


ENGLISH BOARD GAME: IMPROVING WRITING SKILLS AMONG YEAR 6 PUPILS IN SK AYER PUTEH, PENDANG

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history: Received: 2 Jan 2025 Revised: 10 Jan 2025 Accepted: 27 Jan 2025 Published: 1 Feb 2025</p> <p>Keywords: English Board Game past simple tense simple sentences writing year 6 pupils</p> <p></p>	<p>This study investigates the efficacy of utilising an English Board Game as an educational tool to enhance Year 6 pupils' comprehension of the past simple tense and the proper construction of simple sentences. Many of these students struggled with their writing skills, often failing to use appropriate tenses in their past narratives and facing difficulties in crafting grammatically correct sentences, which subsequently hindered the clarity of their written work. Although a list of irregular verbs in the past simple tense form were already given to the pupils, they still could not remember and used the incorrect form of the verb when writing sentences in the past simple tense. Thus, the introduction of the English Board Game aims to address these challenges. To attain the study's objectives, a pre-test and post-test were administered to 22 Year 6 pupils in SK Ayer Puteh. The results indicated significant progress among all participating pupils following the implementation of the post-test. 16 out of 22 pupils managed to score full marks in the post-test whereas none of them managed to do so in the pre-test. Moreover, the students found the learning process enjoyable and devoid of stress, as the activities incorporated within the English Board Game fostered engagement. This pedagogical approach holds potential for extension to other tense forms such as the past participle form of verbs that Year 6 pupils need to master to improve their language knowledge.</p>

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INTRODUCTION

Learning and mastering the English language holds a significant importance in Malaysia, especially in primary school education. This emphasis on English proficiency is driven by several compelling reasons. Firstly, English is a global lingua franca and a crucial international language of communication. Understanding and being able to converse in English opens doors to a vast pool of knowledge and facilitates interaction with people from diverse backgrounds. Malaysia's Education Blueprint underscores the importance of English proficiency among primary school students.

One of the key aspirations is for every child to attain operational proficiency in both the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, and English. This dual-language proficiency is seen as essential to prepare students for future work environments, where these languages are often used. Hence, mastering the English language is aligned with the country's educational objectives and its vision of producing globally competitive individuals. Nevertheless, mastering English can be challenging, particularly for students who have limited exposure to the language at home or during the teaching and learning process in schools. Therefore, it becomes even more crucial to instill strong English language skills from a young age, starting in primary school.

One of the core components of English language proficiency is writing skills. This skill is part of the quartet of language abilities, alongside speaking, listening, and reading. Developing strong writing skills in English is essential for several reasons, especially for primary pupils. These skills empower students to engage with the global community, achieve academic success, access diverse cultural resources, and ultimately enhance their future career prospects. Consequently, investing in English language education at the primary level is a strategic move that aligns with both national educational goals and the demands of an interconnected world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English is taught as a second language in Malaysian primary and secondary schools, with a strong emphasis on fostering literacy and language proficiency among pupils. However, a significant challenge arises for students residing in rural areas, as they often struggle to attain a level of proficiency comparable to their urban counterparts. According to Lim et al. (2017), pupils in rural areas consistently underperform in English language proficiency assessments when compared to their urban counterparts. This discrepancy is further supported by the findings from Nooreiny et al. (2003) and Talif and Edwin (1990), who found that even though both urban and rural schools follow the same curriculum, English proficiency remains considerably lower in rural settings. The primary reason behind this disparity is the limited exposure that rural pupils have to the English language outside the classroom. Unlike their urban counterparts, they lack opportunities and environments facilitating language practice and use. Consequently, researchers have conducted numerous studies to explore strategies that can assist these pupils in acquiring and mastering the English language.

