CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS
iELT-CON2021

10th International English Language Teaching Conference

PELLTA
Penang English Language
Learning & Teaching Association

20 - 21
November 2021
Virtual Conference

Editors
Rovena Elaine Capel
Quah Seok Hoon

"Developing Future Skills in English Language Teaching"

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PREFACE

The Penang English Language Learning and Teaching Association (PELLTA) organised its 10th international English language teaching conference, iELT-Con 2021 from the 20 – 21 November 2021 with the theme "Developing Future Skills in English Language Teaching". Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this conference was convened as a virtual conference with live streaming as well as on-demand video presentations.

It was a fulfilling two days of professional sharing of knowledge, expertise and experience. Keynote presentations were 45 minutes and featured speaker panels were 60 minutes. Meanwhile paper presentations oriented towards research and best practices were each 15-minute pre-recorded video presentations on Youtube. A total of 4 keynotes, 2 featured panel sessions, 1 presenter showcase session and 45 papers were delivered with participants from 20 countries across the globe.

This conference proceedings contain 14 peer-reviewed full papers which were submitted after the conference and we would like to share them with all our readers, presenters and non-presenters alike. Some of these articles indicate the relevance of technology-aided teaching, learning and assessment in this digital era and its benefits for learners and teachers such as in Chapter 1 Online Game-based Learning Framework for ESL Learning Strategy by Ngui Geok Kim, Wong Lind Say and Kwong Shuk Wah, Chapter 2 Improving Year 6 Pupils' Interest And Ability In English Essay Writing Through Book Creator by Lim Jie Yik and Chapter 3 Promoting Students' Speaking Fluency and Social Collaboration through Toontastic 3D by William Mark Joseph Raj and Chapter 4 Assessing Equivalency Between Paper-and-Pencil And Computer-Based English Competency Test by Muhammad Yoga Prabowo who conducted a comparative study between computer-based and non-computer-based methods of testing. However, the future of English language teaching does not only depend on technology but also on improving existing practices in today's educational contexts such as in Chapter 9 EAP Course Design : A Practitioner's Perspective by Devika Misra, Chapter 10 EFL, SDGs And Leadership In Theory And In Practice by Peter Carter, Chapter 11 Implementing Better Multiple Choice For EFL Learning And Testing by Charles Jannuzi and Chapter 12 Metacognitive Strategies Used By L2 Listeners In Think-Aloud Protocols During The Pandemic by Azran Azmee Kafia who researched the metacognitive strategies employed by her students in Bangladesh. Meanwhile, the importance of inclusive education practices is foregrounded by the author of Chapter 13, Champa Damayanthi I H from Sri Lanka and in Chapter 14 Use Of English To Bolster Inclusion In Special Education Centers in Mexico by Luz Irene Licea Claverie.

Finally, we thank all presenters for their contribution to iELT-Con 2021 and to this compilation of research findings and great ideas for English language teaching and learning in this challenging time. We would also like to express our gratitude to the panel of reviewers for their time and invaluable comments in reviewing the articles.

Rovena Elaine Capel & Quah Seok Hoon

PANEL OF REVIEWERS

This Proceedings of PELLTA's 10th. International English Language Teaching Conference (iELT-Con) 2021 would not have materialised without the contribution of the panel of dedicated reviewers. We thank the following people for their time, effort and very helpful comments that helped the authors to improve on their papers.

Teh Bee Kim

Irene Teoh Ming See

Loke Khoon Ee

Leong Mi-chelle

Koet Tian Wei

Wan Nor Asmah Arshad

1   Online Game-Based Learning Framework For English As Second Language (ESL) Learning Strategy

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Abstract

The Movement Constraint Order has changed the landscape of English education globally. Students spend more time of their online gadget for learning and entertainment as outdoor activities are limited. Due to the appealing nature of online games, students tend to get distracted with their gadget at the expense of their academic fulfilment and hence, hindering effective language learning. Since the learning environment has changed, educators must improvise their teaching methods to deliver learning instruction. It is vital to explore the potentials of online games in second language learning. This paper proposes an online game-based language learning framework for English as a second language. The key components were derived from the game design principles, core elements in digital games and language learning motivation. The proposed framework was piloted with 10 students which gained positive responses from them. The proposed framework serves as a guideline for implementing online game-based English education.

Keywords : *English language, digital entertainment, online game-based learning, second language*

Introduction

The recent coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic outbreak has affected daily activities around the world. Closing of schools and learning institution as well as stay-at-home mandates and self-quarantines had contributed the increase of digital entertainment consumption, most notably online gaming and other related activities such as e-sports and videogame live-streaming (Javed, 2020). According to report by Steam, a leading gaming distributor, in 2020 there are more than 20 million concurrent active users, the highest number in 16-year history. On the other hand, live-streaming platforms YouTube Gaming and Twitch reported 10% increase in viewership. The increase of participation in online and mobile gaming has been perceived as complementary to public health efforts to promote spatial distancing (King et al, 2020) as well as spending more time indoor. However, it is crucial to admit that substantial increases in playing game may not always be beneficial and may pose risks for vulnerable individuals including children and those affected by and at risk of gaming disorder (King, Koster, & Billieux, 2019). Due to gaming disorder, some students are facing challenges to control their playing time and some worst case, addicted to mobile games. This disrupts their learning schedule thus affecting their overall academic performance (Marzo et al, 2019).

In Malaysia, after the implementation of Movement Constraint Order (MCO), students likely started to feel demotivated to learn due to less social interaction thus resorting to play online games as a mean of escapism. Lack of motivation is a major issue in learning anything. The challenges of learning a second language require extended motivation and persistence especially in this difficult time. Inducing enough motivation is both challenging and important as it requires intricate balancing of the students' skills and the learning task at hand (Elaish et al, 2019). Although many studies are pointing at the bad impact of digital gaming (Marzo et al, 2019; Fernandes et al, 2020; Kamal & Wok, 2020), there are also evidence that pointed at the contribution of digital games in improving learning motivation and language skills (Guerrero, 2011; Xu et al, 2019).

Advancement in technology has changed our method of delivering information. Online learning has been seen as an evolution from traditional face-to-face class, to distance and web-based learning, then mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) (Elaish et al, 2019). Considering current online technology and gadget literacy among students, it is possible to take another step to enhance language learning through online games. According to Winn (2008) the symbol of a successful learning game is enjoyable. The main attributes of a game is to provide the player with an active experience and encouraging learning by becoming active participant. This gives a social medium that affords the player with human-to-human or human-to-non human interactions while providing player with customized responses. This makes learning engaging by promoting behavioural learning and providing role models for the player at the same time.

Background

To curb the number of Covid19 cases in Malaysia, the Movement Constraint Order (MCO) was implemented to reduce crowds and unnecessary gathering of people. Due to the stay-at-home mandate, students from all levels (primary, secondary, tertiary) are having their classes via online while homework and assignment are given through messaging platform such as WhatsApp and Telegram. Having to rely on self-discipline and lesser surveillance, many students are easily distracted with playing online games rather than focusing on their study. According to Fernandes et al. (2020), adolescents tend to spend more time with their gadget as a mean to cope with loneliness and anxiety throughout the pandemic. This had hindered effective learning as students are spending too much time on their online games and having problems to balance their playing and studying time. To cope with these changes, educator must find a way to combine their teaching strategy and online games to allow for an engaging learning session.

Purpose Of The Study

This paper aims to conduct a research to explore a new way of using video games as a learning strategy for the acquisition of English language among ESL students. The study will explore the possibility of implementing online games as part of learning by reviewing past research and studies. At the end of this paper, a framework will be proposed as a guideline for educators to implement this new strategy.

Research Objectives

The research objectives are as follows:
1. To develop a new learning framework based on digital game-based learning principles.
2. To review the impact of online games in language learning from past studies.
3. To identify types of game elements that support ESL learning.
4. To identify types of online games that contributed towards ESL learning motivation.

Research Questions

These are the research questions that will be answered:
1. What are the important principles needed to build an online game-based learning framework?
2. What are the impacts of online games on language learning?
3. What types of game elements support ESL learning?
4. What types of online games contribute towards ESL learning motivation?

Methodology

This is a qualitative research paper that focused on proposing a new language learning framework based on online games that can motivate and enhance English learning. The first step would be collecting past studies that discuss about the application of video games in learning sessions. This includes reviewing the current online game frameworks to find out the main attributes of the frameworks that were used to develop an online game for language learning. Referring to the reviewed literature, a new English learning framework will be constructed by combining learning strategy and online gaming. This was based on the argument that digital technologies can expand the setting of learning experiences. After the framework is constructed, a short survey involving a group of tertiary students will be conducted to evaluate students' responses regarding the new learning framework.

Framework Development

In the early design stage, this framework will be built based on related literature. Three studies provided the background for implementing online game in language learning. The first one is Gee's thirteen design principles for digital game-based learning (Coleman & Money, 2020; Gee, 2003), followed by Shute and Ke (2012) seven core of elements of well-designed digital games and Ebrahimzeh and Alavi (2017) language learning motivation in digital games (Table 1).

According to Coleman & Money (2020), with regards to learner empowerment, the thirteen design principles allow the players' choices to be the primary driving force behind the experience they are having while able to make decisions throughout the game. Players could also relate real life situation while playing the games and this might help them to solve real life problems. The thirteen principles also emphasized that digital games must be flexible to allow for experimentation and improvisation during playing. Finally, digital games must be able to convey meaningful elements to enhance player's experience after they completed their session.

In their study, Xu et al. (2019) stated that digital games can act as effective learning tools to scaffold purposeful learning. Every good game should possess specific core elements to achieve this objective. When it comes to language learning, they found that the most common gaming element was specific goals (100%), followed by sensory stimuli (95.83%), on-going feedback (89.58%), interactive problem-solving (85.42%), uncertainty (70.83%), control (66.67%), and adaptive challenges (52.08%). This shows that games with specific goals are usually related to effective language learning.

Although our main concern is to promote effective language learning, it is important not to emphasize too much on the 'educational' part. It has been indicated that since many learners automatically assume educational games to be boring, identifying and selecting a suitable commercial game may improve students' motivation to play. As mentioned by Ebrahimzeh & Alavi (2017), the primary goal of a digital game (Mobile & PC) is winning the match rather than learning a language, in this case English. Language does play a secondary role when gamers are to obtain, create, use, or manipulate their items to allow them to win their games. It also comes into play if gamers are to understand their quests or effectively communicate with Non Player Character (NPC) or one another. Thus, learning the language becomes a more subtle goal or objective.

Table 1

Online Game-Based Language Learning Proposed Framework Guideline

Author	Title	Description
Coleman & Money, (2020); Gee (2003)	Gee's thirteen design principles for digital game-based learning	<u>Learner Empowerment</u> • Co-design • Customisation • Player Identity • Manipulation <u>Problem Solving</u> • Ordered problems • Pleasantly frustrating • Cycles of expertise • Information provision • Fish tank learning • Sandbox learning • Skills as strategies <u>Understanding</u> • Systems thinking • Meaning from experience
Shute & Ke (2012)	Seven core of elements of well-designed digital games	Seven Core of elements of well design games • Adaptive Challenges • Control • Uncertainty • Interactive Problem Solving • On-going Feedback • Sensory stimuli • Specific Goals
Ebrahimzeh & Alavi (2017)	Language Learning Motivation (LLM) in digital games	Digital games for language learning must NOT be educational games to avoid 'boring' label by students. Completing the game is primary objective while language learning is secondary objective. Six modes of digital gaming that can enhance students motivation to play and learn;- active, explorative, problem-solving, strategic, social, and creative activities

Table 2

Mapping of Online Game-Based Language Learning Framework Components

Key Components	Description	Supporting Literature
Player Engagement	The type of game to be chosen as part of learning must have Single Player (individual learning) and Multiplayer (Group learning) mode.	Chen & Yang (2013)
Type of Online Games	For every semester, Instructor must choose one or two suitable online games based on the elements and characteristics of the digital-learning games (Gee, 2003). Instructor must avoid 'educational' online games as these types of games are not appealing to students. After deciding on which game to be played, students will be instructed to install the game in their mobile gadget. Example of online games to be considered: - *Last Day on Earth (Adventure & Survival)* - *Clash of Clans (Strategy & Adventure)* - *Player Unknown Battleground (Shooting & Action)*	Coleman & Money (2020)
Completing Quest in the online games	Students must complete some, if not all of the quest and mini quest provided in the game. There is no time limit as when they need to finish the game. This will be their primary motivation to learn English.	Ebrahimzeh & Alavi (2017)
Task related to English Course will be given by instructor as part of learning	Instructor will provide task and quiz based on the setting and context of the online game chosen for the semester. E.g. - *Please write a 500 words summary about the online game (Last Day on Earth);* - *Relate one of the situations in the games with any real life situation. Your writing should not be less than 350 words.* Students are allowed to do their own research to assist them in writing.	Shute & Ke (2012)
Task Assessment	Instructor will assess student's task and assignments based on course' learning objectives. Students performance will be recorded for future references.	Ebrahimzeh & Alavi (2017)

Findings And Discussion

Proposed Framework

The proposed framework consists of a few key components such as Player Engagement, Type of Online Games, Online Game principles for Language Learning, Task given by educator, language learning motivation and task assessment. As shown in Figure 1, the proposed framework is constructed accordingly to the key components discussed in previous chapter.

Figure 1

Proposed Framework for Online game-based Language Learning
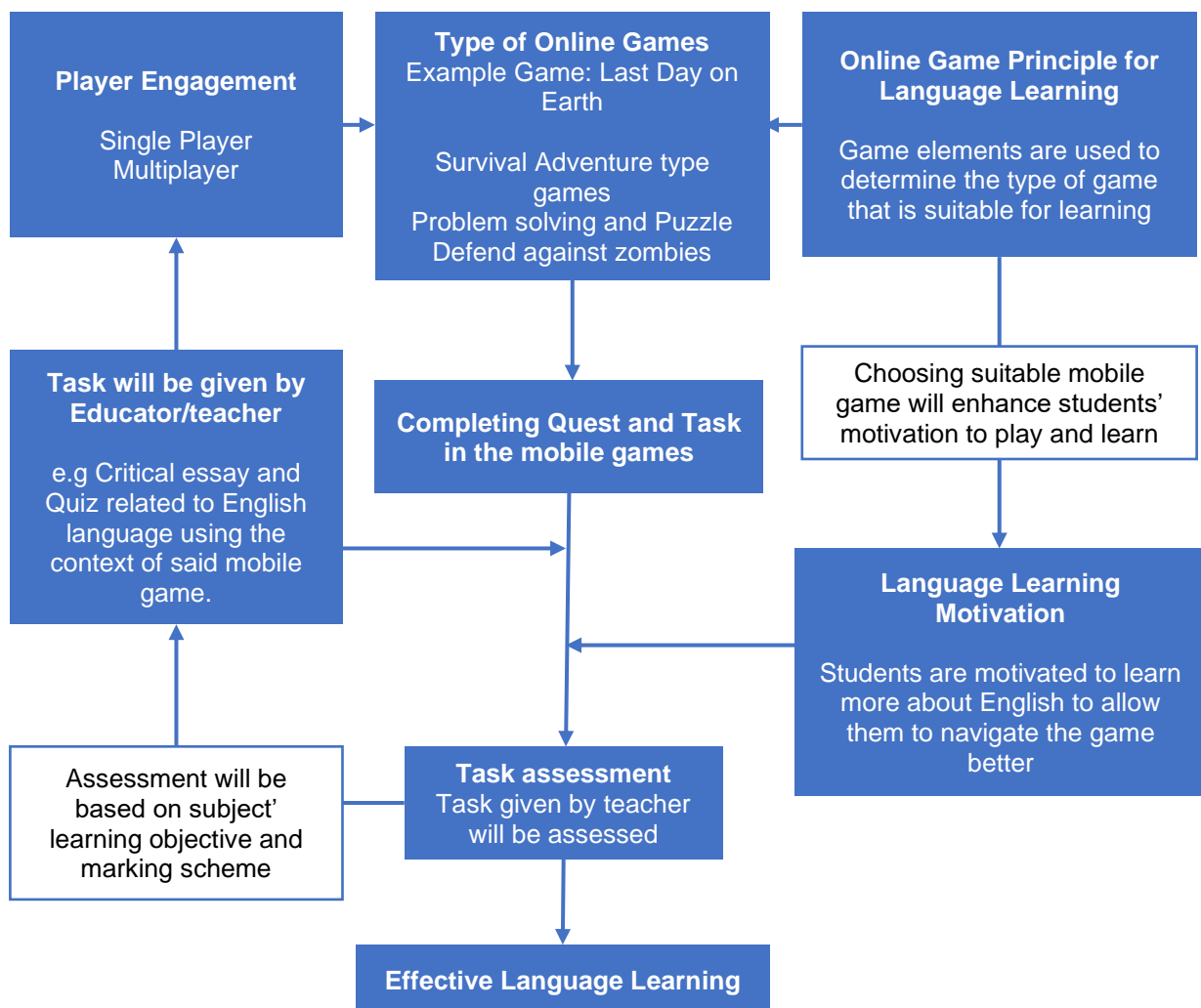
The proposed framework introduces a new way of learning language through combination of online technology and digital interactive entertainment. Using interactive entertainment such as online games is important to improve language learning motivation which could lead to effective learning. This is aligned with the findings from Elaish et al (2019), Azar & Tan (2020) and Yadav & Oyelere (2020).

Proposed Framework Reception

To evaluate the early responses of this new method of learning, a short survey involving 10 tertiary students has been conducted. The survey was conducted using a set of questionnaire related to student's perception towards the new framework. Their responses and perception towards the new framework are recorded using Likert Scale.

Table 3

Student Responses Towards the Proposed Framework

Question	1	2	3	4	5
Do you agree that we should change our way of learning second language?	0	0	1	1	8
Do you support the idea of using mobile games in learning English?	0	1	1	2	6
Do you agree that online gadget is important when it comes to learning language?	0	1	2	1	6
Do you agree that the proposed framework will motivate students to learn more about English?	0	1	2	2	5
Total	0	3	6	6	25

(5-Strongly agree, 4-Agree, 3-Not sure, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree)

From the results shown in Table.3, we can see that most students strongly agreed with the idea of learning language using mobile technology. The early responses also show that students are accepting the idea of having mobile game-based lessons for their English classes. Due to the small number of subjects involved in this survey, an in-depth analysis must be carried out in the near future to test the effectiveness of this proposed framework.

Conclusion

Selecting a suitable online game as a base for language learning is challenging. The elements and the overall design of the game itself have a significant impact towards the player in terms of entertainment and learning. Past research also stated that educator and instructor should not resort to educational games for language learning as the label itself might demotivate students to play it. The main purpose of the proposed framework in this paper is to provide a guideline for educators to integrate online game applications into their lessons to

motivate students in their learning of English. Subsequently, the next step in our future research will be to measure the impact of this framework towards English language acquisition and effective language learning.

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2   Improving Year 6 Pupils' Interest And Ability In English Essay Writing Through Book Creator

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Abstract

Writing is one of the four skills in the English language. In fact, it requires the learners' concentration and effort in order to produce a good piece of writing. The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of the Book Creator application to improve Year 6 students' interest and ability in English essay writing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants of the research consisted of four average Year 6 students who encountered hardships in writing English essays. During the period of Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran dari Rumah (PdPR) or teaching and learning from home, they lost interest in learning to write. As a result, their writing performance started to deteriorate. Therefore, an action research which focused on the integration of the Book Creator application was conducted in order to boost the students' interest and ability in essay writing. The data for this study was collected using the qualitative method, involving reflective journals and semi-structured interviews. Then, the data obtained was analysed using thematic analysis. Findings of the study indicated that the Book Creator application was useful and effective in helping the students to build positive learning behaviours towards writing as well as develop their ability in essay writing. An implication of this study is that Book Creator can be used as an instructional strategy to improve learners' essay writing skills.

Keywords: English essay writing, Book Creator, interest and ability

Introduction

According to Pokhrel & Chhetri (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has created the biggest disruption to education systems in human history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries. In the context of Malaysia, our country implemented a movement control order (MCO) on 18 March 2020 in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) guideline to stem the spread of infections. Consequently, with the implementation of MCO, all physical classes in Malaysian primary and secondary schools were moved online, which also came to be known as *Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran dari Rumah* (*PdPR*) or teaching and learning from home (The Star, 6 Jan. 2021). From a positive viewpoint, the COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity for teachers to introduce digital learning to their students (Dhawan, 2020). However, transitioning from conventional face-to-face learning to online learning can be an entirely different and challenging experience for both educators and learners. As this *PdPR* is new, teachers were facing various problems and obstacles in online teaching.

As a primary school English language teacher, I faced some problems in my *PdPR* sessions as my teaching practices in the writing lessons did not meet the learners' needs. I teach at a small Chinese vernacular primary school located in the northern state of Kedah in Peninsular Malaysia. Since the school is located quite far away from the town area, the students have little exposure to the English language, except during their English lessons. Although the school has a multiracial enrolment of Malays, Chinese and Siamese, all of them would socialise with their teachers and peers using only Mandarin as the language of communication. In fact the Malay and Siamese learners also depended greatly on Mandarin to learn English as their second language. Therefore, in order to overcome the problem, a study was carried out in the setting of this school.

Problem Statement

PDPR which was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the interest and ability of the Year 6 students in English essay writing. In other words, these students showed a decline in both their interest and ability in writing essay. This problem has hindered the learners from achieving a higher level of performance in English.

