstractly (objects that never exist physically) or hypothetically. In order to improve the lesson and prevent this situation from happening in future lessons, the teacher should play a bigger role. Teachers should act not only as facilitators but they must also constantly provide guidance such as giving more examples and facilitating learning questions to springboard pupils' idea production. Providing an alternate ending to a story is not an easy task. In fact, it is at the highest hierarchy of Bloom's taxonomy which is to create. Before the lesson, the teacher should provide the needed schemata for pupils to construct new knowledge or apply their prior knowledge in a different context. In order to promote language production, the teacher may also provide ideas for pupils to generate their own ideas.

It is hoped that by applying these suggestions in future lessons, it will provide teachers and pupils with a better language learning environment. Having a better language learning environment will help pupils to lower their affective filter level, be more comfortable and increase their confidence in using English. They will have a more meaningful lesson that uses more English words.

## Conclusion

From the study above, utilizing 'Skype in the Classroom' in the ESL classroom has shown its benefits as well as the challenges that arose with it. The engagement of pupils in a communicative and collaborative

ESL classroom was indeed positive. The communicative aspect of the lesson was fulfilled as pupils were discussing, presenting and talking to their peers in the target language. Pupils were learning with an authentic audience which was about the same age and low proficiency level as them. In addition, 'Skype in the Classroom' also helped in reducing pupils' language learning anxiety. Pupils became more confident and motivated to learn English. However, educators in the future should also look at the challenges and take into consideration the prescribed suggestions to further improve the use of 'Skype in the Classroom' in the ESL classroom.

'Skype in the Classroom' is a tool to connect pupils virtually with anyone in the globe be it native speakers of the target language, book authors as well as language experts. There is a huge potential of using 'Skype in the Classroom' to make global connections where pupils interact with native speakers and learn a new culture. There are many functions of 'Skype in the Classroom' that has not been used in this study. Therefore, this study is hoped to provide some insights towards utilising 'Skype in the Classroom' optimally in second language learning classroom. While using 'Skype in the Classroom' can be beneficial, language educators still need to evaluate the benefits of any technology applications. Teachers should not adopt a technology tools for the sake of introducing new technology. Educators must take into consideration their learning objectives, learning outcomes, pupils' proficiency level, interest and needs, facilitating conditions prior to utilising it in the ESL classroom.

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# Index

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