One critical aspect of English language education that demands attention is writing skills. Proficiency in writing is not only fundamental for academic success but also essential for future endeavours in secondary education, university, and the workplace. However, students with limited English language proficiency face considerable difficulties in writing, as indicated by Maghsoudi and Haririan (2013). These students find composing in English to be a daunting task because it necessitates the application of various cognitive and linguistic strategies with which they are unfamiliar with. Due to their limited use of English outside of the classroom, vocabulary deficiencies further exacerbate their writing challenges. Although some students may possess creative ideas, their lack of understanding of grammar and proper written expression results in disorganised and incomprehensible writing. The primary hurdles faced by these pupils include generating ideas, structuring coherent paragraphs, and selecting appropriate vocabulary (Firmansyah, 2015).

Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to find effective solutions to help pupils acquire the basic skill of writing. Considering the challenges posed by limited exposure to English language outside the classroom and the difficulties faced by students with limited language proficiency, implementing language games during the teaching and learning process can be a valuable strategy. Mindy and Dorothea (2014) suggest that incorporating games into lessons can make learning more engaging and meaningful. Harmer (2007) supports this view by emphasising the importance of engagement in the classroom. Therefore, the use of language

games to overcome hurdles in memorising the past simple tense and constructing sentences might prove to be one of the most effective approaches. Lee (2012) further points out that well-developed games have educational and pedagogical value. By designing suitable and age-appropriate games tailored to primary school pupils, educators can significantly enhance pupils' ability to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for proficient writing.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH SAMPLE

While the initial intention was to conduct this action research with all 66 Year 6 pupils at SK Ayer Puteh, practical constraints, including time limitations and a lack of necessary instruments, have necessitated a change in approach. As a result, a sample of 22 pupils from the 6 Cambridge class at SK Ayer Puteh has been selected for this study. Among these participants, there are 10 males and 12 females, all of whom share the same classroom. Notably, the sample represents a diverse range of English proficiency levels.

PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION

The procedure in collecting the data can be seen in the Table 1(a). It is divided into two cycles as suggested by Kemmis and McTaggart's Research Model (1988).

Table 1(a): The procedure of data collection

Cycle 1	
Identify the problem	The teacher identified the problem faced by Year 6 pupils during the teaching and learning process through observation and preliminary data was collected through the administration of pre-test.
Plan	The teacher planned the English Board Game to help the pupils in acquiring the simple past tense words and in constructing simple sentences correctly.
Action	The English Board Game was introduced to the pupils and the teacher explained how the game is played. All the pupils played the game every morning from Monday to Wednesday before the actual lessons began.
Observe	Throughout the process, the teacher observed and made some notes especially on pupils' behaviour and motivation when playing the game.
Reflect and Evaluate	The teacher reflected the process based on the observations and notes gathered. The teacher also evaluated the board game whether any changes needed to be made.

Table 1(b): The procedure of data collection

Cycle 2	
Revise Plan	Some amendments were made towards the game. The number of cards also increased from three sets of 25 cards to three sets of 75 cards.
Action	The pupils continued playing English Board Games. Other activities such as Running Dictation and Chinese Whisperer also were conducted using the game cards. They also used the sentences in the game card by writing them down in the Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) table. The posttest also was administered to find out pupils' progress.
Observe	The teacher observed the pupils' response and behaviour. The teacher made some notes and recorded the test result.