During the implementation of *PdPR* 2.0, I noticed that the students' interest in writing decreased significantly. They barely gave any response during the writing lesson and became very passive in learning. As a result, only a small number of students managed to hand in their homework through Google classroom. In one instance, as shown in Figure 1, only 2 students handed in their homework in Google Classroom.

Figure 1

Screenshot of Homework Submission in Google Classroom
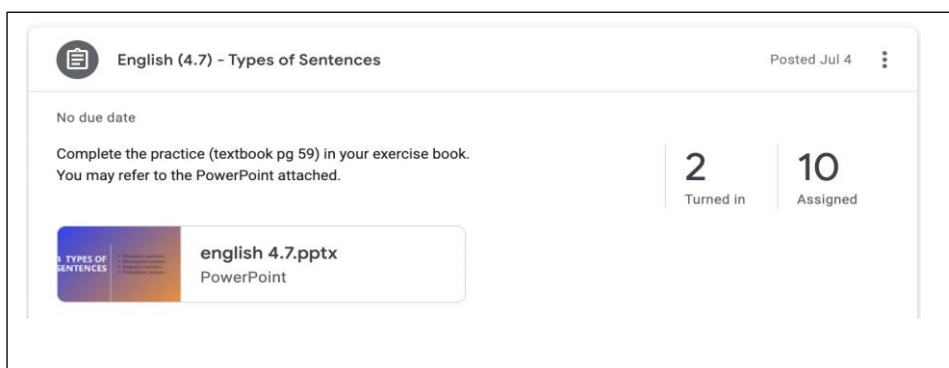
In addition, a preliminary analysis was conducted on the Year 6 learners' May 2021 academic results, focusing on the level of achievement in the English essay writing paper. This writing assessment was conducted on 6 May 2021 to examine the pupils' ability in essay writing. The pupils' performance in the writing test is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

The Pupils' Performance during the Writing Assessment
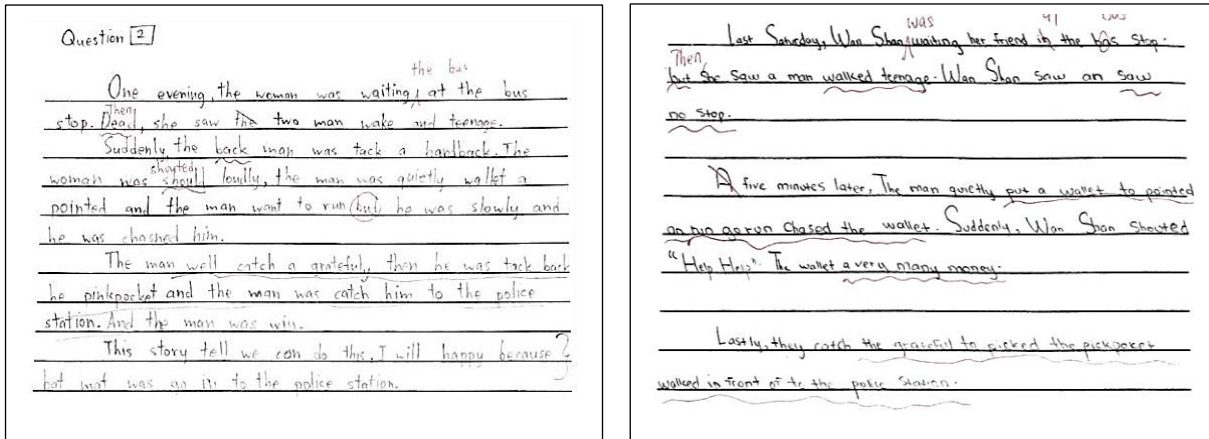
Based on the writing assessment, the students' level of performance in *Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah* (PBD), that is the classroom-based assessment, was identified and shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Bands achieved by the Year 6 Students in English Essay Writing

PBD	TP 1	TP 2	TP 3	TP 4	TP 5	TP 6
No. of pupils	0	3	6	4	1	0

TP = *Tahap Penguasaan* (Achievement Level)

Based on Table 1, four students obtained Level 4 in their essay writing and only one managed to achieve Level 5. This is because the four average students seemed more inclined to lose motivation in essay writing and did not show any distinct improvement during *PdPR*. Therefore, an immediate intervention needed to be planned to overcome the learning problems.

Research Aims and Research Questions

This study aims to enhance the teacher's lesson delivery using a digital application called Book Creator. Furthermore, it also aims to improve Year 6 students' interest and ability in English essay writing using this digital tool.

More specifically, the research questions are as follows:

1. How does the use of virtual teaching aid improve Year 6 pupils' English essay writing?
2. Does their interest and ability in English essay writing increase through Book Creator?

Limitations of the Study

This study has some limitations within which the findings need to be interpreted carefully and may not be completely generalised. First, the scope of the research was only restricted to the practices in my own classroom. Besides, the number of respondents of this study was small, involving only four Year 6 students from my class who had average level of performance in English. Next, time is another constraint in this study as the researcher was required to complete the study within two-month period.

Literature Review

Challenges Faced by Learners in Learning to Write

Writing is an essential skill in our daily lives. Hence, education puts a strong emphasis on writing. According to Drowns et al., (2004), writing not only allows students to demonstrate and share their knowledge, it has been found to be effective in facilitating students' understanding across curricular content areas. Despite the importance of the writing skill, many students still struggle to attain the necessary writing skills to meet their communication needs. According to Can and Altunbas Yavuz (2017), writing is the most challenging skill to learn among the four language skills. Students find it difficult to compose in English because it demands them to apply many cognitive and linguistic strategies of which they are uncertain, including the selection of vocabulary, application of grammatical pattern and also the relevance to subject matter (Maghsoudi & Haririan, 2013). On top of that, student readiness is another challenge in learning writing (Foster, 2015). So, students should be equipped with both physical readiness and mental preparedness in order to complete writing task successfully (Winarso, 2016). Furthermore, lack of motivation is also another challenge faced by students in writing. Dişlen (2013) stated that boring lessons may impact students negatively, causing them to lose motivation in studies and eventually resulting in poor

academic performance. Furthermore, Wright (2011) added that the feeling of being unable to do the given tasks, less confident in learning and having a deficient relationship or communication with teachers also cause students to have low motivation in writing.
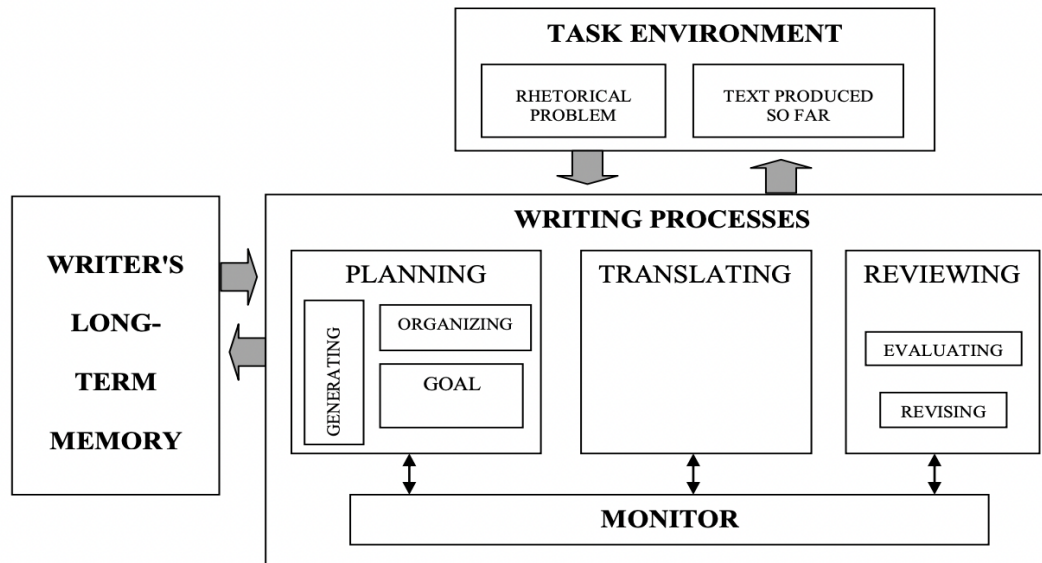
Book Creator as an Innovative Writing Application

Since teaching and learning moved online due to the pandemic in March 2020, the role of digital technology in teaching and engaging learners cannot be denied. In terms of writing, Book Creator is an application which can be used to create digital books on a variety of topics for different writing purposes and proficiency levels. It has several features that provides students with the flexibility to create multimodal books, such as rich text styles, insert of images or photos and audio-visual components. These interesting and interactive features create more opportunities for second language learners to creatively engage their language skill in unique ways (Cowan & Kress, 2018). The features have given learners more options to present and convey their ideas in writing and thus, no student feels hindered in their communication (Cowan & Kress, 2017).

Moreover, Book Creator has video and drawing components that users can integrate into their books. These features give users more ways to represent their ideas and tell their stories and hence, no student feels limited in communicating their meaning (Cowan & Kress, 2017). In short, Book Creator is an app that is able to enhance the teaching of writing by providing opportunities to engage students in active learning.

Cognitive Process Theory of Writing

This study is guided by the Cognitive Process Theory of Writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981). According to the Cognitive Process Theory of Writing, the process of writing is defined as a set of distinctive thinking process which writers organise during the act of composing. It is made up of the three main elements, which are the task environment, learner's long-term memory and the writing processes. The task environment is basically about how the writers understand the rhetorical problem (title, audience, exigency) and the goal that he/she determines based on the rhetorical problem. Next, the writer can retrieve their knowledge on a certain topic from their long-term memory bank to aid their writing. Then, the theory also states that the three processes of planning, translating and reviewing do not take place in a chronological order, they can take place at any time of writing under the help of a monitor. In other words, the writer may constantly be brainstorming, composing and editing throughout the writing process in non-sequential manner. The Cognitive Process Theory of Writing is summarised in the Figure 3.

Figure 3

Cognitive Process Theory of Writing

TASK ENVIRONMENT

RHETORICAL PROBLEM | TEXT PRODUCED SO FAR

WRITING PROCESSES

WRITER'S LONG-TERM MEMORY

PLANNING | TRANSLATING | REVIEWING

GENERATING | ORGANIZING | GOAL | EVALUATING | REVISING

MONITOR

Research Methodology

Upon reflection of the teaching and learning process, I decided to conduct an action research using the spiral model proposed by Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988), which consisted of four steps namely planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The research framework of Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Spiral Model by Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988)

REFLECT | PLAN
ACT & OBSERVE
REVISED PLAN
REFLECT
ACT & OBSERVE
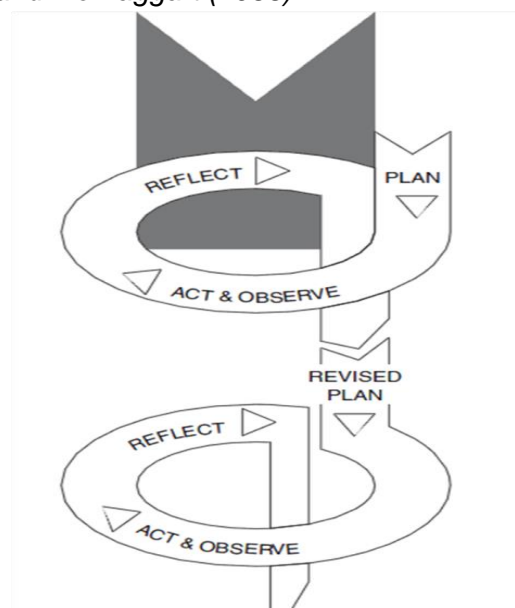
Research Participants

The research participants comprise four average Year 6 learners in my class who showed little interest in writing English essays. They rarely responded during online lessons and thought that essay writing was very boring and difficult. In terms of ability, these four pupils obtained *Tahap Penguasaan 4* (TP4) which indicated an average performance for their English writing assessment in May. Moreover, their performance started to decline during *PdPR* 2.0 and this required immediate action from me as the teacher researcher.

Research Design

This study adopted the action research spiral model by Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988). Hence it was conducted based on the following steps: observation (issue), reflection, planning, action, re-observation and final reflection. This model also involved several cycles. In the first cycle, I observed the issues that occurred in my online classroom and identified two problems : the decline in the students' interest towards essay writing as well as the deterioration in their essay writing performance during *PdPR*. After that I conducted self-reflection to identify the causes of the issues. Next, based on the self-reflection, I planned the action to be taken to improve the pupils' interest and ability in English essay writing by using the Book Creator application as an intervention. The indicators of the intervention success would be determined by the positive change in pupils' learning behaviours and their achievement in the level of performance by obtaining at least TP 5 in their writing. Next, I started to implement the action or intervention with my students. The data was gathered on the impact of Book Creator on the students using a teacher reflective journal and semi-structured interviews to determine whether the objectives were achieved or not. After ensuring that the objectives were achieved, the next step was to report the findings. If the objectives were not achieved, the researcher would follow move into in the second and subsequent cycles if necessary.

Research Procedure

Before introducing the Book Creator application to the students, I ensured that those selected have a desktop computer or laptop at home since the application only supports computer setting. Among the four of them, only two students have computer facilities at home. Therefore, I divided them into two groups by pairing up a student with a computer to another without a device.

These are the steps that were implemented during the intervention.

Step 1: Introduction of Book Creator

A Google Meet was conducted with the all the pupils selected on 13 May 2021 to introduce them to this application. The intervention was carried out via Google meet after the class-hour as it only involved four of them from the class.

Firstly, I introduced the features of Book Creator via Google Meet to my students so that they were able to use them in their virtual writing. There are some simple yet interesting features in the Book Creator application, like inserting layout, shapes, images, types of text and so on. The students tried out these features and familiarised themselves with the settings before starting on assigned writing activities using the application.

Step 2: Assigning essay title and providing writing guidance

Then, I assigned the students the title for their Book Creator project, which is "A Trip To Cameron Highlands". A writing guideline was provided to help them with better idea expansion and ensure these learners were able to produce narrative writing logically. The writing guideline is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Writing Guidelines Provided to the Students
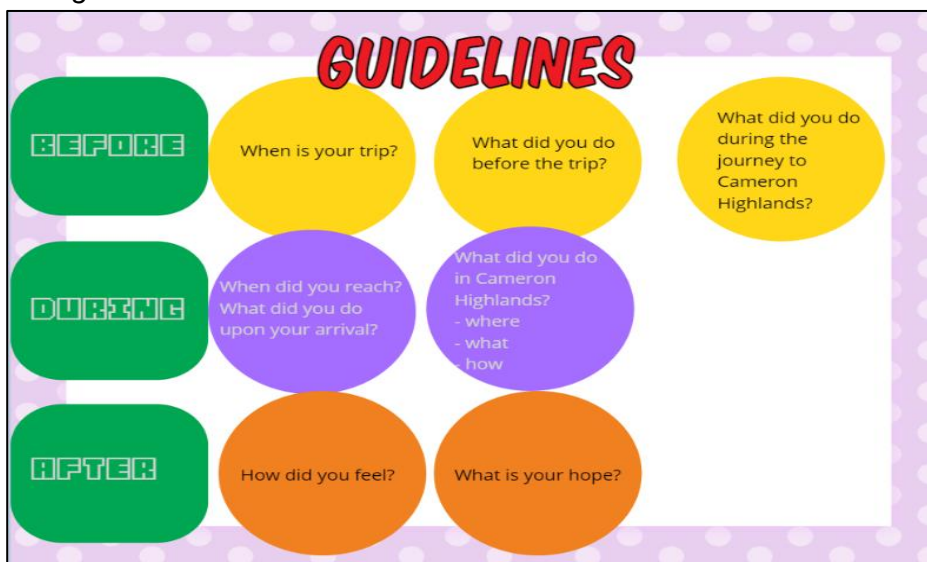
The students were given the freedom to distribute tasks among themselves. Those without a computer could aid their partners in constructing the essay outline. Communication

between learners happened indirectly as they were required to discuss the design, content and media to be inserted in the book.

Step 3: Working on Book Creator

After that, the students were given two weeks, which was from 13 May to 27 May to work on their book project. Meanwhile, they were welcome to reach out to me for assistance if they encountered any problem(s) in the writing process through WhatsApp.

Step 4: Edit and Review

After two weeks, I reviewed the Book Creator product together with the students to do some final editing. The learners were required to amend and edit their work through Google Meet.

Step 5: Publication of Books

The students published and shared their books on Book Creator. Figure 6 shows screenshots of the learners' collaborative writing products. These e-books can also be accessed at https://bit.ly/3GWqE5n (Group 1) and https://bit.ly/3sRXL5w (Group 2).

Figure 6

Student Collaborative Writing Products in Book Creator

Group 1

Group 2

Findings

This section presents the findings of the study according to the research questions.

Research Question 1: How does the use of Book Creator improve Year 6 students' English essay writing?

With the implementation of Book Creator, it helped the teacher to transform her teacher-centred classroom to a student-centred one. The students became active learners in the writing process by diligently seeking the teacher's feedback regarding their writing. The teacher facilitated their learning by providing relevant feedback on their writing. This practice emphasised the teacher's role as the facilitator to guide and aid the learners to achieve the lesson objectives by planning suitable teaching strategies. In this context, Book Creator was a beneficial virtual teaching aid that helped to maximise student learning as they were required to be decision-makers and content planners in order to produce the writing.

Besides, the teacher was able to provide immediate feedback to the students' writing through Book Creator. Based on the interview, student P1 stated that "when teacher discusses the grammar mistake with us, I learn a lot from there." Thus, the interaction between the teacher and learners was useful and effective to help them to complete the writing task. In Book Creator, the teacher can work simultaneously with the students to correct their writing and provide relevant feedback to them. This was important because delayed feedback is less helpful and may eventually impede the students' improvement and dampen their motivation to learn.

Research Question 2: Does their interest and ability in English essay writing increase through Book Creator?

Based on the reflective journal. the use of Book Creator as a virtual teaching aid helped to improve the learners' interest in essay writing. They informed the teacher that this was their first time doing virtual writing and they could not wait to find out more. Besides, their attention was hooked when they saw the features in Book Creator. Their attention span became longer and the entire Google Meet was filled with question-and-answer on the Book Creator. Moreover, their excitement was shown on their facial expressions. Their faces showed excitement and they were in awe of the features they could use to produce their writing via Book Creator. This showed that the students' interest in writing was aroused by the Book Creator application.

Furthermore, based on the thematic analysis of the interview, students P1 and P4 both agreed that Book Creator is a fun and interesting tool and it is not as stressful as the conventional way of writing an essay. On top of that, the various features in Book Creator also

increased the students' motivation in essay writing. P2 stated that he liked Book Creator because he could choose the pictures based on his preference to express his ideas. Whereas P4 also said that the process of using Book Creator to write an essay made him felt like a real author as he had the opportunity to design the book and plan the flow of the story himself.

Moreover, the students' ability in essay writing also improved with the use of Book Creator. The comparison between their level of writing performance before and after the intervention is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Students' Performance Level in Writing Before and After the Intervention

Before Intervention		After Intervention	
P1	TP 4	P1	TP 5
P2	TP 4	P2	TP 5
P3	TP 4	P3	TP 5
P4	TP 4	P4	TP 5

*P = Pupil

TP = Tahap Penguasaan

All the four students managed to show improvement in their level of performance from TP 4 to TP 5 after the intervention. These learners may have the potential to achieve TP 6 (the highest achievement) if the time frame is extended. Based on Figure 6, the students successfully achieved TP 5 by showing the following characteristics in their writing:

- Ideas are well developed and well organized with supporting details
- Language is accurate with some grammar and spelling mistakes
- Vocabulary chosen is suitable and precise
- Interest is aroused and sustained
- Produce writing with minimal support from the teacher

Discussion

During *PdPR* or online teaching from home, the implementation of interactive activity was quite challenging. In my context, the students are demotivated easily because they are not fully engaged in the learning process. However, with the use of Book Creator, it transformed my teaching from a teacher-centred lesson to a student-centred lesson. During the process of writing, the learners became active participants in the learning process by interacting with the content, each other and their teacher. They were involved actively in conversations and decisions related to their learning (Venable, 2012). With the given essay

title, which is "A Trip To Cameron Highlands", the students explored, brainstormed and planned the content by themselves. The interaction with the content aided them to be active learners and helped them to experience the different stages in writing.

Moreover, Book Creator also provided the students with the flexibility and autonomy to complete their writing tasks. They were given the freedom to work on their writing whenever they were free. They decided on their own content and learned to solve the problems in writing by themselves. This finding concurs with Dhawan (2020) who stated that online learning provided advantages in independent learning and developing new skills in the process leading to life-long learning.

Furthermore, the teacher's initiative to explore and employ Book Creator during *PdPR* also helped the students to boost their motivation and thus improved their performance in writing. In fact, Ahmadi (2018) stated that the effective use of new technologies improved learners' language learning. Hence, teachers as the front-liners in education need to master digital literacy by having the ability of using ICT to find, create, and communicate (Hafifah, 2020).

In addition, Book Creator also enabled the teacher to provide immediate feedback to the students on their performance. Instant feedback allowed these novice writers to gain better insight and motivation to complete their task. Correspondingly, Barse (2015) mentioned that close relations and excellent communication between teachers and students increased students' motivation. Hence, teachers who can motivate students were those who were most likely to carry out successful learning activities in the classroom (Rosanti, 2017).