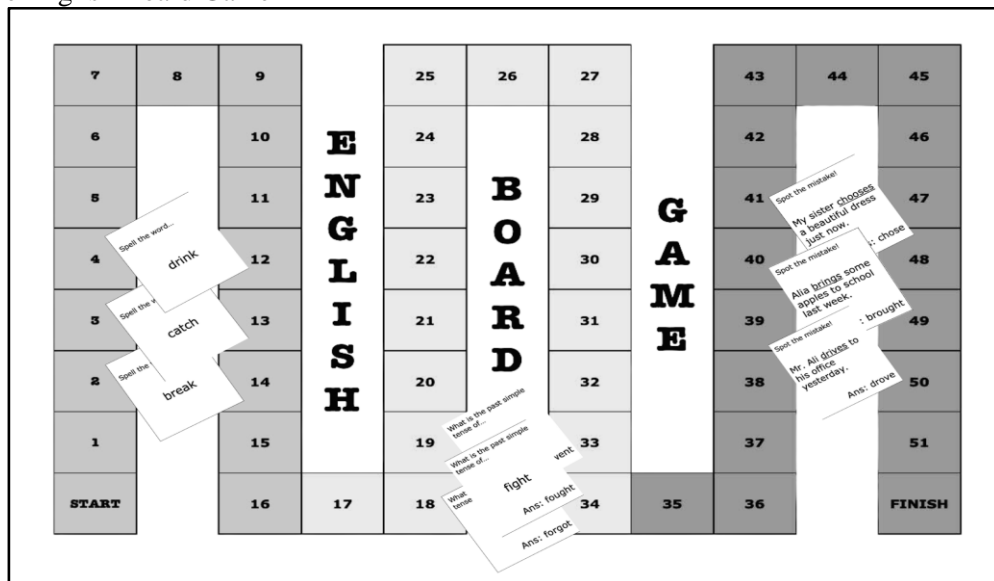
Reflect and Evaluate

The teacher analysed and interpreted the findings. Indeed, the pupils showed a significant improvement compared to the first cycle.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The teacher developed the English Board Game as the primary research instrument. This game comprises a three-coloured stages board and three sets of 75 cards. The first set, represented by green cards, includes both regular and irregular verbs. The second set, denoted by yellow cards, contains questions and corresponding answers in the past simple tense form for these verbs. Lastly, the third set, indicated by red cards, contains simple sentences in the past simple tense form. To further support pupils in constructing accurate sentences, the game also incorporates the use of the Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) table where the pupils will use the sentences in the red cards and transfer them into the SVO table.

Figure 1: The English Board Game



DATA ANALYSIS

The data from both observation notes and test results have been subjected to descriptive analysis. To enhance clarity, visuals like charts, pictures of pupils' work, and tables are employed for data presentation. The findings are comprehensively discussed, addressing limitations and assumptions. They are then summarised and related to the research questions. Additionally, this research suggests avenues for further research and intervention.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research findings will be presented by referring to the research objectives and questions of this action research.

OBJECTIVE 1

To evaluate whether the use of English Board Game helps the Year 6 pupils to memorise and gain the knowledge of past simple tense.

Research Question 1

Can the implementation of the English Board Game effectively enhance the memorisation of simple past tense verbs, particularly irregular verbs, among Year 6 pupils?

From the data collected, it can be said that pupils show a lot of improvements especially in memorising the verbs in past simple form. This can be seen through *Table 2* and *Figure 2* as following:

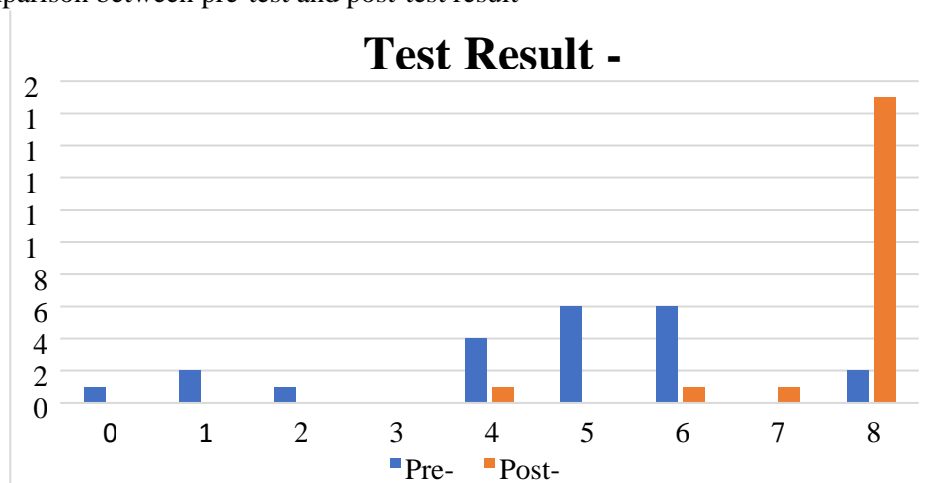
Table 2(a): Result of pre-test and post-test for memorising the verbs in past simple tense form