Initially, the students showed little or no interest in essay writing because they thought that it was very difficult and the process of learning to write was boring. However, based on the thematic analysis of the reflective journals, these students showed a big change in their learning behaviours and thus gained a positive impression towards writing after experiencing the Book Creator application. They showed interest in the writing process and worked diligently on the task. The students' behaviours towards learning changed through the implementation of Book Creator as they regularly sought suggestions and feedback on their writing. According to Filgona et al., (2020), students' motivation in the learning process can be seen from their behaviour in learning. Hence, the positive changes that happened on my pupils showed that their motivation and interest to learn writing increased after the implementation of Book Creator.

Besides, the students were curious about Book Creator because they had never experienced this in their previous lessons. According to Oudeyer et al., (2016), curiosity is a form of intrinsic motivation that is key in fostering active learning and spontaneous exploration.

This statement supports my findings as the I could see that the students became more active and keener in learning with the use of Book Creator as it was different from the conventional way of writing. The Book Creator was new to the students and thus they were curious to find out more about it. They were delighted and excited to ask questions during the intervention process because they wanted to try their best to produce a piece of good writing. This indicated that the learners were highly motivated and had keen interest in essay writing using the Book Creator application.

Furthermore, Book Creator also increased the students' interest in writing to a higher degree through its customisation features. They were given freedom to design their books, including customizing of book cover, selection of pictures and fonts and decision on the flow of story. They enjoyed the feeling of being fully in-charge of the process of creating their e-book, including designing their own book cover and planning the flow of the story, just like what an author does. This finding is supported by Stornaiuolo et al., (2009) who stated that multimodality helped students become keenly aware of audiences (readers) and encouraged them to choose the most effective tools to convey their thoughts. When the students were given the opportunity to be in-charge of their own writing in Book Creator, the task became more meaningful and relevant to them. This concurs with the research by Frey and Fisher (2010) who stated that the role of autonomy in learning was important as learners were motivated when they had a voice in decisions and choices.

Through Book Creator, the students' ability in essay writing had also improved. Previously, they were not able to elaborate on the notes given. They possessed low level of confidence in writing because they could not understand the vocabulary given in the note-expansion format. However, Book Creator has helped these learners to overcome the problem effectively. While using Book Creator, the flow of the story was not fixed and thus they had the opportunity to draft, plan and elaborate on the story based on their own creativity. They could expand their ideas freely using their own personal experience, making the work more related to their real-life context. This finding concurs with the study of Adami (2016) who found that writing applications which supported meaning-making empowered students to become better writers and meaning makers. Therefore, Book Creator is an application that encouraged meaningful language production in the target language.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicated that teachers' initiative to explore and apply online interactive teaching resources plays a significant role to arouse students' interest and improve their ability in English essay writing during online teaching. This action will help to accelerate

the process of achieving the goal of creating an innovative self-sustaining system and taking achievements to greater heights in the third wave of Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025. Hence, teachers should constantly find interventions and implement modifications to their instructional strategies to tailor their teaching to meet the students' needs in teaching the writing skill. Besides average learners, the Book Creator application can also be implemented with weaker learners who achieved TP 1 or TP 2 to evaluate its effectiveness with different participants. Instead of writing sentences, weaker learners can use this application to practise writing words or phrases. Furthermore, it is also more ideal to carry out the research for more than one cycle to ensure more reliable data.

In conclusion, engaging and student-centred lessons would help students to develop 21st century skills such as critical and creative thinking, as well as encourage holistic, well-rounded personal growth.

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3   Promoting Students' Speaking Fluency and Social Collaboration through *Toontastic 3D*

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Abstract

This research was conducted to show how *Toontastic 3D* promotes fluency in speaking as well as to bind the students in a strong social collaboration among primary school students. *Toontastic 3D* is a game which can be incorporated in the language classroom for pleasure and language learning purposes controlled by the teacher. According to Google (2015), with *Toontastic 3D,* children can draw, animate and narrate their own adventures, new stories, school reports and anything else they might dream of. It is like a digital puppet theatre but with enormous interactive 3D worlds, dozens of customable characters, 3D drawing tools and an idea lab with sample stories to inspire new creations. The study addressed two research questions – the effect of *Toontastic 3D* on students' speaking fluency and the effect of *Toontastic 3D* on students' social collaboration. The data for the research was obtained through qualitative research methods, namely classroom observations, survey and interviews with five students.

Keywords : Toontastic 3D, speaking, fluency, collaboration

Introduction

Being capable of using the English language for effective communication in real life situations locally and globally has become the prime purpose for learning English as a foreign language. As English is a skill-based subject, effective communication depends on one's level of competency in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The major scenario that is affecting our contemporary education society is that learning today has changed and its process somehow differs from that in the past where the main focus of education used to be on the acquisition of the basic skills as well as content knowledge ranging from reading, writing, calculating, history and science. Instead, what accounts for a success in learning or education today is the ability to use high order skills including the ability to think through, to solve complex problems, and to interact critically through language (Stirling, 2013). Teachers need to be creative to bring the elements of fun learning into the classroom in order for the students to learn as they want.

Problem Statement

As stated in the introduction, the world literacy level is on the rise but we can always argue on the speaking ability of English Language users in Malaysia. Realizing the importance of the language in Malaysia, the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MoE) has continued with the policy of Strengthening Command of English as stated in the Malaysian Education Development Plan or *Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia* (PPPM) 2013-2025.

As students move beyond the primary grades and continue to struggle in speaking development, their lack of word recognition does not receive the focus of many current mandated literacy programs adopted by schools. The amount of unfamiliar vocabulary contained in many of the text selections as in Year Four *Superminds* textbook leaves many students struggling. As they progress up the grade levels, this becomes a barrier to a successful comprehension and continued gains in reading (Baumann, 2009).

This is the scenario that is faced by this particular group of students. The students are exposed to many English language programmes initiated by various panels of the school including English Language panel but to have them speak fluently and be engaged in meaningful communication are the main obstacles faced by teachers.

Speaking activities require students to speak, yet when the researcher did the observation during his routine coaching and mentoring sessions in schools, he found they did not speak much in English. When the teacher asked them to respond in English, they kept silent. Some did not know what to say, even in very simple sentences. They spoke with many grammatical and pronunciation mistakes. They lacked vocabulary as well. They frequently code-switched to Tamil to overcome their inadequate vocabulary in communication.

As a School Improvement Specialist Coach (SISC+), the researcher observed that the teacher did not provide the students with engaging activities. The activities for speaking were very monotonous and boring. Role playing was the only speaking activity done throughout the speaking class. The students only needed to memorize the dialogues that the teacher gave, and then they practised the dialogues with their partners and at times they had to act the dialogues. It was very obvious that the activities conducted during teaching and learning process for speaking were not engaging.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent *Toontastic 3D* affects speaking fluency and communication levels of Year Four students. This research also sought to discover to what extent participating in *Toontastic 3D* activities affects pupil engagement in speaking. This research is developed under two research objectives. They are :

i. to investigate the effects of *Toontastic 3D* on students' speaking fluency.
ii. to identify the effects of *Toontastic 3D* on students' social collaboration.

Research Questions

This research aims to investigate how *Toontastic 3D* affects students speaking development, accuracy and motivation. The study addresses the following research questions :

i. What are the effects of *Toontastic 3D* on students' reading fluency?
ii. How does *Toontastic 3D* affect the students' social collaboration?

Rationale of the Study

This research was conducted to find ways and methods to generate interest in speaking amongst the selected students where speaking is done not just for the sake of speaking but with fluency and engagement with the others and bring meaning to their speaking. By introducing *Toontastic 3D*, the researcher hoped to see that the students being more fluent in their speaking and engaged in communication with their peers.

Toontastic 3D is a game which can be employed not only for pleasure but also with a purpose controlled by the teacher. According to Sam & Hashim (2022), with *Toontastic 3D,* children can draw, animate and narrate their own adventures, new stories, school reports and anything else they might dream of. They only need to move characters around on the screen and tell their story. It is like a digital puppet theatre but with enormous interactive 3D worlds, dozens of customable characters, 3D drawing tools and an idea lab with sample stories to inspire new creations.

Toontastic 3D provides pre-sets for children to choose from but affords a level of freedom too. First, they pick how many acts they want their story to have and choose from three pre-determined story arcs. Then, they choose from one of eight pre-drawn scenes or create their own with drawing tools. Finally, they select (or draw) characters and animate them by moving them around and recording voiceovers with a microphone.

Limitations of the Study

The research has some limitations that should be acknowledged. The first was the time factor. The research was conducted within a short time frame where observation, questionnaire and interviews were conducted in one class whereas there were three classes of Year Four. Therefore, to generalize the results, more participants should have been involved among the Year Four students. Secondly, the respondents' responses to the semi-structured interviews might be another limitation due to the possibility that participants might have responded to the questions to please the interviewer.

Another limitation of this study was the presence of the researcher during classroom observations could have triggered the teacher and even the children to behave differently from what they would do in their regular day-to-day activities. Finally, the students' conversations in the audio-recordered interview sessions, were sometimes not as clear as they should have been. A probable solution might be to use two audio-recorders or a video recording.

However, despite the fact that this research was on a small scale, it was still believed that the observational data collected and interviews with the five students in the classroom provided enough information and data to answer the research questions addressed in the research.

Definition of Terms

Speaking Fluency

Fluency demonstrates the correct uses of natural hesitations, breaks, and fillers. However, Buitrago (2017) clarified that fluency is not an absolutely accurate use of the language and no existences of hesitations but it is considered as fluency when audiences can follow the flow of speakers' messages and ideas. Additionally, Segalowitz (2010) stated that oral fluency is an intricate intellectual competence requiring speakers to apply nine linguistic comprehension skills in cognitively flowing ways. Besides that, Buitrago (2017) stated that fluency is native-like uses of language in oral communication consisting of the acceptable application of language features such as pauses, interjections, intonations, stress and so on.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is a process where students with various abilities, gender, nationalities, and different level of social skills carry out their learning process by working in

small groups and helping each other (Bolukbas et al. 2011). It is well known that collaborative learning is a pedagogical use of small groups which enables students to maximize both their own and others' learning. As a learner-centred method, collaborative learning is a teaching method where in order to achieve a common objective, each learner study by helping one another in small groups in their learning process.

Significance of the Study

A prime significance of this research is to explore and provide realistic evidence whether *Toontastic 3D* can play a role in fostering students' speaking skill for communication as well as to be fluent. Another importance of this research is there is no research carried out validating *Toontastic 3D* as a performance genre with educational benefits and its effectiveness as an instructional tool to influence speaking development in primary school children especially in Malaysia.

The results of this study can contribute to the body of research attempting to understand the effects of *Toontastic 3D* on students' fluency and engagement towards English Language. *Toontastic 3D* may promote and multiply the ways students respond to speaking and exercise creative processes. By knowing this, primary schools may want to consider using *Toontastic 3D* in Bahasa Melayu classes or other subjects. . As far as the researcher knows, no one has conducted this kind of research in Tamil Vernacular schools before.

Research Methodology

As a whole, this research was a qualitative research which is very helpful when it comes to examining people's views and activities (Flick, 2014). This research examined the use of *Toontastic 3D* to promote speaking fluency and collaboration among Year Four primary school children. Specific research instruments used were observations, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. All these methods enable the researcher to find out issues from the view of the study participants, and understand the meanings and interpretations given to behaviour, events and objects under investigation.

According to Dörnyei (2007), qualitative research is related to data collection procedures that give open-ended and non-numerical data, which usually includes non-statistical data analysis. Qualitative research seeks to answer questions such as 'why' and 'how' and usually aims to study how people's behaviour is shaped by the social, cultural, economic or physical context in which they live (Hennick et al. 2011).

The researcher has a briefing session with the English language teacher prior to this research on how to use Toontastic 3D in the speaking lessons. As the lessons were taking place, the researcher was an active observer taking down field notes.

Sample

This research was carried out in a Tamil vernacular school in a sub-urban area in Kedah. There were twelve classes in the school with every level has two classes each. The targeted class was a Year Four class with 37 students with 16 males and 21 females. The students in the class are of mixed abilities. The researcher who is a School Improvement Specialist Coach (SISC+) was coaching the English Language teacher who was teaching that class. In one of his coaching and mentoring sessions with her, the idea of *Toontastic 3D* was mooted and the teacher welcomed the idea and was very positive to implement it in her reading lessons. Therefore, the sampling strategy that was used was convenience sampling (Dörnyei 2007) with willing participants.

Qualitative Data Collection

Observations, interviews and questionnaires were the tools to collect data for this qualitative research. The observation method was the most suitable for this study involving Year Four primary school children in order to see how they behaved in natural situations. Writing field notes was the main data collection method used during observations. The interviews and survey questionnaires were the other data collection methods used.

i. Observations

Dörnyei (2007) argues that in qualitative research, observations enable researchers to see naturally and in a direct way what people do without depending only on what they say and claim they do. Observational data can give a researcher a first-hand and objective account of events and behaviours of people. In this research of Year Four children, observations were valuable, especially of young participants with emerging verbal skills and in providing a detailed description of the context and setting of the targeted phenomenon (Dörnyei 2007).

In this study, the lesson observations took place for 5 days and lasted for a period of 4 weeks, with each observation lasting an hour. The researcher observed the teaching and learning processes from different angles of the classroom. The participation of the students in the speaking activities was the core focus of the observation beside the socialization of the students among the members of their groups.

ii. **Interviews**

As part of data collection, semi-scripted interviews were conducted with five students, one boy and four girls, in the classroom. They were selected on a voluntary bases. The date and time of the interviews were discussed and agreed upon in advance with the English teacher so as not to disturb her lesson preparation.

The semi-structured interview format was chosen to collect data because it offers the interviewer a list of useful probes, which encourages the interviewee to give more details or clarification of an original response (Dörnyei 2007). The present research therefore used an interview guide as a framework in order to elicit useful responses from the interviewees and at the same time provided direction for relevant areas to be covered.

The questions were straight forward and simple as the interviewees were ten year olds. All the questions offer useful probes and were also open-ended. The five students were asked the same questions but were asked different follow-up questions on the basis of the responses given.

iii. **Survey Questionnaire**

The survey questionnaire was designed to be relevant and quick to answer as the respondents were ten year old students. It had two sections: Section 1 on demography and Section 2 on the learners' responses to the use of *Toontastic 3D.* There were seven fairly simple questions to make it easy for the students to answer. Every question had four options using the Likert Scale – (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree, and (4) Strongly Agree.

Prior to conducting the survey, the researcher asked the headmaster for permission to conduct the survey. There were 37 respondents with 21 females and 16 males. The number of the respondents may be considered too few to give generalisable results. However, the researcher did not make any selection, but involved all the students in that class. The researcher believed that that the respondents gave a representative sample of how speaking and *Toontastic 3D* were focused upon involving all the students in the class. The researcher used a sample of convenience.

Procedure for implementation of Toontastic 3D

The use of this digital application, Toontastic 3D occured in a series of five speaking lessons based on the story "Little Red Riding Hood". Although the first three lessons did not

involve the students directly using Toontastic 3D, they were necessary as scaffolding before the students could use Toontastic more effectively.

Day 1 - Shared Reading Aloud

During this hour of speaking, the class was introduced to a new story entitled, 'Little Red Riding Hood'. Afer some brief prediction and vocabulary activities, the teacher modelled expressive reading in order to demonstrate what accuracy, automaticity, and prosody should sound like while the students followed along by reading their texts. In this way, the students were exposed to reading with correct intonation and fluency. After this initial read, students were asked to respond to the story using own words in order to let them speak. The teacher created a scenario from the story and prompted the students to respond in groups.

Day 2 – Three Questions

The lesson was conducted in pairs. The teacher assigned each pupil to ask 3 questions on the story they read in the previous lesson to his or her partner. The partner asked 3 questions to him or her after answering all the questions asked. Once the pair had finished, they could go and find other partners. This went on until every pair had done the question and answer.

Day 3 – Hot Seat

The teacher appointed a few students to be the characters from the story. These characters were seated in four corners of the classroom. The class was divided into four groups. The groups then went to the characters and asked questions on anything but related to the story.

Day 4 – *Toontastic 3D* hands-on

During this session, the students were given the instructions to work in groups to create an animated movie on the story they read on Day One. The teacher kept reminding them to work closely with every member in the group for greater achievement. The students wrote their own script and started rehearsing their lines before recording them on Toontastic 3D. Their ultimate goal was to produce a good animated movie. The teacher got six mobile phones from her colleagues for this project to be loaned to each group.

Day 5 – Performance

The groups sent their 'masterpiece' to their teacher via telegram. The teacher then gathered all the presentations and projected them one by one on a large LCD screen. After each presentation, the teacher asked the students to give feedback to encourage them to

speak loudly. The teacher allocated only ten minutes for each group to present. After each presentation, the students commented on their own presentations and also gave feedback to others.

Findings

This section describes the findings as a result of data analysis according to the data collection methods - observation, survey and interview.

Observation

Analysis of the observation notes showed that the scaffolding that the teacher provided in modelling correct prosody and intonation and helping the students understand the story better before they worked collaboratively on Toontastic was necessary to the development of the learners' speaking skill. Shyness and lack of confidence can be a deterrent to speaking. During the Hot Seat activity in Day 3, the students were able to respond well in English and there was some kind of motivation and boldness among the children because they could demonstrate comprehension of the story.

By the time the Toontastic hands-on day arrived, every pupil was very engrossed with the assignment and tried doing their best. There were healthy arguments and supporting words in every group. The students were closely knitted to achieve their ultimate goal that is to produce a good animated movie. The strong collaborative efforts were seen to continue to the final Performance day when the students were engrossed trying to make amendments before they sent their 'masterpiece' to their teacher via telegram. The excitement was seen in the expression on their faces and voices as they commented on each group's presentation and responded to questions. Throughout the performance, the researcher was able to see the confidence level of speaking among the students was good and they had improved their speaking fluency tremendously. During the performance, the students were able to detect their own mistakes in pronunciation as well as in voice projection. Once they were able to detect their mistakes, they were able to rectify on the spot and it was a great achievement for the students and the teacher.

Survey

This sub-section describes the findings from analysis of data collected in the survey. A total of 37 students, 16 males and 21 females, answered the questionnaire. The students are of Indian origin and speakers of the Tamil language.

The second section of the survey was to answer questions on students' interest for speaking and to determine the social bond and collaboration among them during the Readers' Theatre. Table 1 below shows the results of this section where students were asked to respond using a Likert Scale where 1) is Strongly Disagree, 2) Disagree, 3) Agree, and 4) Strongly Agree.

Table 1

Students' attraction for speaking and social collaboration

Questions	N	Mean
1. The English Language lesson was more interesting when we use *Toontastic 3D* to act out the script.	37	3.54
2. Acting out the script is a good way of learning spoken English.	37	3.68
3. I will feel more confident about spoken English through this lesson.	37	3.62
4. I am confident of using English language through *Toontastic 3D*.	37	3.76
5. I enjoyed working with my friends in speaking and performing the script.	37	3.76
6. It is great to be in groups.	37	3.73
7. After watching my friends perform, I want to improve my speaking skill.	37	3.89

The results for each question is expressed in mean. The survey was designed to determine if the students preferred *Toontastic 3D* as an aid to learn speaking and how they felt working with their peers while carrying out the activities on speaking. It is very clear that the majority of students enjoy speaking through *Toontastic 3D*. Questions 1 to 4 were on learning speaking through *Toontastic 3D* and the mean score is between 3.54 and 3.76 for each question. This is the result of every pupil answered that they agreed or strongly agreed to all the four questions posed in the questionnaire.

Meanwhile, questions 5 to 7 were on social aspect of working in collaboration where every pupil answered that they agreed or strongly agreed to all the three questions bringing to the mean score in between 3.76 and 3.89. These results show an overwhelming agreement with these positive statements regarding the experience of speaking and spending free time speaking for pleasure.

These results show an agreement with these positive statements regarding the help of *Toontastic 3D* in helping the students to speak fluently and the experience of working in a team to bring the best out of themselves.

Interviews

Analysis of the interview data showed that the students were very happy to do *Toontastic 3D* as a tool to improve their speaking. All of them agreed that their English Language teacher was the main factor that attracted them to love the subject especially speaking. The following are some extracts of the students' answers to questions asked pertaining to *Toontastic 3D* and social collaboration:

QUESTIONS 1 & 2 : **Do you like English lessons and why?**
Student 1   : The way the teacher teaches is fun.
Student 2   : Yes, I do. English is a fun subject. The way we learn is fun.
Student 3   : Yes, because the teacher teaches in a fun way.
Student 4   : Yes. My teacher teachers very well and she teaches us happily.
Student 5   : It is fun. I'm happy when the teacher teaches very well.

QUESTION 3 : **How do you feel when you speak aloud in class?**
Student 1   : I feel happy because teacher asks others to follow after me.
Student 2   : I feel very happy but scared to make mistakes.
Student 3   : Shy.
Student 4   : Scared and shy. Shy because I'm scared my throat will break.
Student 5   : Feel very happy. Not scared at all. My friends help me.

QUESTIONS 4 & 5 : **Do you like *Toontastic 3D*? Why?**
Student 1   : Yes because it is fun. I can try to speak many times if I make mistakes.
Student 2   : That is very fun. So many people act out the story.
Student 3   : Yes. It is joyful to act and speak with my friends.
Student 4   : Yes… I can speak aloud and act with my friends. I can learn new words.
Student 5   : Yes because I like it. I can act like how the characters in the story behave. If it is angry, I can speak angrily. If it is sad, I speak sadly.

QUESTIONS 6 & 7   : **Do you like to be in groups with friends? Why?**
Student 1   : It makes me happy to be with my friends. They can help me.
Student 2   : I can have some fun time with them. Everybody is listening to me.
Student 3   : We learn together. We can help everyone. All listen. I can speak better.
Student 4   : I enjoy myself with my friends. I speak and my friends listen. I speak better.
Student 5   : I can discuss with my friends. I am happy when my friends listen to me.

From the perspective of the selected ten year olds, the English lessons were fun especially with a very nice teacher who turned the classroom into a fun-filled and non-threatening environment. All the five students acknowledged that they love reading as it was a way for them to be happy.

The researcher discovered that the students were very keen in speaking aloud after *Toontastic 3D* was introduced. They seemed to practise a lot in order to get their speaking as correct and as accurate as possible. They had help from the members of their groups. They were not shy to make mistakes or even the repeated mistakes anymore. All the members in the groups were accommodating each other well as to achieve the ultimate goal that is to produce a good performance of *Toontastic 3D*.

It is a clear indication that social collaboration and interaction affected students' speaking and they tried their best to speak better when cooperating with others. The respondents agreed that they tried to read better if everyone in their own groups listened to their reading. The students also agreed that when they shared ideas and discussed with their peers, they read better.

Discussion of Findings

This mini research was conducted is to examine how *Toontastic 3D* promotes fluency in speaking as well as to bind the students in a strong social collaboration.

Toontastic 3D promotes speaking in the Year Four English classroom

The first research question concerns the effects of *Toontastic 3D* on students' speaking fluency that took place in the Year Four classroom, which was investigated through observing the classroom activities, questionnaires and through interviewing five students. The findings of the study indicated that the students had a high interest in active-role activities where they speak out the scripts assigned to them with real understanding and feelings. This supports Knifsend (2018) view that learning relates not just to an individual but also to the situation,

activity and participants. In other words, learning is most effective when learners are actively involved.

From the findings, it was determined that *Toontastic 3D* did a good job to explore and enhance the speaking aloud strategy and eventually the improvement of the speaking with understanding of a pupil. Analysis of observation data showed each pupil spoke better when the teacher listened to his or her speaking. When students had a positive attitude towards the teacher, the results were positive too. As the findings pointed out, the teacher was the main source of inspiration to focus on the improvement of students' speaking skills.

Toontastic 3D and Social Collaboration

Toontastic 3D became a tool for social collaboration among the students. The researcher was able to see that there was a strong involvement in the speaking activity using *Toontastic 3D* in groups. The students were excitedly involved in reading and speaking of the scripts. They were directly involved in learning, paying attention, asking questions, persistence in effort and always having the support of their group members to motivate and sustain their interest.

There were many positive observations made while students worked in co-operative groups. Students got along very well listening to each other, using right gestures and asking questions in a polite way. Each member had a role to play for each lesson. Everyone was supportive of each other in completing the assigned tasks. Everyone was accountable for his or her own actions. Problems faced in the groups were often settled in the group except that needed the intervention of the teacher. Students were exposed to leadership characteristics and everyone was able to contribute towards the success of their reading using *Toontastic 3D*. There was no 'passenger' or 'sleeping partners' throughout the research period. Everyone wanted to contribute in one way of another regardless of his or her fluency in English language.

Implications and Recommendations

One implication of this research is that these students' literacy development was being enhanced in numerous ways in the English language classroom. The results of the research indicated that oral interaction, which was embedded in many of the children's activities, was vital for supporting the children's literacy development. Exposure to a print-rich environment familiarized the students with letters, colours and words, and thereby promoted reading and

built their vocabulary, which supported speaking skill development. Thus, what was practised in the classroom supported much the research on *Toontastic 3D*.

Even though it seemed that the teacher was aware of the implications of *Toontastic 3D*, more attention could be given to the students during interactions. Level Two primary school teachers should be as responsive as possible to children's cues, comments and questions, in order to give more room for interactions and learning that can promote children's literacy development.

On the whole, based on the results from this research, the researcher was able to come up with the following recommendations. Teaching social skills in the classroom on a regular basis benefits the students while working in co-operative groups. The results from the students' questionnaires showed an increase in their interest in speaking. They also reflected an increase in awareness and through the eyes of the researcher there were many positive interactions and comments made while students worked in groups. This research was a short one – four weeks in length and it showed an increase in some social skills and their interaction in a very positive way in this limited amount of time.

If *Toontastic 3D* has been shown to increase students' speaking fluency and communication levels, the researcher hopes to be able to provide support for the implementation of this instructional program throughout the country for the benefit of all students.

Conclusion

It is a proven fact that frequency of pretend play can contribute to the learning potential of students in speaking and collaboration. In this study, the students used their imagination to act out the roles of adults or even animals and speak like them with *Toontastic 3D*. This important finding comes in agreement with Vygotsky's (1978) argument that, apart from the fact that pretend play builds young children's cognitive development, it also increases their ability to tell and comprehend stories linked to narrative skills related to literacy development.

The development of the students' speaking fluency was influenced by the social collaboration among the students. Oral interactions played an important role in *Toontastic 3D* where meaningful interactions were seen throughout the observation period. These interactions encouraged the students and also answered some of their questions, thereby exposing them to various literacy-related social and language skills.

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4   Assessing Equivalency Between Paper-and-Pencil And Computer-Based English Competency Test

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Abstract

Computer-based testing (CBT) as the state-of-the-art technology in language assessment offers several advantages over the paper-and-pencil testing (PPT) mode. Despite the difference in modes, results from the CBT and their PPT counterparts should be expected to have equivalent item parameter estimates. This study attempts to assess the equivalency evidence between both delivery modes on the English Competency Test (ECT), a standardised English language assessment developed by the Financial Education and Training Agency of the Republic of Indonesia. The analyses were conducted with the classical test theory framework by comparing reliability, item difficulty, and item discrimination indices on both modes. In addition, a questionnaire was used to investigate the test-takers perception of the newly implemented CBT delivery. The findings showed that PPT and CBT were relatively equal, but CBT tended to have slightly better reliability and item discrimination indices. Furthermore, test-takers in general had a considerably positive perception of the CBT.

Keywords: Paper-and-pencil test; computer-based test; psychometric properties; English Competency Test

Introduction

In this era of globalisation, English competency is increasingly necessary for professional and international communication. As the interconnectedness and interdependence between countries are rising, English competency has become an essential skill for government administration. The Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia has been using the English Competency Test (ECT), a standardised test used for competency mapping and selection within the ministry. Developed by the Financial Education and Training Agency (FETA), an echelon-1 unit under the Ministry of Finance, the test focuses on three linguistic skills: listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension.

Until early 2020, the English Competency Test was administered as a paper-and-pencil test (PPT). The paper-and-pencil test is considered a traditional assessment format, in which students use pencil to fill in bubbles on a scannable answer sheet (He & Lao, 2018). As the COVID-19 outbreak forced the educational institutions to shift to e-learning, the English Competency Test has been delivered as a computer-based test (CBT) since 2021.

Despite the relatively recent increase in adoption catalysed by the pandemic, CBT technology has been in use for a long time. It has been the focus of much psychometric research since the 1970s (Choi et al., 2003). The rapid development in the early 2000s raised several issues related to administration standards, security of the tests and test results, and control over the testing process (The International Test Commission, 2006). In response to that, the International Test Commission (ITC) in July 2005 devised the Guidelines on Computer-Based and Internet Delivered Testing. The guidelines suggest that test developers consider the psychometric qualities of the test and ensure the evidence of equivalence between the PPT and its CBT parallel version (The International Test Commission, 2006). That is to say, a test that is adapted from paper-and-pencil to computer-based version should have comparable validity and reliability estimates. Furthermore, the psychometric properties and evidence of equivalence should be appropriately documented and published as a good practice in the domain of testing.

The issue of PPT and CBT equivalence has attracted the attention of researchers worldwide. In the field of English language assessment, several studies have found that PPT and CBT versions of English proficiency tests are comparable to each other (Choi et al., 2003; Ebrahemi et al., 2019; Hosseini et al., 2014; Khoshsima & Toroujeni, 2017; Kim & Huynh, 2008). While much of the research focuses more on the comparability of scores between different modes, studies comparing psychometric properties of the items have been few and far between. In accordance with the guidelines, evaluating the psychometric qualities of the test is also necessary as they might shed light on the aspects of test validity, reliability, and fairness.

Research about test modes equivalence in terms of psychometric qualities remains largely underexplored. Analysing the equivalence between the PPT and CBT versions of a test is necessary as a prerequisite to establishing validity evidence. Hence, the aim of this paper is to assess the evidence of equivalence between the PPT and CBT versions of the English Competency Test.

Literature Review

Computer-based Test

Computer-based test has been used in language testing since the early 1980s (Roever, 2001). It offers several advantages over the traditional paper-and-pencil test: expedient delivery, automatic scoring possibilities, and digital record-keeping options (Winke

& Isbell, 2017). Accordingly, CBT is frequently perceived as being the state-of-the-art assessment technology, but it is more challenging to develop (Parshall et al., 2002).

The International Test Commission (2006) highlighted four main issues that were considered to be the primary concern in developing a computer-based test: technology, quality, control, and security. As far as quality is concerned, the computer-based test is often compared with the traditional paper-and-pencil test as it is not intrinsically better. The mode effect was an initial concern for comparability between different test modes (Parshall et al., 2002). Factors irrelevant to the test content, such as how the items are displayed on computer interface, are perceived to be affecting test takers' performances (Pommerich, 2004). In light of the mode effect, appropriate psychometric analysis needs to be performed to establish the equivalence between different modes.

Equivalency Evidence

Sawaki (2001) addressed the issue of computerized test comparability and mode effect by establishing the criteria to evaluate cross-mode equivalence, which include the comparability of task content and administration conditions across modes of presentation, the psychometric criterion of stability of item parameter estimates, the plausibility of linking tests across modes, the potential interaction of examinee characteristics and testing conditions, the comparability of decisions, and the impact of the introduction of computerized tests to examinees. Across different modes, item parameter estimates may vary. Text-only items showed more tendency of equivalency than items with graphics (Stone and Lunz, 1994 as cited in Sawaki, 2001).

A meta-analysis conducted by Trisnawati (2015) concluded that PPT and CBT test results can be equivalent as long as the test design and algorithm are well-designed; therefore, psychometric issues should be a focus in establishing test equivalence as a part of the validity evidence. Retnawati (2015) suggested that the calculation of reliability estimates can be performed with the classical test theory approach. The resulting Cronbach's alpha coefficients are then compared between the PPT and CBT versions to evaluate the evidence of equivalence. Additionally, psychometric data can be analysed by measuring item difficulty and discrimination indices (Parshall, 2002).

Methodology

Data Collection

Data analysed in the research were obtained from test results stored in the Integrated Test Management Division's database. A single form of test items for each section was selected as it has been tested in both PPT and CBT modes. Hence, the test items in PPT and CBT modes were identical and presented linearly. The selected test form has been used for low-stake competency mapping. PPT test data were collected from English Competency Test batches delivered in 2017-2019, while CBT test data were obtained from a single pilot test conducted in 2021. Participants on both modes were Ministry of Finance's employees with a minimum education of undergraduate degree. The distributions of the test items and participants are subsequently presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Distribution of English Competency Test Items

Number of Items in Each Section		
Listening	**Structure**	**Reading**
50	40	50

Table 2

Distribution of PPT and CBT Participants of English Competency Test

Test Mode	Number of Participants in Each Section		
	Listening	**Structure**	**Reading**
PPT	309	353	189
CBT	165	165	165

In addition to the test results data, this study also used a post-test questionnaire to examine CBT test takers' perceptions on six aspects of the test delivery: ease of use, clarity of application user guide, clarity of test instruction, clarity of questions, clarity of sound, and committee responsiveness. It used five-point Likert-scale items, ranging from poor to excellent. The questionnaire was completed by 101 out of 165 people who took the CBT version of the English Competency Test.

Data Analysis

In the psychometric analysis, a sample of 120 test takers was selected using the random sampling method for each section in both PPT and CBT modes. To assess the

equivalency evidence between the PPT and CBT versions of the English Competency Test, the following psychometric parameters were used: reliability (Cronbach's alpha), item difficulty, and item discrimination (point-biserial correlation) indices. Psychometric analyses were conducted according to the classical test theory approach with the CTT package (Willse, 2018) on RStudio statistical software.

Findings

Table 3 shows the comparison of psychometric item parameters in both PPT and CBT versions of the English Competency Test. The item difficulty and item discrimination indices are presented with the range between minimum and maximum values, and the mean values (within brackets). The mean values of both indices are also displayed in Figure 1.

Table 3

Psychometric Parameters Comparison between PPT and CBT Versions of ECT

Test Mode	Section	Reliability	Item Difficulty (Mean)	Item Discrimination (Mean)
PPT	Listening	0.88	0.25–0.78 (0.57)	0.10–0.62 (0.34)
	Structure	0.89	0.17–0.93 (0.57)	0.13–0.67 (0.39)
	Reading	0.81	0.02–0.97 (0.56)	-0.19–0.58 (0.25)
CBT	Listening	0.90	0.32–0.91 (0.67)	0.10–0.65 (0.37)
	Structure	0.89	0.18–0.97 (0.67)	0.15–0.59 (0.38)
	Reading	0.88	0.19–0.97 (0.64)	-0.05–0.58 (0.34)

Figure 1

Item Difficulty and Item Discrimination Means Comparison
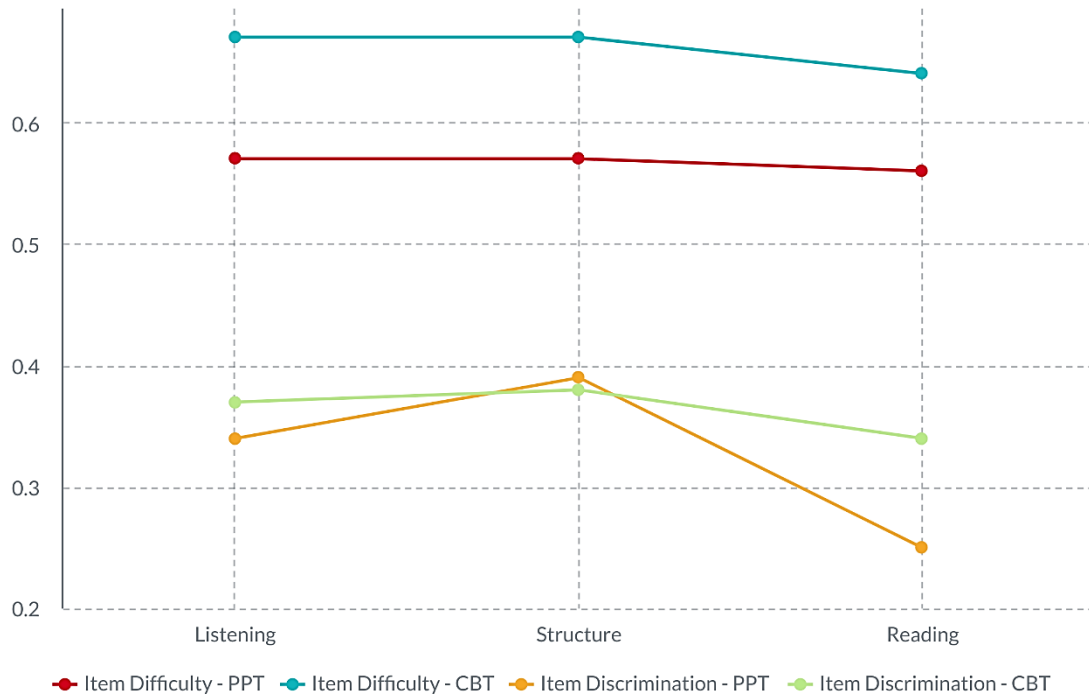
On all sections on both modes, the reliability estimates tended to be stable at high category (more than 0.80), suggesting that the test items had satisfactory level of internal consistencies (Carr, 2011). The rank of item difficulty and item discrimination by section also remained unchanged. On the CBT version, the listening and reading sections' reliability estimates were slightly higher than those of the PPT counterpart. On average, the item difficulty levels fell on medium difficulty (between 0.3 and 0.7). The CBT mode consistently produced higher item difficulty indices, indicating that CBT test takers answered more questions correctly.

Item discrimination analysis showed that some items in the reading comprehension section had negative item discrimination indices. Such values indicate that these items cannot distinguish test takers with high abilities from those with low abilities. Nearly all sections on both modes showed mean item discrimination above 0.30 which is considered the minimum acceptable value for a test (Carr, 2011). An exception, however, was observed in the reading section on PPT mode, which fell short with an average of 0.25.

Test takers' perceptions on the test delivery were also examined with a post-test questionnaire. The responses were explored using frequencies and averages to gain a deeper insight. Figures 2 and 3 show the frequency and average statistics of the responses.

Figure 2

Frequency Statistics of Test Takers' Questionnaire Responses
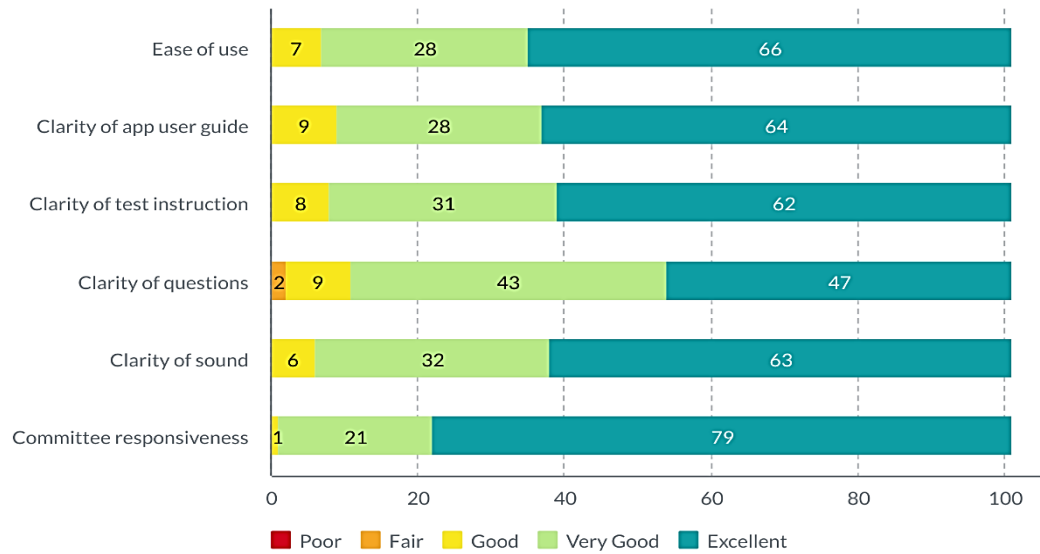
Test takers' responses were substantially positive, with very few respondents choosing fair and none choosing poor options. More than 60% of respondents gave excellent ratings to ease of use, clarity of application user guide, clarity of test instruction, clarity of sound, and committee responsiveness. Clarity of questions, however, received fewer excellent ratings than other aspects, with 46.53% of respondents rated excellent. However, only less than 2% of test takers rated the clarity of questions below good, indicating that most test takers did not have major issues with the comprehensibility of questions and passages.

Figure 3

Average of Test Takers' Questionnaire Responses
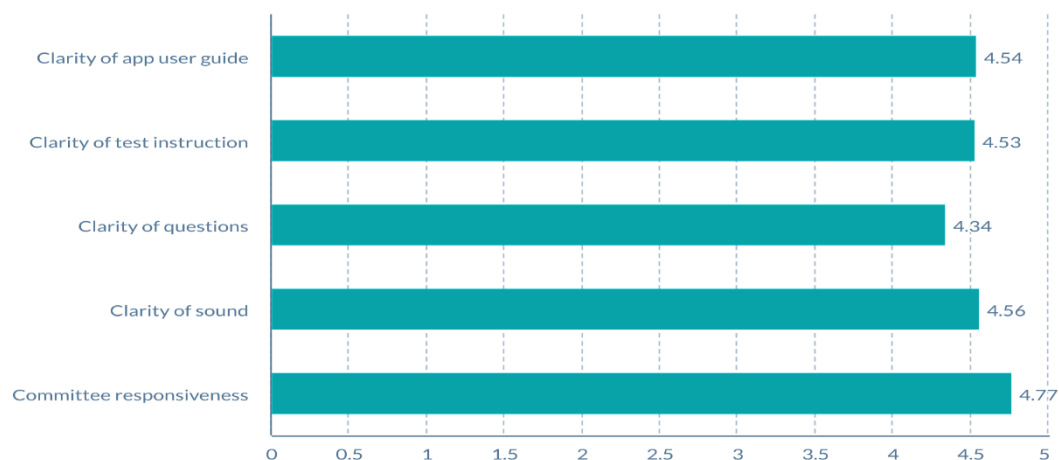
Overall, the aggregate average of the six aspects was 4.56 out of 5. The aspect of committee responsiveness received the highest average response (4.77), indicating respondents' satisfaction in how the committee provided assistance during the test. Conversely, the aspect of clarity of questions received the lowest average response (4.34) which was otherwise still considered a decent result (above 4). Test takers might find the reading section more challenging than other sections in terms of comprehensibility as it is longer and contains more complex vocabulary. In spite of that, the reading section's psychometric properties on the CBT version were improved from the PPT mode.