Research Participants	Pre-test	Post-test
M1	1/8	6/8
M2	5/8	8/8
M3	5/8	8/8
M4	2/8	8/8
M5	1/8	4/8
M6	5/8	8/8
M7	0/8	7/8
M8	6/8	8/8
M9	4/8	8/8
M10	6/8	8/8

Table 2(b): Result of pre-test and post-test for memorising the verbs in past simple tense form

Research Participants	Pre-test	Post-test
F1	4/8	8/8
F2	6/8	8/8
F3	8/8	8/8
F4	5/8	8/8
F5	5/8	8/8
F6	5/8	8/8
F7	6/8	8/8
F8	6/8	8/8
F9	6/8	8/8
F10	4/8	8/8
F11	4/8	8/8
F12	8/8	8/8

Figure 2: Comparison between pre-test and post-test result



The data collected indicate that most of the pupils showed significant improvements, especially in memorising past simple tense verbs, including irregular verbs. This is supported by the pre-test and post-test scores presented in *Table 2(a)*, *Table 2(b)* and *Figure 3*. During the pre-test, many pupils struggled to score 8 out of

8 marks, especially with irregular verbs. However, in the post-test, most pupils achieved full scores and appeared confident in completing the test.

The use of the English Board Game seems to have positively impacted pupils' ability to memorise past tense forms, especially irregular verbs. Additionally, it appears to have motivated the pupils to learn the language and increased their confidence in using English in their daily lives. The conclusion suggests that games can enhance the speed of learning and knowledge acquisition because pupils enjoy the process.

OBJECTIVE 2

To evaluate whether the use of the English Board Game helps the Year 6 pupils to construct simple sentences using the past simple tense correctly.

Research Question 2

To what extent does the utilisation of the English Board Game contribute to the improved ability of pupils to construct grammatically correct simple sentences, following a series of activities involving its use?

The pupils also showed great improvements in writing simple sentences in past simple tense. This can be seen in *Table 3* and *Figure 3*.

The data collected also indicate a significant improvement in pupils' ability to construct simple sentences in past simple tense, as shown in the pre-test and post-test scores provided in the table and graph. Most pupils managed to construct eight simple sentences correctly after using the English Board Game.

However, it is noted that there were six pupils who still struggled to write simple sentences correctly. These pupils had low English proficiency levels and not only lacked knowledge of past simple tense verbs but also faced vocabulary challenges. They required extra attention from the teacher during game activities and sentence construction. Nevertheless, even these struggling pupils showed some improvements after playing the English Board Game.

In summary, the English Board Game seems to have had a positive impact on both memorising past simple tense verbs and constructing simple sentences correctly among Year 6 pupils. It particularly helped those with lower proficiency levels, although some still faced challenges.

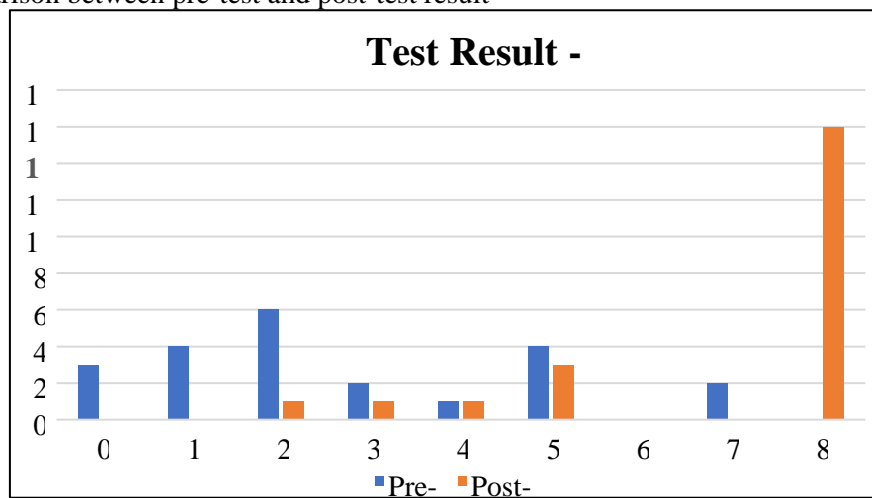
Table 3(a): Result of pre-test and post-test for sentence construction