Conclusion

Investigation on the comparability of the English Competency Test in PPT and CBT versions demonstrated the evidence of equivalence as shown by the similarity of their psychometric parameters. The CBT version tended to produce slightly better reliability and item discrimination estimates. Furthermore, the responses from test takers also revealed their perceptions that the CBT application had satisfied the criteria for good test delivery. In other words, the transition from PPT to CBT could be effortlessly accepted by users and did not affect their results adversely.

Recommendations

Psychometric analyses conducted on the English Competency Test results found several non-functioning items in the reading section of the selected item form, which were indicated by very low item discrimination indices (negative values). These items cannot properly distinguish test takers with high abilities from those with lower abilities. Hence, these items should be re-examined (for possible miskeying) or excluded from scoring. The psychometric evaluation should be performed as a routine for all test forms to ensure that the items have met the rigorous validity and reliability standards.

This study uses the classical test theory approach which has a limitation in being sample dependent and group dependent (Erguven, 2013; Magno, 2009), implying that results derived from different samples may vary. Therefore, future researchers should extend this study by using more robust psychometric approaches to produce more stable results across different samples, such as the Rasch model or the item response theory (IRT).

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5   Improving Students' Participation Using Pear Deck During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Students get demotivated when it comes to online learning and they are eager to participate actively in a lesson where the use of technical tools and appropriate evaluation are performed during online classes. This study attempted to establish a way for dealing with students' engagement in online learning in the new normal. Pear Deck, an online learning platform, was employed where 22 students with average language competency levels were involved. The data for this action research approach was gathered through observations and a survey questionnaire. The data was analysed using a quantitative method. The findings show that active learning pedagogy practices are major motivators for students to stay engaged, since the number of students who joined online classes increased drastically after utilising Pear Deck. Despite the limitations in internet connectivity and device shortages, the findings offer the potential to improve teaching methods in ESL classrooms.

Keywords: Pear Deck, online learning, ESL classroom, New Normal, student's participation

Introduction

The spread of COVID-19, a coronavirus disease, has forced the adoption and adaptation of a new norm in work and educational conditions for people all over the world including Malaysia starting in 2020. As a result of various procedures and quarantine laws, educational institutions all over the world are turning to distance learning. The issue has already sparked a surge in online education, putting us in a better position to deal with the situation.

English language is very-well accepted all around the globe. In this 21st century, we cannot run from the fact that English is an international language and is widely used all over the world. English is also one of the important languages for many purposes but the main thing here is for education. To be on par with the ever-changing technology and internet of things, there is a need to be proficient in English to meet the uncertain job prospects in the future. The Ministry of Education Malaysia has also emphasised the use of English when it introduced the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025) and in one of the eleven shifts state that every child is expected to be good in English language as well as other languages. (Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025).

Problem Statement

Many students in Malaysia especially those living in rural areas where internet facilities are at moderate level, have a lot of challenges and difficulties in learning the language especially when it comes to online classes. Since the introduction of home-based learning which started last year, most students especially from the weak classes do not join the Google Meet sessions or handed in their assignments in Google Classroom or other social medias like WhatsApp and Telegram. With the uncertainties of teaching and learning during the pandemic, students need to be active in online learning especially to those who are taking national examinations. According to Nguyen (2021), in order to get students to be active learners in online learning, teachers have to be creative and innovative in planning and implementing their lessons. The lessons need to lively and interesting to motivate students to join online classes as well as to support them to face the new norm. From the study, it is also stated that students mostly get motivated to join and participate in the class activities where the use of innovative and engaging tools are present in the teaching and learning. Furthermore, if students were given a chance to access information freely on the internet so that they can showcase their products and receive positive feedbacks from their friends, this will also boost their motivation to join online classes. Apart from that, it will be very useful if teachers can apply suitable assessment methods with their students during online classes.

Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are as follows:
i. To improve students' participation in online classes using Pear Deck.
ii. To investigate the effectiveness of using Pear Deck in English language online classes.

Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:
i. How does Pear Deck improve students' participation in online classes?
ii. How effective is the use of Pear Deck in English language online classes?

Literature Review

Online Learning

Nowadays, there are various learning contexts in which learners can learn, including face-to-face learning, distance learning, and online learning. Online learning is a term used to describe learning that takes place entirely online, outside of the classroom, and is comparable

to distance learning but uses online platforms (Oblinger et al., 2005). For students learning online, the online delivery mode can provide efficient and convenient approaches to attain learning outcomes (Junco et al., 2013). Many factors, such as technological features, user-friendly online platforms, class activities, and assessments, may influence the success of online learning (Wijekumar et al. 2006; Shuey, 2002). As a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, many schools have been compelled to convert to online teaching rather than face-to-face teaching. It is critical for schools to understand what factors may influence students' happiness and their desire to join online classes.

When compared to traditional face-to-face classroom sessions, the virtual classroom offers a significantly different atmosphere. The design and delivery of online classes have a significant impact on students' satisfaction, learning, and retention in online courses (Irani, 2005). Learner-learner contact, learner-content interaction, and learner-instruction interaction are all important aspects of online learning, according to a study by Moore (1989). The following three essential aspects influenced students' online learning experiences: a comfortable and quiet learning environment, teachers' support, and the learning platform's ease of use.

Using ICT in the Language Classroom

The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching of English language has been widely used especially in this 21st Century teaching and learning. The new Z generation who was born in year 2000 onwards, are the breed to this new and ever-changing technology. With the presence of modern and latest technology, teachers must be competent and skilled in using ICT to teach this new generation. With ICT, a lot of innovations and methods in teaching and learning have been introduced and continue to do so even now with the pandemic situation. It prepares the way for a move from a "teacher-centered" to a "student-centered" approach. Smart displays, projectors, and LCD screens with speakers, microphones, and videos are replacing chalk, chart, and other similar more 'traditional' teaching aids.

According to Kumari & Hemalatha (2020), there are numerous approaches that utilize ICT in language teaching to create meaningful lessons in the classrooms. Among them are, CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning), TELL (Technology Enhanced Language Learning), Digital Libraries, Multimedia, Free and open-source software, MOOCs, Virtual Classrooms, I-Pad, Padlet and Podcasts. With these remarkable advancements of ICT, learners are facilitated in self-learning, learning 24/7 and at their own pace.

Students' Participation

The unexpected change in their learning environment was a huge difficulty for many students during the pandemic COVID-19. Due to the fact that classes are held entirely online, students must quickly adapt to the new method and interactions between classmates and teachers. Because classes are no longer held in a real, face-to-face setting, the experience is no longer the same, as the mode of delivery has a significant impact on the context of learning (Westera, 2011). As Westera (2011) points out, digital media tends to introduce new dimensions of context, necessitating a rethinking of the learning context. Wua et al. (2008) have highlighted the disparities between in-person and online classes. According to the authors, teachers must seriously consider how to rethink learning delivery that incorporates new technical capabilities that are distinct from prior technological knowledge, such as those used in face-to-face delivery. As a result, teachers must constantly strive to be creative and inventive in their teaching design and approaches, particularly when the teaching medium or situation changes. One of the most difficult aspects of online education is maintaining student engagement and encouraging active participation while studying.

Students' engagement, according to Fredricks et al. (2004), is very important for effective learning outcomes. Engagement occurs on a scale of one to ten and is dependent on a variety of factors (Avendano, 2003). As a result, educators must play a critical role in developing courses that stimulate interaction, participation, and communication in online courses in order to increase student engagement (Johnson, 2003; Weiss et al., 2000).

Pear Deck

Pear Deck is a Google Slides add-on application for creating interactive presentations with students. During the session, it allows teachers to monitor student participation and learning progress. Using Google Meet and Zoom, Pear Deck may be used for remote learning (Pear Deck, 2020).   Pear Deck (www.peardeck.com) is a platform that allows teachers to assess their students at any time during the face-to-face class and when students work at their own pace. Teachers can import their current Power Point slides into Google slides with a Pear Deck add-on feature and they can also import questions into the slides, or they can also use the customised questions in the templates and students can use their smart phones to answer, or work in small groups to discuss possible answers. Library templates provide slides for beginning, middle and end of lessons. It also features some slides for few subjects like Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. The teacher can embed audio instructions, descriptions, or examples for students to listen while they read the prompts and react to interactive questions from the teacher's Pear Deck slide presentations using the Pear Deck

Add-on (Root, 2014). In Pear Deck, teachers able to see their students' responses, show the responses to the class by sharing the screen in Google Meet or Zoom or ask students to change their answers if they make mistakes. This platform can create positive and engaging lesson between students and teachers during lessons (Mehring, 2016).

Although they are some limitations to the platform like Teacher Dashboard, Students' names in the response and the ability to leave comments on students' work, this platform is very useful to be integrated during remote teaching not only for the fun of language learning but also for motivating students to join online classes during the pandemic. This digital tool allows teachers to increase student-teacher engagement, resulting in a more communicative classroom. As they are regularly examined through apps like Pear Deck, students can freely express their thoughts, listen to classmates, receive rapid feedback from the teacher, and confirm mastery of new concepts. It provides a form of formative or classroom-based assessment that can be utilised with the students. Students in this form of flipped class may have a greater sense of ownership over their learning, develop stronger collaborative learning abilities, and build on pre-class activities by using the English language in more real situation (Mehring, 2016).

Covid-19 Effects on Education

The effects of COVID-19 pandemic are many and one of the most affected areas is the students' educational process. School closures and other restrictions affect billions of children and millions of educators (Ozer, 2020). In an attempt to halt the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, most governments throughout the world have temporarily closed educational institutions. Over 60% of the world's student population is affected by these nationwide closures. Several other countries have enacted localised closures that will affect millions of more students (UNESCO, 2020). Millions of students have been unable to continue their education at schools, universities, technical schools, and adult education programmes. Many governments have responded to the increasing necessity to provide online and remote learning opportunities for schoolchildren (Römer, 2020). Despite the safeguards taken, the learning process of the kids was harmed. Students who have had their independence taken away as a result of COVID-19 are concerned about when they will be able to receive face-to-face instruction.

New Normal

The New Normal in education is here to stay; teachers and students must adapt to new situations. This phenomenon exists because of the Covid-19 pandemic where it changes

the way teachers and students teach and learn. As education is very crucial, schools were closed and remote teaching and learning take place (Bhakti, 2021). When this happens, the teaching and learning strategies have to change to meet the requirements of the new normal to ensure that students can continue their studies even with the challenges they are facing. Students need to be taught to learn at their own pace and practise self-motivation during this pandemic situation.

Methodology

Action research, according to Mills (2000), is a form of inquiry that attempts to improve people's lives by researching the topics or problems they encounter. The researcher chose to use action research to reflect on a specific situation that the students were facing at school, to collect and analyse data, and to make changes based on the findings. In this action research, the researcher also used a mixed method approach (sequential explanatory), which combines qualitative research with classroom observation and quantitative research with the percentage of students' attendance and survey questionnaire. The reason behind this approach is that quantitative data and subsequent analysis give a broad knowledge of the study topic. The qualitative data and analysis enhance and explain the statistical results by delving deeper into the perspectives of the participants (Rossman & Wilson, 1985; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Creswell 2003).

Research design

According to Kolk (2021), Kurt Lewin used the word "action research" in 1944 to describe a process of investigation and inquiry that takes place when an issue is being solved. Today, the term is used to describe a method of reflective inquiry aimed at enhancing knowledge and practice. The word "action" refers to the change you want to make and "research" to refer to the transition you are trying to make and your newfound knowledge of the learning environment. In this study, the researcher applies the five cycles of action research to conduct the study as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Adaptation of Kurt Lewin's Action Research

Research Respondents

This study employs purposive sampling (also known as decision, selective, or subjective sampling) which is a sampling method in which the researcher selects the respondents to take part in the study based on his or her own judgement. Twenty-two Form Five students were chosen for this study by purposive sampling. These students had a low to moderate level of English proficiency. This limited sample size is suitable to be evaluated for this study in using Pear Deck to improve students' attendance in online classes during the pandemic. The respondents were selected from one class of Form Five to meet the minimum requirement of sample size of 20.

Research Procedure

Identifying the problem

The new norm has directly and indirectly affected both teachers and students in the teaching and learning of English Language especially online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers are struggling to get students to join their online teaching be it synchronous or asynchronous class. The Form Five English Language uses the new CEFR-aligned syllabus, with emphasis on the four main skills namely Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Students need to master all four skills in order to pass the English Language with the minimum band of B1. Getting students to join online classes during the pandemic has been a hassle to teachers especially the weak classes. Table 1 shows the poor attendance of the students on Google Meet and WhatsApp, prior to the use of Pear Deck in the English language class.

Table 1

Students' Attendance before the Use of Pear Deck

No.	Date	Attendance	Platform	Percentage (%)	Time spent	No. of exercises
1.	18th February 2021	13/22	GC	59.0	1 hr	5
2.	25th February 2021	8/22	GC	36.0	3 hrs	3
3.	4th March 2021	11/22	GC & WA	50.0	3 hrs	4
4.	11th March 2021	12/22	WA	54.5	3 hrs	6

This attendance issue was highlighted based on early observation as well as discussion with a few teachers. As shown in Table 1, we discovered that out of 22 students, less than 15 students joined the online class every week whereas full attendance of students can be achieved in face-to-face lessons. When the Movement Control Order (MCO) started, only a handful of the students joined the Google Meet sessions especially if the class was early in the morning. Most of the time, it will be the same students attending the online classes. Apart from introducing various teaching and learning methods to get students to join the online classes, still the full attendance could not be achieved or even sixty percent from the total number of students. Besides using Google classroom as one of the learning platforms, some students refrain from using it and they resort to sending their assignments in WhatsApp where they have to capture all the pages and post them to the teacher personally to be checked. Teachers then needed to download and mark their work and later share them back to the students which is time consuming and tedious.

Figure 1

Student Assignments Submission in Google Classroom
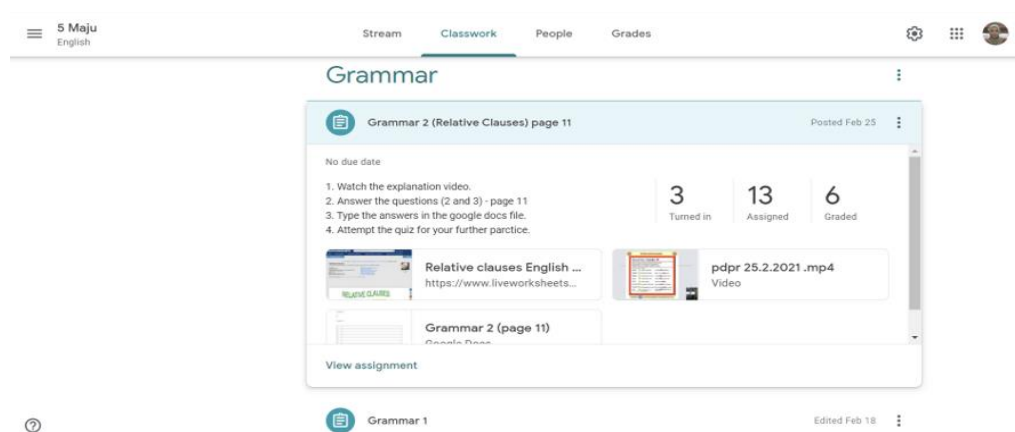
Planning an Action – The Use of Intervention

After a lot of futile attempts in getting students to join online lessons, the researcher decided to introduce Pear Deck to improve her students' participation in online classes so that they would not to be left out during the pandemic. After trying out a few activities using Pear Deck, it was proven to be effective in getting to students to join the online learning at their own pace without having to upload or post their work in any other platforms. They only need to click the given link provided by the teacher and start working on their assignments and teachers can monitor their progress there and then. Should the teacher need to correct the mistakes done by the students, they can be informed in the class WhatsApp or Telegram group.

Implementing and Observing the Intervention Process

Observation Phase 1 (Pre-Intervention)

The first phase of observation was carried out from February 2021 to 11 March 2021(Table 2). For the first observation, the students were required to read a sample essay from their textbook and copy it into their exercise book. Through the class WhatsApp group, the teacher informed the students about their task (Flipped Classroom). The teacher informed the class a day earlier that the class can be held via Google Meet and the students were instructed to read the text before the next lesson.

Table 2

Students' Attendance during Home-based Learning (PdPR) from February to July 2021

* GC-Google classroom, WA – What Apps, PD- Pear Deck, GM-Google Meet

No.	Date	Attendance	Platform	Percentage (%)	Time spent	No. of exercises	Remarks
1.	18th February 2021	13/22	GC	59.0	1 hr	5	Pre-Intervention
2.	25th February 2021	8/22	GC	36.0	3 hrs	3	
3.	4th March 2021	11/22	GC & WA	50.0	3 hrs	4	
4.	11th March 2021	12/22	WA	54.5	3 hrs	6	
5.	18th March 2021	12/22	GM & PD	54.5	3 hrs	5	Intervention
6.	25th March 2021	18/22	GM & PD	81.8	3 hrs	3	
7.	20th May 2021	17/22	GM & PD	77.3	3 hrs +	7	
8.	27th May 2021	17/22	GM & PD	77.3	3hrs	4	
9.	17th June 2021	18/22	GM & PD	81.8	3hrs	5	

10.	24th June 2021	18/22	GM & PD	81.8	3hrs	3	
11.	1st July 2021	21/22	GM & PD	95.5	2hrs	4	
12.	8th July 2021	19/22	GM & PD	86.4	3hrs	7	
13.	15th July 2021	18/22	GM & PD	81.8	3hrs	6	

Implementation of Pear Deck (Intervention)

On the first day of implementing Pear Deck in the class, the teacher distributed a link to Google Meet and instructed all students to be prepared for the day's activities. In the GM chat box, the teacher shared a link to the Pear Deck platform and invited all pupils to click it. Students did not need to install any apps on their cell phones or computers, and they can join using any email address Students were asked to respond to a few pre-writing questions before the lesson began. The teacher presented the slides and evaluated the pupils' responses. Students can use their smartphones or PCs to draw or type their responses in the answer section.

The development lesson continued, and the teacher provided immediate feedback to the students via GM, either in the chat box or verbally. After receiving feedback from the teacher, the students can quickly amend their answers/responses. The presentation went on until the post-lesson assignment, which required them to create a short narrative paragraph (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Steps in carrying out the Intervention
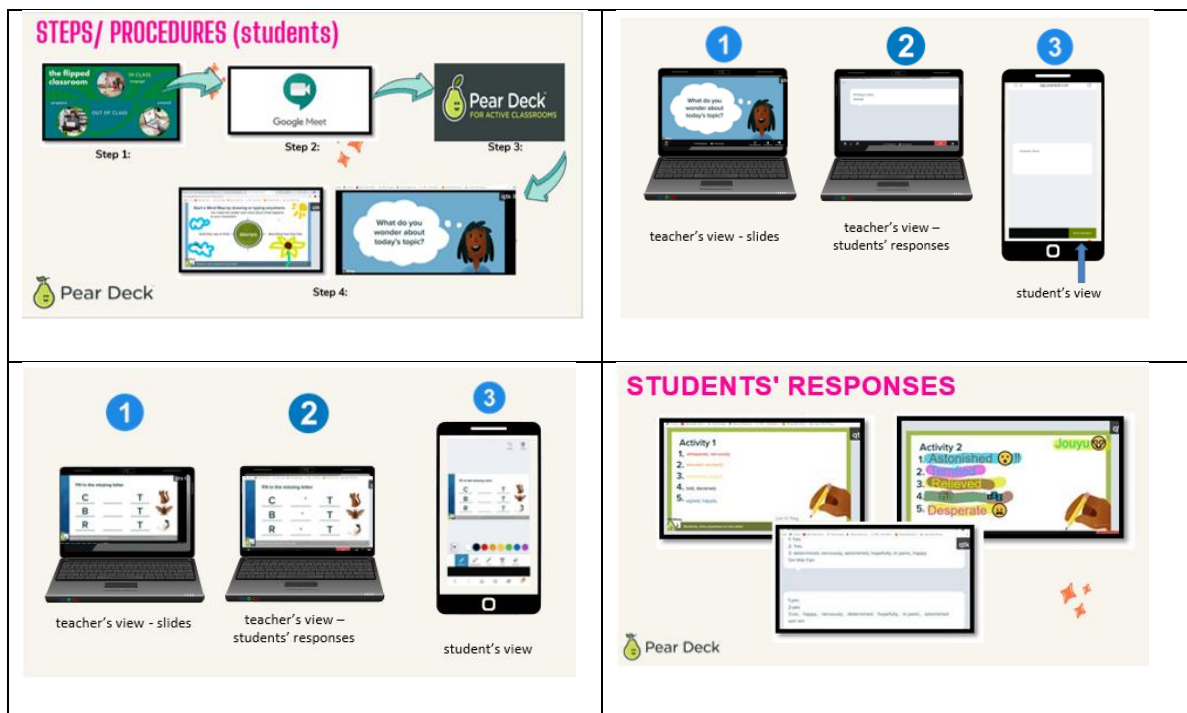
Observation 2 (Intervention)

The second observation phase was carried out from 18 March until July 2021 (Table 2) when Pear Deck was introduced into the language lessons. In the later part of this second phase, the students were not only provided with the usual Pear Deck platform and Google Meet. The teacher has applied varied teaching methods along with the platform in terms of formative assessment and students' reflection on the lesson. By applying other technological tools in the online lessons, like Padlet, The Wheel of Names, Answer Garden and Quizizz, students' attendance has tremendously improved to 95.5% as compared to 81.8% previously. Figure 3 shows some of the digital tools integrated into the online lessons of this second phase.

Figure 3

Some Technological Tools integrated with the Intervention
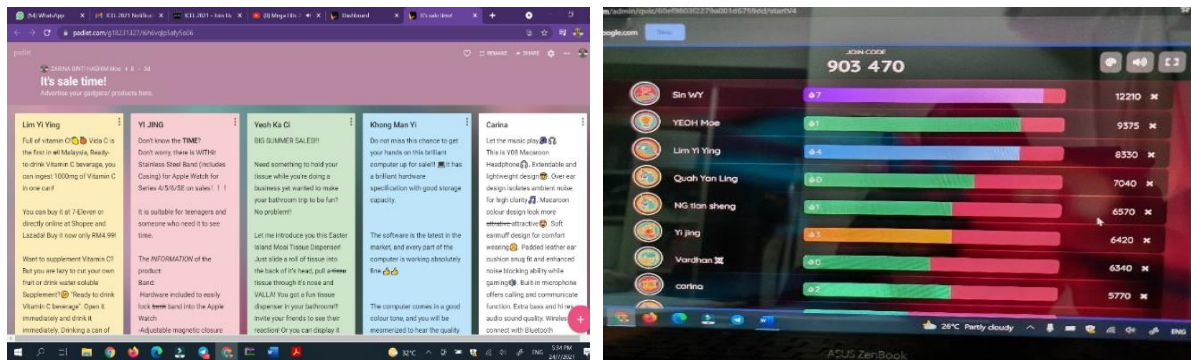
Results And Discussion

During the intervention, more students joined the online classes after the introduction of the Pear Deck platform and other teaching methods like Padlet to display their work and products. Students became more motivated and interested to join the online classes, they also stayed until the class ended and also gave good cooperation during the class. After the intervention, students did not leave the Google Meet session halfway and they freely gave their responses either written or orally. This is the evidence of more student-centered lessons.

The objectives have been achieved where more than 60% of the students joined the online lessons after the second observation. The students were more engaged and actively participated in ESL classroom for writing lessons during online classes.

Figure 4 shows the improved student attendance during the intervention phase of this study. As the students' attendance showed an increasing trend since March 18th, it is clear that students were more motivated to join the online classes and completed all the activities

carried out during the lesson. The engaging activities and lessons required these students to always be on the lookout for more activities as they have no time to waste. Furthermore, most of the activities were hands-on and not merely listening to teacher's lectures.

Figure 4

Analysis of Students' Attendance Pre- and During Intervention
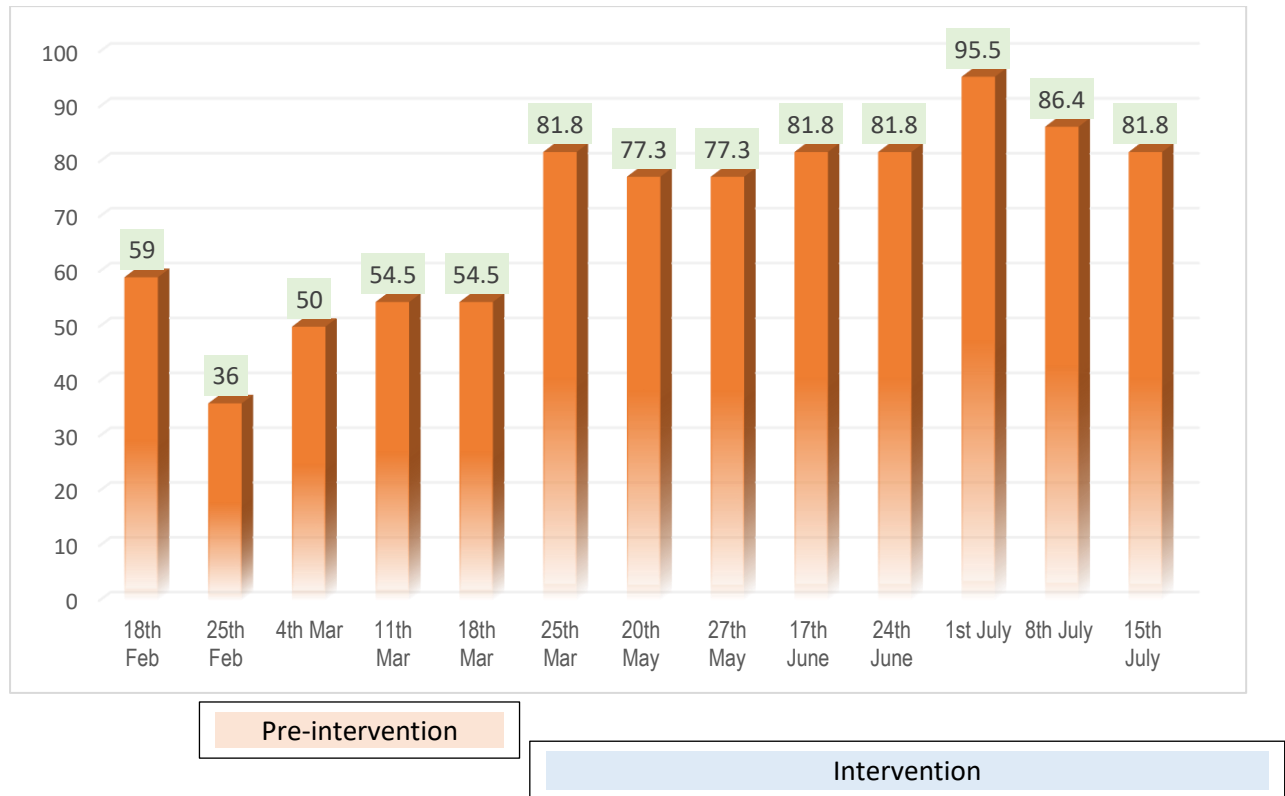
The success of the intervention is evidenced when the percentage of students' attendance increased from the first observation phase to the second observation phase after using the Pear Deck platform and effective formative assessment methods that are relevant to be applied for online lessons during the pandemic. In addition, the variable teaching methods other than that Pear Deck which were integrated during online classes like Google Meet, Quizizz and Padlet provided additional active learning opportunities for the students to show their responses and talents to their peers.

Conclusion

During the pandemic, the use of Pear Deck to persuade students to join remote learning classes proved to be beneficial and effective. Teachers are urged to use this learning platform as a tool to improve students' participation in classroom and at home. Educators are

looking forward to having an enjoyable class, especially during the pandemic. Future research in Malaysia on the efficient application of Pear Deck in other topics will be extremely valuable and essential in assisting teachers with their teaching and learning not only at home but also at school. In accordance with the Movement Control Order, students are not permitted to work in groups physically, but they can always work together as a class to engage themselves while the teacher serves as a facilitator. Teachers can also use formative or classroom-based assessment to evaluate their students.

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6   Using Digital Toolkits for Effective Learning in A Rural Primary School

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Abstract

The pandemic is truly a blessing in disguise for the pupils from SK Selat Bagan Nyior. Living in a remote village in Dayang Bunting Island with minimal exposure to the English language and technology, these pupils had the opportunity to learn virtually. This article aims to share two main digital applications that were widely used by the teacher, Padlet and Canva and several other online engagements done throughout the virtual teaching and learning process. The upper primary pupils' English literacy has improved especially in their writing and speaking skills. Meanwhile, the online engagements enhanced the pupils' motivation in learning and promoted fun learning in the classroom. The materials used for the teaching and learning were also shared with the teachers throughout the nation and received positive responses as they are practical and interactive in their respective schools.

Keywords: Remote learning, creative materials, digital tools, upper primary pupils

Introduction

The pandemic has changed the education world forever. It has paved the way for all teachers to adapt to the changes of home-based virtual learning. Similarly, I seized the opportunity for the pupils from my school to explore more digital learning platforms. Without this opportunity, it would not be possible. The virtual learning was a catalyst for me as a teacher to devise and design effective ways to deliver the lesson and engage the pupils as much as I could. This is because virtual learning and the application of existing digital learning platforms were underutilised previously. The necessity for an education upgrade was required in line with technological advancements (Mahyoob, 2020). There is less difficulty to access online learning because both learners and teachers are provided with an excellent opportunity to learn and interact with educational technology tools such as mobile-based learning, computer-based learning, and web-based learning (Pellegrini et al., 2020)

Digital Toolkits and the Pandemic

Zhao (2020) has argued that COVID-19 is a catalyst for educational change. Due to COVID-19, many educational activities, including school inspections and testing, have been paused. The pauses "give governments and education leaders the very rare opportunity to rethink education." (Zhao, 2020, p. 30). The digital toolkits play an important role in virtual learning. They are boosters and energisers to keep the momentum and engage the pupils

throughout the lesson. There are various types of digital toolkits for education like Padlet, Canva, Quizizz, Kahoot, Teachermade, Liveworksheets, Nearpod and many more. Now, if we can ponder and rewind back, all these were available prior to the pandemic. However, the awareness and application in teaching and learning was less widespread. Nevertheless, thanks to home-based learning due to the pandemic, all of us had the opportunity to browse, to use, to apply these platforms in teaching and learning. Teachers need to try which methods work best for their students. They want their learners to have fun and learn. That applies to me as well. Despite living in a rural village with minimal exposure to English, my students had the chance to dwell in the digital world. The adaptation and critical thinking of 21st century learning require all educators to integrate constructive ideas to present their lessons in meaningful, fun and accessible ways to the learners. There are alternative digital applications to cater to the need and level of learners. Teachers just need the time to explore and try to implement them in the digital classroom. After implementing, it is possible to identify a suitable medium for their specific group of learners and then continue the teaching and learning with them. The pandemic has given a chance to many teachers like me to explore and integrate these digital learning applications to make teaching and learning an interesting process. Throughout the home-based learning, there were discussions about effective digital platforms among teachers. This clearly showed the curiosity and the thirst of the educators' community to seek knowledge and experience to deliver the best for their children.

Frankly, online teaching is a challenge. Initially, I did not even know how to get started. There were numerous questions running in my mind. "Can I conduct lessons without seeing my students?", "How am I going to make my class as lively as before?", "Will any of them understand what am I teaching?" I am sure most teachers can relate to this. The new norm activated the creative side of me. I started with making colourful and creative materials for the lessons. Initially, I was only sending my materials and taught via WhatsApp. Thanks to Canva, one of the digital toolkits, which I used in my teaching, my lessons, became interesting to my students. They began to show interest. I could see their participation showing progress. They liked the materials and responded well. This boosted me to do more, to come out with better materials for every class.

The reason I am sharing my experience here is to encourage other teachers to come forth and share their success stories. I am sure there will be many of them. This online teaching experience has enabled me to embark on a new journey of sharing the materials and worksheets with other teachers. Figures 1 and 2 show some sample materials produced on Canva and how they were shared with my students via Google Meet and Facebook.

Figure 1
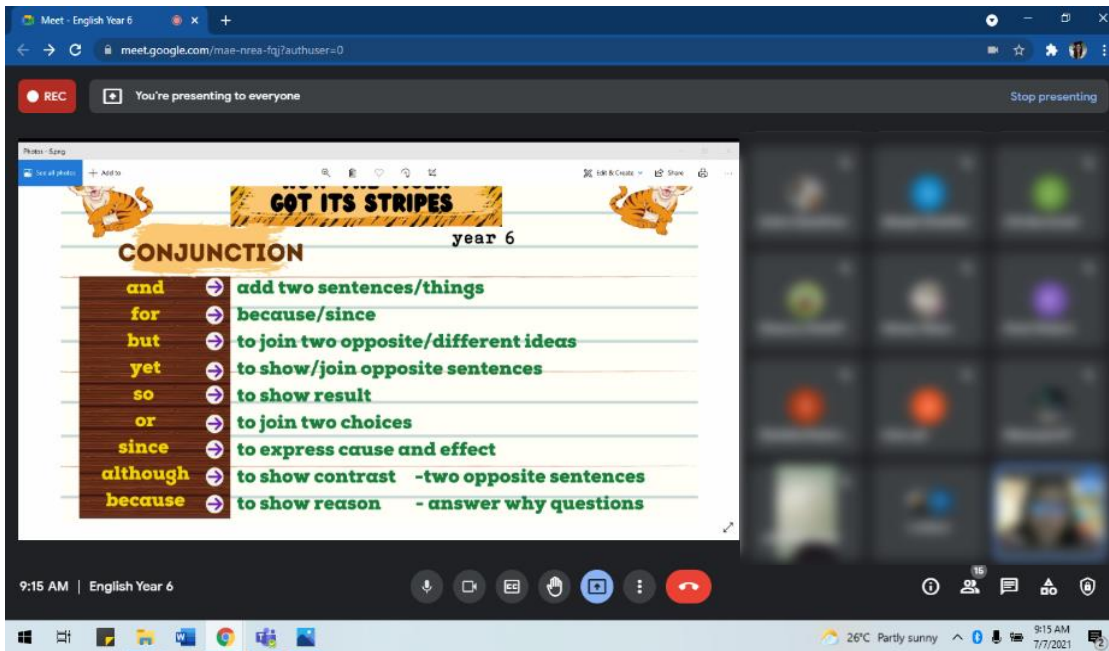
Materials Used During Online Class

Figure 2

Sample Materials Shared in Facebook

What Digital Toolkits

As mentioned previously, Canva was the main digital toolkit, which was used for material creation. This application helped me to construct creative materials. The main concern while creating the materials was to ensure learner participation. I chose colourful pictures, attractive animations, engaging worksheets and simple text. I believe I know my students best. Thus, the materials, which I create, should focus on easing their learning. Although, I was not physical present, the materials were representing my teaching style. So, I made sure I put all the graphics in a way that my pupils could understand and learn. My materials represent my teaching style. There were two types of materials, one was for delivering content (topic) and the other one was task-based or worksheets. This helped me to teach the children every topic and then evaluate them accordingly. These materials follow the learning standards and objectives stipulated in the syllabus and accommodate the learners' proficiency level and interest.

The next digital toolkit, which promoted participation and communication in my ESL virtual classroom, is Padlet. This platform was a game changer. The students were interacting and engaged in the lessons integrated with Padlet. They liked to take part in the discussion, brainstorming and writing tasks actively. This is a platform for the learners to be acknowledged and appreciated for their work. Padlet has features on commenting, grading and liking which boosts the interaction and participation of the students. It is a virtual platform to store all the work of the students throughout their virtual learning experience, like a digital workbook. Once again, the priority on adjusting the materials according to their level made the lessons progress more smoothly. Personalising the background and shelves for each student created learner autonomy. This eventually increased their participation. Besides, this platform helped to evaluate the students' writing in various ways.

Other learning applications were included in the lessons like Google Jamboard, Quizizz, Teachermade and Liveworksheets. Jamboard has similar features like Padlet that encourage learners to interact on a digital white board. It is an undeniable fact educational games always win the learner's heart. They were attentive and keen on playing games. However, these games should be assigned carefully to ensure 'real' learning takes place. Sometimes, an activity may turn out to be merely playing the game without the students gaining any understanding of the content of the lessons. In order to make sure the students get the point of the lesson; I usually do not share the games first. The game links are rewards; those who complete the assigned tasks will be given the access to play these games. This is just to maintain the efficacy and the purpose of educational games. Meanwhile, Teachermade and Liveworksheets will be used as digital worksheets. Figure 3 shows materials created using

Canva. Figure 4 shows the interaction in Padlet while Figure 5 shows activities in Quizizz and Liveworksheet.

Figure 3

Materials using Canva

Figure 4

Padlet Activities
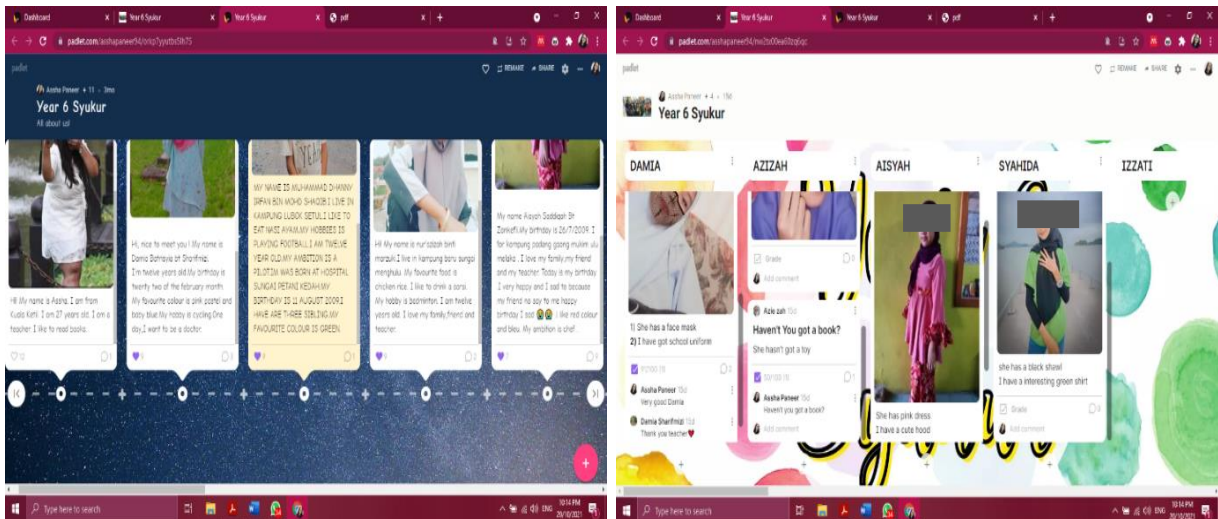
Figure 5

Quizizz and Liveworksheet
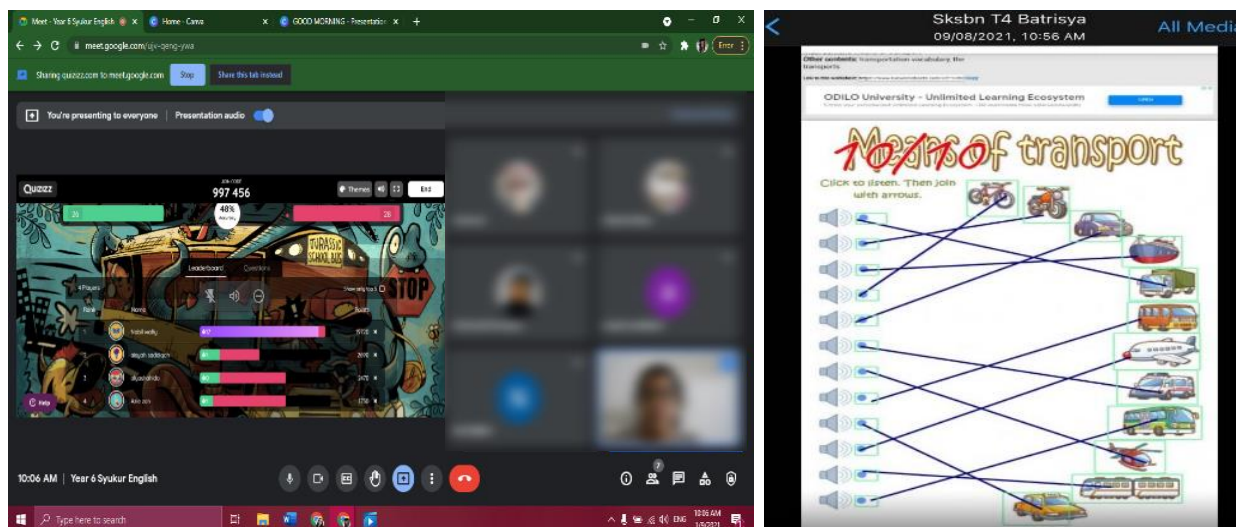
Why Digital Toolkits?

Despite the rural context of the school, digital toolkits can be employed to transform the pupils to be more tech savvy. I know my pupils best; their access to technology, gadgets and digital platforms is limited. Yet, home-based learning gave them a chance to type, browse, interact and create works in digital form. Personally, this is a milestone, for the whole community. These platforms helped them to be more expressive. The participation is usually higher than the face-to-face lessons. This is because they are new to this and they like it. From an activity as simple as attending video conferencing classes to submitting their tasks, the pupils have a heightened awareness of ESL learning and technology. Living in a globalised world, the pandemic has nudged those rural kids to experience the digital atmosphere.

When, Where and Who?

Meanwhile, Dhawan (2020) discusses several solutions to problems associated with online education. The solutions may include pre-recording video lessons or lectures; humanizing the learning process by making it more interesting, dynamic, and interactive; creating forums for communication using social media and other digital platforms; continuously improving the quality of the online courses; allowing students to ask questions and provide feedback; and promoting collaborative learning, project-based learning, and group-based learning. All the digital toolkits were used during the home-based learning due to school closure. The main issue was adapting to the new norm of having virtual classroom and the challenge of shifting to digital lessons. The identification and experimenting using various methods and strategies to make the lessons interesting and comprehensive was time consuming but worthwhile towards the end.

How 'rural' is this rural school? SK Selat Bagan Nyior is located in the well-known pregnant maiden island from Langkawi Island. This small fisherman village has only boat access from the mainland. This school has mostly students from the fisherman families. Figure 6 shows a snapshot during our virtual lesson.