Research Participants	Pre-test	Post-test
M1	0/8	4/8
M2	1/8	8/8
M3	3/8	5/8
M4	1/8	5/8
M5	0/8	2/8
M6	1/8	5/8
M7	0/8	3/8
M8	5/8	8/8
M9	2/8	8/8
M10	5/8	8/8

Table 3(b): Result of pre-test and post-test for sentence construction

Research Participants	Pre-test	Post-test
F1	4/8	8/8
F2	5/8	8/8
F3	7/8	8/8
F4	5/8	8/8
F5	2/8	8/8
F6	3/8	8/8
F7	2/8	8/8
F8	2/8	8/8
F9	2/8	8/8
F10	2/8	8/8
F11	1/8	8/8
F12	7/8	8/8

Figure 3: Comparison between pre-test and post-test result



The findings of this study shed light on the impact of the English Board Game on pupils' learning outcomes. Notably, pupils who initially struggled to memorize verbs in the simple past tense showed significant improvement, ultimately scoring full marks in the post-test after the introduction of the English Board Game. Over a four-week period, the game proved to be a motivating factor, driving pupils to learn and memorize verbs more effectively.

Our findings align with the assertion made by Sideris et al. (2006) that students are more inclined to invest time and effort in learning when they are genuinely interested and motivated. The observed increase in engagement and enthusiasm among pupils further substantiates the idea that students tend to excel when they enjoy the learning process. As Hauray and Rillero (1994) suggested, motivated pupils not only learn more but also demonstrate improvements in related skills, such as reading.

As the pupils managed to grasp the knowledge of the past simple tense, it helped them construct simple sentences using the past simple tense correctly. Although the pupils had problems writing grammatically correct sentences before the game was implemented, they managed to do so after playing the games and using the red-colored cards containing sentences to transfer them into the Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) table. While carrying out the activities, the pupils could see how sentences were constructed, which significantly aided their ability to write sentences independently.

Mindy and Dorothea (2014) also mentioned that pupils had fun and were motivated to learn sentence construction after the game was implemented in the lesson. They enjoyed playing the game and completed the writing activities using the SVO table, as evidenced by the post-test results, where most of them managed to

write simple sentences correctly. Mustaffar et al. (2019) also agreed that the use of the SVO Grid Table helps pupils write sentences and achieve success in their assessments.

However, it is worth noting that a small number of pupils still struggled to achieve a full mark in the post-test. These pupils exhibited extremely low proficiency in the English language and required additional support and attention. In recognition of their needs, a continued intervention plan has been designed, ensuring that these selected pupils will continue to engage with the game until they can independently demonstrate a strong grasp of the material.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study examined the impact of the English Board Game on Year 6 pupils at SK Ayer Puteh, focusing on their ability to memorise the past simple tense forms of verbs and construct grammatically correct sentences. The collected data clearly demonstrates that the English Board Game significantly aids pupils in memorising verbs and composing accurate sentences. Moreover, it has been observed that students are highly motivated to learn English through this enjoyable process, as it relieves them from the stress of memorising an extensive vocabulary. Considering that writing remains a challenging skill for students learning English as a second language, the incorporation of games during the learning process is indeed an effective approach that facilitates skill acquisition and boosts enthusiasm for learning.

To enhance the understanding of the English Board Game's effectiveness, it is advisable to broaden the participant pool beyond Year 6 pupils and extend its use to Level 2 students, encompassing Year 4, Year 5, and Year 6 pupils. This expanded study would offer a more comprehensive perspective on whether the game aids students in improving their English writing skills and boosting their confidence in language usage.

Additionally, exploring the game's potential by adding more content that covers additional English tenses, such as the perfect tense, where irregular verbs change from the past simple tense, could be beneficial. Given that acquiring knowledge of the perfect tense is an important part of Year 6 pupils' curriculum, expanding the game with sets of cards or elements focused on perfect tense constructions could help students better memorise past participle forms and construct sentences using the perfect tense, making the game more versatile and aligned with the nation's educational goals.

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