Figure 6

An Online Lesson Via Google Meet

How Are Digital Toolkits Used?

The digital toolkits that were mentioned in earlier sections were the support structure for the home-based learning for my teaching. In this section, I would like to share the ways of implementation of all the digital toolkits. The materials creation are done based on the topics and learning standards. The materials were structured in a way that my pupils could understand the content in an easier way. For the worksheets and activities, I would usually go for an achievable evaluation. This gives a sense of accomplishment every time the pupils submit their work. It does not affect the quality of the materials and evaluation methods. Most of the materials are structured to cater to their level to ensure the pupils understand the lesson. It should not have to be too easy or too challenging for them. Next, the materials are thoroughly checked before I share them with the students and the teachers to minimise grammatical and structural errors. The materials are created to ease the classroom-based assessment process. Besides, I always make sure I record a video of having my face in it to deliver the lesson. I strongly believe that when the pupils see their teacher's face, they connect to the lesson easily. It also shows individuality. The five key considerations include instruction (explicit, orderly, and well-organised); content (high-quality and appropriate to students' level); motivation (self-regulation, parents' involvement, and tasks that separate students from online environment);

relationships (interpersonal relationships through various communication channels and sufficient face-to-face online instructions); and mental health (reaching out to students who may need help and informing them about who to contact when they need mental health support) Martin (2020).

Meanwhile,Padlet is the best way for the classroom-based assessment where all the pupils' work is saved automatically in cloud. The evidence and the progress are there. For the first few classes, the pupils need to be guided in using the platform so that they will be able to access and use it in their lessons easily. Usually, this platform is used for writing and idea sharing sessions.

Furthermore, the materials sharing has been a great motivation for me. The response I got for the sharing made me do more and be more creative. This also led me to start a telegram channel with 1000 subscribers in two months. This gives me confidence that the materials are suitable for the pupils. Figure 7 shows the digital toolkits used. Figure 8 shows the materials sharing in the telegram channel.

Figure 7

Digital toolkits used
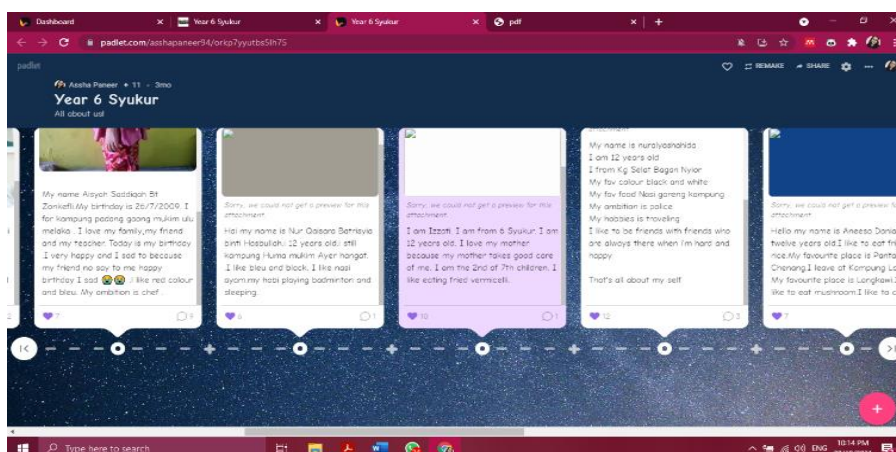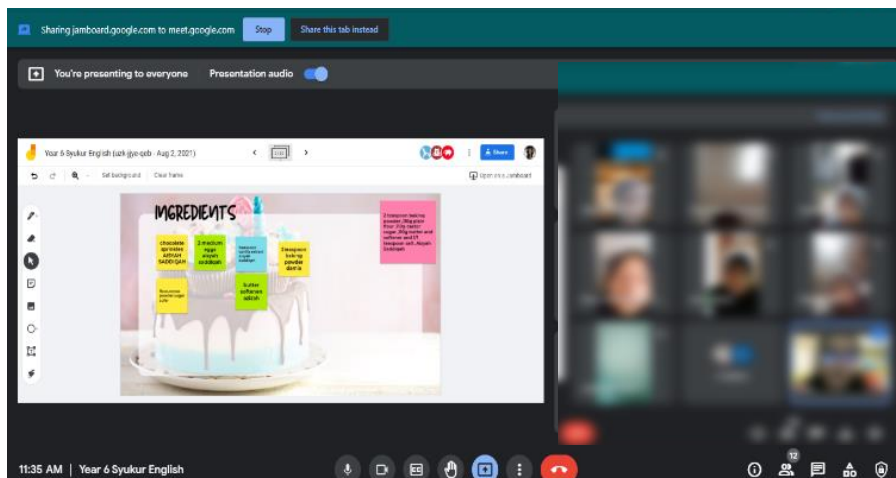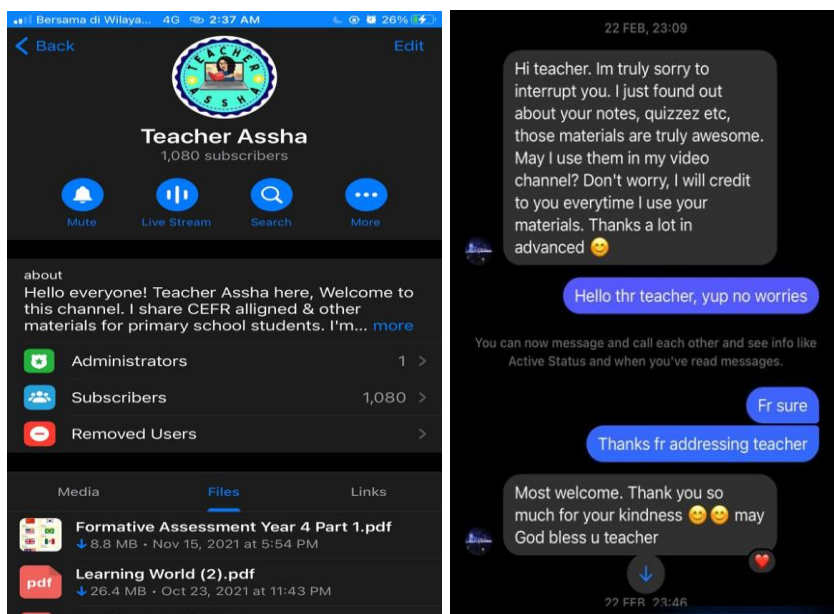
Conclusion

Online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about many challenges for educators, students, school administrators, and parents, among other stakeholders. These digital toolkits made the home-based teaching experience a different one for me. There are undoubtedly challenges but more importantly, it has truly been a learning experience for my students and me. I am sure that there are teachers out there who have similar or better stories. All efforts should be continued and supported by the stakeholders even in post-pandemic times. To conclude, there should be continuous efforts to rise to educational challenges and take action to elevate the literacy levels of the learners we teach and to make a change in their lives.

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7   Lumos-Express: A Writing Tool To Improve ESL Learners' Motivation In Descriptive Writing

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Abstract

Creating art through technology is ground-breaking. Using both in writing is creating creative fusion. In general, Malaysian schools teach English as a second language. In this era of globalization, it is crucial for students to be competent in the language. This refers to the ability to master all the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, the mastery of writing has always been an obstacle. This exploratory study attempts to investigate the use of pictures through technology to motivate learners to write. The research involved 10 students whereby 5 were from an urban school in Johor Bahru and 5 were from a rural school in Baram. The instruments used were the analysis of documents, interviews and field notes to examine the learners' motivation towards descriptive writing. The findings showed positive results from the participants who also agreed that teachers should incorporate technology and visuals in writing.

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

Introduction

In the Malaysian education system, the English language is taught in primary and secondary schools for a total of 11 years. Acquiring this target language is no doubt vital in order to enable the citizens to compete globally. It is clearly stated in the English Language Education Reform: The Roadmap that the biggest stakeholders, the children of the country, need to be fluent in English as they are the ones who hold the country's future growth and prosperity (Ministry of Education, 2015). Acquiring all the four skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing is a must in order for one to be a competent user of the language. Walsh (2010) as cited in Klimova (2012) explains that writing is crucial due to its extensive use in tertiary education and in the work environment. Much of professional communication is done in writing: proposals, memos, reports, applications, preliminary interviews, e-mails, and more are part of the daily life of a college student or successful graduate.

In relation to this, it is clear that poor competency among students highlights writing as the most difficult skill to master. Despite being teachable, the writing skills require complementary skills. It is no surprise that second language learners struggle with writing. Judging from comments from teachers and employers, learners have yet to master writing skills in English at the necessary level in Malaysia. Writing, as a life skill, offers the students the opportunity to succeed in their academics, career, and also in other relevant aspects of

their lives. Thus, various techniques have been conducted in the language classroom to help improve the writing skills among second language learners. One of the techniques is known as Lumos-Express, which uses Tayasui Sketches application by integrating pictures and technology as a writing tool. This technique allows users to use pictures as stimulus. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to explore the use of pictures as a stimulus in the Lumos-Express technique to improve students' motivation in descriptive writing.

Research Purpose, Objective and Question

This study aims to explore the Lumos-Express technique in enhancing primary school ESL learners' motivation in descriptive writing.

The research objective is to explore Lumos-Express technique of using pictures and integrating technology to enhance second language learners' motivation in descriptive writing.

The research question of the study is as follows:
How does Lumos-Express help in improving second language learners' motivation in descriptive writing?

Literature Review

Descriptive Writing

The four main classifications of writing are narrative writing, descriptive writing, expository writing, and persuasive writing (Bhasin, 2020). Descriptive writing, as one of the four types of writing, can be thought of as painting a picture with words. Besides describing something visually, the writer also considers the reader's sense of smell, hearing and touch (Bouchrika, 2020; Sadapotto & Bisse, 2021). Accurate use of language is crucial in descriptive writing as vague adjectives, make it tough for readers to imagine the item being described. Therefore, presenting vivid details makes the story more significant to readers.

Being competent in descriptive writing can enhance a student's language learning. Teaching students to write more descriptively is a way to engage students to gradually improve their writing skills. This is because descriptive writing is the most basic element of writing (Suriyanti & Yacoob, 2016). Udit and Hashim (2020) emphasize that writing gives opportunities for the learners to share their knowledge and ideas in order to learn better. Moreover, students are required to express their ideas and thoughts in writing. When students are familiar with the concept of descriptive writing, they will be able to practise more with writing

activities and this will help them to improve their writing skills in time. In addition, practising descriptive writing not only helps students with future work but also allows them to have fun and be creative while writing.

However, students encounter challenges in descriptive writing. Writing has been a difficult skill to master (Fareed et al., 2016; Singh et al., 2020; Chua & Yunus, 2020). In writing descriptive texts, the concentration is on what the writer perceives through his/her five senses and tries to communicate that to the reader. The writer aims to describe his/her immediate thoughts on a particular person, object or place. Nonetheless, ensuring sentence correctness and accuracy of writing mechanics complicate the writing process. This has led to students being dissuaded from learning how to write descriptively.

The Use of Pictures in Writing

Illustrations have been widely applied in lessons to improve learning. Pictures are frequently employed as visual triggers to capture the student's attention, motivate and facilitate the development of their analytical thinking skills (Duchastel & Waller, 1979; Levie, 1987; Winn, 1982) as cited in Lee (1996). Through the use of illustrations, students will have a stimulus to write about compared to writing without images. According to Rivers (1989) as cited in Lee (1996),unlike speaking, writing does not come naturally. The truth is, not everyone is able to write expansively and expressively or even inspire themselves to write. Effective writing practices based on the needs of both teacher and student are needed for proper instruction in order to support the acquisition of writing skills (Nusrat, 2016). Clearly, beginning L2 writers frequently face difficulty in forming ideas or minding their grammatical correctness. Therefore, second language writing drills need to be more productive and directed for such learners. Particularly, new second language writers need to be prepared and guided to become experts in writing as a major component in the development of language proficiency.

An effective way to teach writing is using pictures as visual aids. ESL learners should be given ample opportunities to learn how to write and put ideas in writing. In a study conducted by Madut and Yunus (2016), they argued that the use of innovative materials is an unorthodox approach to teaching which helps students become competent in the target 3333language. According to Ediger and Rao (2013), images as well as teaching aids should be available in the classroom to encourage students to write. The pictures and objects may also stimulate learners in writing creative stories. Students will be guided in thinking and writing about the setting, characterization, and the plot of the story. Using images in writing also helps students in generating ideas and expanding their vocabularies (Agustiawati, 2018). As cited in Yusnita et al. (2012), the idea of using the picture series is rooted in the concept that visual

stimulus trains students directly by enhancing their vocabulary and guessing what's going on in the pictures. Students can learn to put their ideas in sentences to share them in written forms. Furthermore, pictures help learners to write with creativity (Yusnita et al., 2012; Asrifan, 2015; Agustiawati, 2018). Students can use their imaginative power to share ideas on what they see creatively in written form. As descriptive writing is important in learning to write among ESL learners, pictures can be something worthwhile to integrate into langauge lessons. Pictures can enhance students' ability in learning to write when they find it is fun and interest to express their ideas freely in sentences. Pictures also develop students' interest and motivation in learning (Hakim, 2010). In addition, motivation is a factor that can contribute to students' success in learning (Hasima, 2020). If students are motivated to write using pictures, the learning outcomes in learning would be optimal.

A number of studies revealed that English teachers frequently search for more impactful methods to teach writing. One of them is using pictures in teaching writing. Abdullah and Yunus (2019) introduced the use of pictures in improving writing skills as one of the best strategies to enhance ESL learners' writing still. Their findings showed positive feedback from the participants who used pictures to encourage themselves to write. Aschawir (2014) revealed that using picture series as visual or pictorial media was effective for teaching English narrative writing. The studies revealed that pictures as visual stimuli offer an attractive and stimulating framework in writing practices and is used by some ESL teachers to improve their students' writing skills. Students' learning style might vary. They are either a combination of visual, kinesthetics or auditory based on what works best. However, research reports that a large number of learners are more visual and kinesthetics or mixed rather than auditory (Dunn & Dunn, 1992; Barbe & Milone, 1981; as cited in Gutierez et al., 2012). This evidence proved that our world is visually oriented and that most of our responses are stimulated non-verbally and even verbal information is better processed when there are visual cues. The way English learners perceive and process information from the world surrounding them is called visual proficiency.

Technology in Writing

The integration of technology in education has become a mainstay. The Fourth Industrial Revolution emphasizes the role of digital technology. Technology has always been a central part of teaching and learning environment (Hudgson, 2013; Ghavifekr et al., 2014; Gilakjani, 2018). Growing access to the internet and technology has improved the students' learning environment. Incorporating technology in teaching and learning has made the learning process more interactive and collaborative (Yunus et al., 2021). We are an evolving technological society and have become dependent on its use in many ways (Costley, 2014).

In education, the advances of technology worldwide have enabled online learning opportunities for students from primary to tertiary giving them access to different kinds of digital learning tools, online applications and other educational web services. Thus, it is becoming more and more difficult to separate the integration of technology from facets of human life.

Incorporating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education plays a crucial part in teaching and learning. Studies have proved that the integration of ICT in the 21st century classroom is profitable to learners (Yunus et al., 2010; Yunus et al., 2012; Hashim et al., 2018). Many schools in Malaysia began adapting the different teaching and learning styles with the aim to cope with the emergence of global learning in the 21st century (Rasamany & Aziz, 2018). Moreover, the integration of suitable tools to enhance learning is the main key in education (Rafiq & Hashim, 2018). By acquiring ICT skills, students are primed to face upcoming issues based on sound knowledge. Students can potentially be prepared for life in the 21st century through ICT.

Technology is a powerful contributor to learning if it is used to deepen students' engagement in meaningful and intellectually authentic curricula. Using technology has become a given when it comes to language learning and the integration of technology into language education has become an everyday feature (Yunus et.al., 2010). Studies revealed that the use of technology in teaching and learning brings positive effects to the English as Second Language classroom. One of them is utilizing technology as an alternative tool in teaching language especially the writing skill. This positive engagement proved that there is a lively and collaborative classroom that could give new insight in the era of technology. A recent study was done by Shararuddin et al. (2021) on 34 pupils from secondary school to investigate the use of technology to enhance ESL learners' descriptive writing. This study was carried out by incorporating technology in writing. The result proved that the use of technology plays a vital role in pupils' active learning and helped them to retain more information. Nevertheless, the advance of technology can enhance students' learning when they have unlimited access of resources and tools that facilitate language learning (Hashim et al., 2016). According to Baytak et al. (2011), children today love to learn by doing, interacting, and discovering. Utilizing technology in classroom has the potential to increase students' motivation, social interactions, positive outcomes, and eventually enhance pupils' engagement in learning. Nevertheless, a lot of technological tools are free-to-use and give teachers a convenient means of producing teaching material (Boonmoh et al., 2021). Technology undoubtedly aids teachers in designing their teaching plans via effective, creative and interesting means that are actively engaging. Previous researches have proven that ICT use in learning enhances the overall process and brings students' active engagement in learning to the highest level (Finger & Trinidad, 2002; Jamieson-Procter et al., 2013). Therefore, it is essential for students

and teachers to be equipped with digital skills to be competent for life-long learning and teaching in this globalized era.

Motivation in Writing

Learners need to be well-motivated when acquiring a language (Pazilah et al., 2019). Motivation is crucial in a child's learning process as it helps the child to develop positive behaviours and performance in language learning. According to Anita and Karderna (2021), motivation is described as the beliefs, drive, needs, passion, or psychological that determining a person or group of people to accomplish certain goals they want to achieve. With regard to this view, motivation is closely interconnected to one's attitude and interest to improve self-efficacy and certain values to achieve targeted goals.

In Malaysian English language classrooms, writing activities are often considered the least favourite activity as students need to complete the writing task by themselves at the end of the lesson. Students find it hard to write when they are concerned about their competence to write and ability to complete the writing tasks assigned by their teachers. As a result, they will be less willing to engage in the activity as they are not interested in the activity. Students' attitudes are impacted by the way writing is taught (Graham et al.,2013). Some methods may not resonate with how the students perceive a task. So, it might end up in them being disinterested. The types of teaching writing methods and approaches in the classroom also will influence the students' attitude to learn. Graham et al. (2013) also argue that their motivation to write shows their perceptions or views on writing. Students' motivation to write is solely based on the set of beliefs that they develop through the language activities. In other words, what students think of the writing task can influence their motivation towards the task. It also contributes to the students' engagement in the task.

Methodology

Sample

This research was conducted in two primary schools. The research involved 10 students whereby 5 were from an urban school in Johor Bahru and 5 were from a rural school in Baram.. The students were selected and divided into two levels, average and advanced students. The reason for this was to see the enhancement the students gained in their writing skills based on their competency levels.

Research Procedure

The research procedure was based on the ADDIE model of instructional system design developed by B. Seel and Z. Glasgow (Wiphasith et al.,2016). This model covers the phases of analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation. Figure 1 illustrates the phases of the ADDIE process starting from analysis to evaluation.

Figure 1

Research Procedure
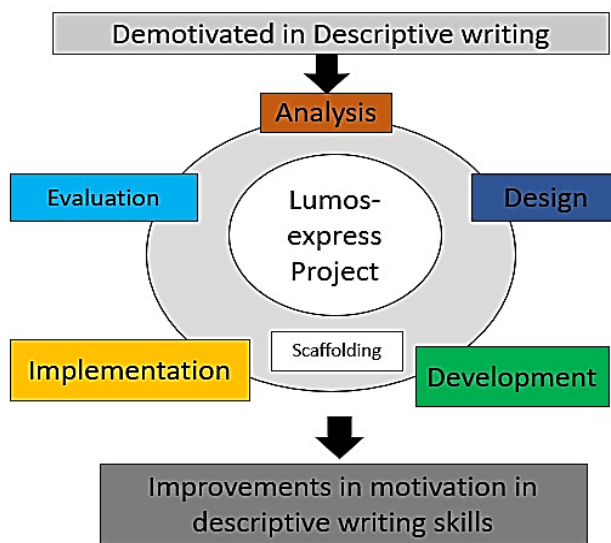
Analysis Phase

The researchers investigated ESL learners' existing knowledge about descriptive writing and problems faced by students in order to overcome their problems in writing. The research was conducted at two schools. A rural school in Baram, Sarawak and an urban school in Johor Bahru. The students were selected and divided into two levels, average and advanced students. The reason for this was to see the enhancement the students acquired in their writing skills based on their competency levels.The students were given a topic and they had to write unguided. The products were kept as data for analysis to identify the leaners' writing problems.

Design Phase

The information collected from the analysis was used to formulate a strategy. The researchers identified the instructional goal of the project which is motivate students to write using the Sketches application as a learning tool to write entries.

Development Phase

The researchers focused on the planning and list of themes for entries. The duration of this project was 8 weeks.

Implementation Phase

The research participants were asked to produce a piece of writing without guidance and the researchers standardized the topics. The first entries without guidance were kept for analysis. Then, they were introduced to the Lumos-express project using Sketches to write. They were guided for the first 3 entries. The students worked independently from fifth entry onward and submitted their entries for feedback and constructive criticism every week. The key factor involved the role of the competent others in scaffolding the students to write entries using the application. During these processes, the students would construct, use pictures and their own experiences in the Lumos-express project.

Evaluation Phase

Evaluation was done through observations, document analysis and interviews. The observations were done during online meetings with the learners. The researchers recorded the observations in field notes during pre, while and post stages of the project. The field note entries were done individually and these entries were used in document analysis. The interviews were conducted through online meetings individually with all the participants also during the pre, while and post stages of the project. Structured exit interviews were recorded after the students completed their last entries. These were done to evaluate the effectiveness of Lumos-Express technique incorporating the Sketches app in motivating the ESL learners to write.

Findings And Discussion

The findings were interesting considering this was the first time the students were introduced to the use of technology and visuals in writing. The objective of this project was to observe the improvements in the students' motivation to write descriptively and to explore the technique of using technology and pictures in enhancing descriptive writing skills. The following paragraphs will describe the findings as a result of data analysis.

Improvement of the ESL Learners' Descriptive Writing Skills

Document Analysis

How does Lumos-Express technique improve primary ESL students' descriptive writing skills? It visualized the students' products as the entries proved that the use of pictures and technology through the use of the app, Tayasui Sketches as a tool for language learning. The key aspect here was that making descriptive writing a very essential but an engaging task was a move in the right direction. It also involved many aspects of language learning as language is acquired through exploring and experiencing. The first finding was the Tayasui Sketches application aroused the students' interest. The application enabled the learners to have free choice, since the students were given autonomy in the topics they explored. In a way, the use of pictures and technology was deemed as a way to experience the process of writing.

Analysis of their end products showed that the learners experienced the need to source information on the topic and the autonomy in learning made the process an engaging task for them especially when it came to choosing the pictures to use. Using decorating tools in their writing was the motivator in the writing process. Throughout the writing process, the learners learned to improve their sentences through trial and error and constructive feedback from the teacher. They explored the language needed to improve their writing through creativity and art in order to produce one of their own. Improvements can be seen in terms of the word count and designs of their entries in the students' essay. Below are some of the pre and post-writing entries produced by learners from a group of average learners.

Figure 2

Products of Pre and Post- Writing entries from Average Group

Respondent 5   Respondent 10

In terms of content, previously, most of the students faced difficulties in expressing their ideas. They could not express their ideas in English and write relevant supporting ideas. By using pictures, the students could express their ideas in English and write relevant

supporting ideas meaningfully. Below are the pre and post-intervention products from the advanced group.

Figure 3

Pre and Post-intervention Products from the Advanced Group

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

Observation

The shift of the students' attitude towards descriptive writing using the Tayasui Sketches technology was an intriguing to witness as it showed a positive result. The learners were observed through participant observation where the observer participated in the group's activities whose behaviour was to be observed. Through the observation, it was noticed that 10 respondents were motivated to write their essays using the application. Their positive attitudes were recorded using field notes three times during the pre, while and post stages of the Lumos-Express project .Below are the Pre Lumos-Express observation of Respondent 2 and Respondent 7 from the advanced group:

Figure 4

Pre Lumos-Express Observation Notes from the Advanced Group

Items / Respondents	What is the respondent doing in the journal entries?	What is the respondent trying to achieve in the journal entries?	What does the researcher see in the respondent attitude towards Lumos-Express??
R2	He can write a few sentences. He includes pictures and doodles in his entry.	He's trying to show his creativity using Sketches to write his entry.	He is motivated.
R7	The respondent looks happy because this particular learner loves art. She's editing the picture using the tools in the application before pasting it on the layout.	The respondent is trying to create an interesting layout for her essay.	She's excited to use the application to write her essay.

Since everybody likes to look at photos, they function as a stimulus to draw the students' attention. Pictures bring the outside world into the classroom in a vivid and imaginative way. This aspect of pictures helps learners generate ideas for their writing. Pictures can motivate the learners and make them want to pay attention and participate. Pictures can contribute to the context in which in the language is being used. Below are the observation notes of 2 students from the average group during implementation of the Lumos-Express project:

Figure 5

Observation Notes of the Average Group during Lumos-Express project

Items / Respondents	What is the respondent doing in the journal entries?	What is the respondent trying to achieve in the journal entries?	What does the researcher see in the respondent attitude towards journaling?
R3	She can write good sentences. She decorates her entry with pictures she found in the internet.	She's trying to be creative in her entry. She's writing and decorating her entry.	She is excited. She is trying to show her creativity in decorating her entry
R8	The respondent is designing her background using the brushes and she's editing her photo using the application.	The respondent is writing her essay and she's designing her essay layout using the application.	The respondent looks so excited and happy with the activity.

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

not perform well in writing despite the task being easy. Thus, feedback and encouragement was given to the students for the next lesson to boost their motivation. At the end of the project, a final observation was made. Figure 6 shows the final observation notes of 2 students (R5 and R10) from the average group.

Figure 6

Final Observation Notes of the Average Group during Lumos-Express project

Items Respondents	What is the respondent doing in the journal entries?	What is the respondent trying to achieve in the journal entries?	What does the researcher see in the respondent attitude towards journaling?
R5	He's writing 3 paragraphs of entry with correct sentences. He includes a picture and doodles as well.	He is trying to show his creativity in writing his entry.	He is motivated and he is so focusing in completing the task.
R10	The respondent looks more confident using the application after a few entries and practice.	The respondent is trying to write his essay and describe his photo using longer sentences (compound sentences).	The respondent looks relaxed, happy and confident compared to the first few entries.

The average learners benefited from the project as well. Their attitude on descriptive writing improved and they were motivated to express their thoughts because they realised that they were in charge of their own learning through the Lumos-Express project. This was perhaps an impact of incorporating technology and pictures in writing where the feedback during scaffolding session gave the students a sense of assurance that they were improving in their writing and motivation.

Interviews

The students were interviewed at the end of the project, after writing their eighth entry. The interview showed that Lumos-Express received positive feedback from the respondents.

Figure 7

Respondents' Feedback
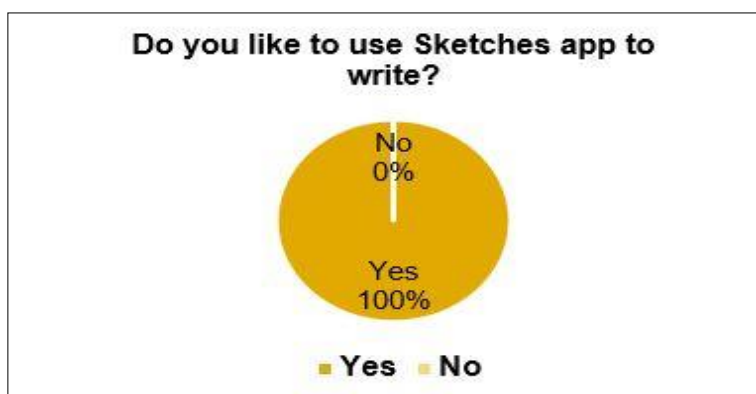
Based on Figure 7, it was clear that all the respondents enjoyed writing using the Tayasui Sketches application. A student, Lola from Baram stated "Yes.I like to use Sketches app to write in English because it's very fun".

The respondent's view on Lumos-Express project using the Tayasui Sketches application indicated a positive reception from the learners. The aspects of autonomy in learning, freedom of creativity and inclusion of technology contributed to this reception. The learners were well aware of the opportunities and discoveries from the application which contributed to their improved motivation to write. This was where the researchers could see that the average learners became one step better while the advanced became a better version of a writer, a motivated writer. As stated by *Justin (Baram): "*Yes.I like to use Sketches app to write in English. It is very fun".

Writing is not an easy feat especially for second language learners. Motivation has to be enhanced and the use of the technology in this research has improved the motivation in these learners so they would be interested to write.

Figure 8

Respondent's Feedback
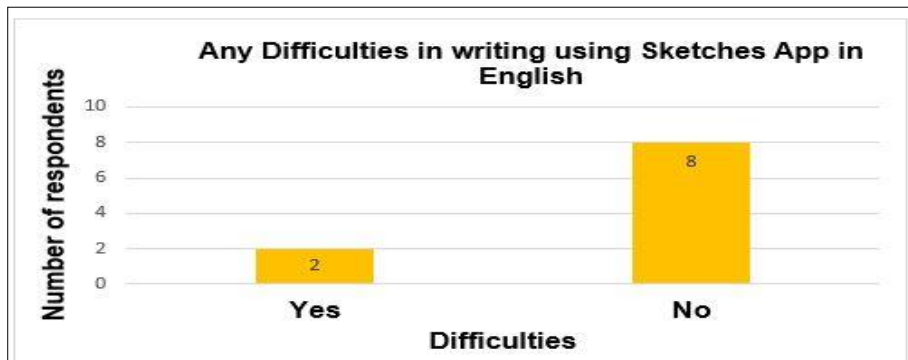
Based on the interview data, two of the respondents mentioned that they had difficulties at the early stages of experimenting with the Tayasui Sketches application. A student from Baram, Joy, said: "Yes, it's difficult to type at first. I practice many times because it's my first-time using apps to write essay".

When it comes to technology in education, being technology savvy is not necessarily a must, as skills and tools can be learned. That was the intriguing discovery of this research. Nowadays, most learners have been using mobile devices like tablets and smartphones to play and learn since they could crawl. Therefore, it is logical to align today's language lessons to the way that learners want and are used to learning. It is one thing to expose learners to technology and a whole different thing to integrate technology and use it to mould creativity.

That was the gem of this research. The learners from two different parts of Malaysia were able to experience these elements in the Lumos-Express project.

Figure 9

Values Learned from using Sketches app to Write
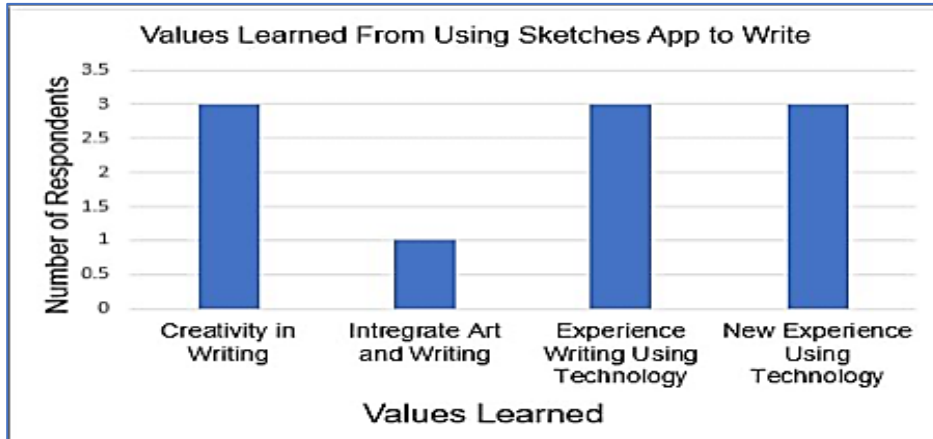
Combining technology and traditional ways to learn would enable the learners to have an enhanced learning experience. As shown in Figure 9, the learners had access to an various new opportunities to learn using the digital app Tayasui Sketches. This technological aspect of the Lumos-Express project empowered learners to be more creative and be more connected. As Lily, a student from Johor Bahru said, "I learned how to write a good English compression using sketches app".

When it comes to writing descriptive essays, learners need to give more attention because mastering descriptive writing can be intricate. According to Raimes (1983: 27), "with a picture, all students, after close observation of the material, will immediately need the appropriate vocabulary, idiom, and sentence structure to discuss what they see". It can help students improve their language use when writing (grammar and vocabulary). Student John from Johor Bahru stated "I learn how to draw and write more sentences".

When the learners write descriptive essays, they should be imaginative and produce ideas which guide them on what to write. Wright (1989) expressed that pictures are often helpful if the learners can respond to a text non-verbally as pictures provide an opportunity for non-verbal response. They also need to understand the sensory detail of the object that they describe and this was where the utilisation of pictures to spark creativity came in handy. Moreover, they need motivation to keep them writing the descriptive piece and this was the function of using the Sketches technology for this Lumos-Express project. Justin (Baram) mentioned "I learn to draw, edit pictures and use cool fonts to write an essay".

According to Wright (1989:17), pictures can motivate learners to pay attention and take part in the lesson. They also help to bring the context of any situations into the writing, thus enable the writer to creatively express their ideas.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that Lumos-Express received positive feedback from the learners. After triangulating findings from the three data collection instruments, it was found that Lumos-Express is able to motivate learners to write. During the 8 weeks of project implementation, the increase in motivation can be observed and this proved that using Tayasui Sketches application in Lumos-Express technique is a good technique to motivate students in descriptive writing.

The use of technology to incorporate visuals to aid writing has made the process of writing an intriguing one and with the autonomy given to the learners, the process became meaningful as the content was chosen by the learners themselves. The most remarkable aspect of the Lumos-Express project was the application of visual technology to motivate ESL learners to write and more importantly, enhance their writing skill.

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8   Digitisation Best Practices And IR 4.0

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Abstract

As the closure of schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic disrupts education, we, educators have turned to online teaching to keep lessons going. I have brought a lot of fun online learning tools into the classroom, such as Wordwall, Quizizz, Wakelet, Padlet, Edpuzzle, Liveworksheets, Assemblr Augmented Reality (AR). Actively embracing technology and digital knowledge re-energized my students as they were keen on the 21st century teaching pedagogy especially the use of 3D augmented reality (3D AR) in the classroom using the Assemblr app. Digitisation greatly enhances teaching and learning. Digitisation best practisces show how web-based technology can be used effectively in education 4.0. When face-to-face learning is not possible, the internet and video-conferencing allow interactions to take place between teachers and students in an online classroom environment. The evaluation of students in an online classroom can be more exciting using Wordwall game ranking rather than traditional classroom assessments. It is hoped that this paper will inform the reader on the pivotal role that technology can play in teaching and learning. More research is required in this field of study to ensure that lecturers or facilitators are equipped to provide effective online teaching and learning.

Keywords: Digitisation, technology, teaching, learning, education 4.0

Introduction

Education 4.0 is a response to the needs of IR4.0, where human and machine coordinate together to create new possibilities in the new education. Learning skills in education 4.0 need to combine life skills and innovative skills with a combination of 21st century skills which are leadership, collaboration, creative, digital literacy, effective communication, emotional intelligence, entrepreneurship, global citizen, problem-solving and teamwork. Adopting a combination these skills is the key element to encourage learners to use intelligent agents and using mobile technologies and cloud computing can promote interactive education. With the advancement of technologies, the education field has integrated mobile technologies as an educational tool that can be used within and beyond the classroom. The adoption of mobile technology creates an interactive learning environment. Thus, it makes the learning process more student-centred, meaningful and is able to encourage students to explore their creativity and encourage innovation.

The latest evolution of technology has led to an exciting yet challenging environment. For example, mobile technology has become essential for most educators and learners. Modern technology-based learning has changed from the traditional textbook to interactive

and captivating digital applications or apps, from boring classrooms to smart classrooms and from silent learners to active learners. By using technology, it helps to create a better environment for the learning process.

In addition, most learners of today are from the Millennial generation and hence are digital natives. The most significant characteristic of these learners is they have been raised and exposed to technology since birth. In general, they need an alternative method of teaching and learning to ensure they are actively engaged in the learning process as well as achieve satisfaction in a learning environment. Consequently, teachers or educators who use technology in teaching and learning indirectly will motivate these learners and enhance the effectiveness of their teaching as technology plays a big role in achieving the students' learning goals.

Literature Review

Interactive Jeopardy Style Quiz

The interactive Jeopardy Style Quiz is a fun game to enhance the teaching and learning process. It can be used to help students prepare for a test or examiniation, review a teaching unit or even be introduced to a new unit. Communication features can be added to encourage interaction between students and the teacher. It can be used to augment the teaching and learning process. Teachers can choose from a diverse range of online features to communicate and interact with learners. Differentiation is applied as the difficulty levels of the questions are different.

Blended Learning

Blended learning is a method of combining online content and activities in a strategic, scholastically valuable way to add to and enhance the learning process (Perera et al., 2020). Blended learning occurs where the instructor or teacher combines the use of web pages and audio-visual material such as online video clips with his/her lecture notes to help the learners to absorb the information presented in the lecture. Blended learning can take place when facilitators provide lecture notes to students online before hosting webinars. For example, in a language class, combining technologically mediated learning with class debates can promote a better understanding of the subject matter in the students. When used with the student as the focal point, blended learning can increase the learners' awareness of the course content. Teachers can use blogs and online platforms to upload lecture notes before class discussions.

Gamification

Gamification is a form of blended learning. Gamification occurs when a teacher converts parts of a lesson into a game to encourage student participation. Gamification augments the learner's contribution in both the online classroom and traditional classroom settings. This enhances teaching and learning in the education sector. Students are often easily engaged with the gamified technique while absorbing knowledge from the content because it is fun and enjoyable. For example in higher education, introducing gamification in programming courses can encourage students to participate and helps the students to learn more from the course (Arason, 2019). Researchers believe that students' achievements in gamified online assessments should motivate them to augment their interests. In an online learning environment, students can apply what they have learned, and higher educational institutions can observe the student's level of performance (Arason, 2019). Pandey (2017) argues that since the online learning environment is very responsive, learners are motivated to impart their understanding of the content. When 'gamified solutions' meet the students' preferences their co-operation in the learning process increases, allowing knowledge to be retained by the learners. Pandey (2017) also regards gamification being used in online assessments as a means to enhance the students' interests and thereby heighten the learners' participation. If the gamified online assessments are tailored to meet the students' educational needs, the retention of knowledge is assured. There are, however, limitations to gamification being used as a form of online assessment.

Useful Digital Applications For Teaching and Learning

This section shares several digital applications or apps that are not only useful teaching aids but also promote student engagement and fun learning.

Wordwall

This app is the easiest way to create teaching resources. Teachers can make custom activities for the classroom like match up game, quiz, random wheel, matching pairs, true or false, maze chase and so on in an interactive way. Pupils enjoy the game and are inclined to compete for high scores on the leaderboard, thus helping them to strive harder. This app can be easily accessed at https://wordwall.net/.

Interactives and printables: Wordwall can be used to create both interactive and printable activities. Most of our templates are available in both an interactive and a printable version. Interactives are played on any web-enabled device, like a computer, tablet, phone or

interactive whiteboard. They can be played individually by students, or be teacher-led with students taking turns at the front of the class. Printables can printed out directly or downloaded as a PDF file. They can be used as a companion to the interactive or as stand-alone activities.

Switching template: Once you've created an activity, you can switch it to a different template with a single click. This saves you time and is great for differentiation and reinforcement. For example, if you created a Match activity based on names of shapes, you could turn it into a Crossword with the exact the same shape names. In the same way we can turn your resource into a Quiz or a Wordsearch and many more possibilities too.

Figure 1

Templates Available in Wordwall.
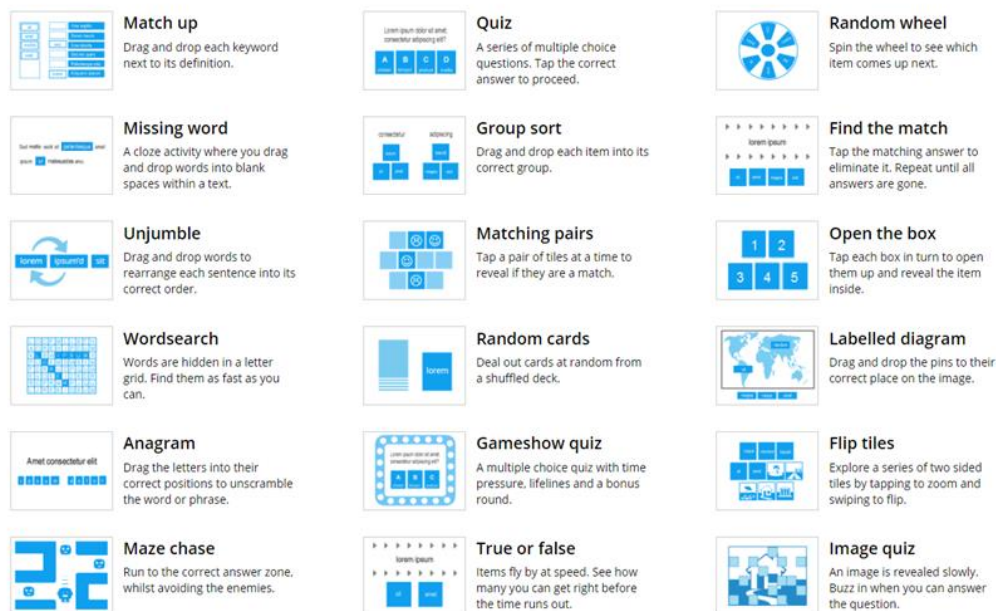
Quizziz

Quizziz is an online quiz platform where teachers can pick an online quiz for their lesson or create their own. They can choose from millions of free teacher-created quizzes or quickly make one themselves. Students engage at their own pace. They can play a live game together or use homework mode. Students use any device and progress independently. Another great advantage of Quizziz is feedback can be included in the quiz and no grading required for every quiz. This online quiz app can be accessed https://quizizz.com/. Another example of a popular online quiz that teachers can use in their teaching is Kahoot which shares similar features with Quizziz.

Assemblr Augmented Reality (AR)

Assemblr is a digital app that helps you create a more accessible and exciting learning experience in 3D & AR. Teachers can turn lessons into stunning 3D visuals and models. Assemblr EDU is the one-stop platform for students and teachers to enjoy learning in 3D & augmented reality (AR) and interactive lessons. Explore the Assemblr EDU website at https://edu.assemblrworld.com/ for examples. The Assemblr app can be downloaded from Google Play Store.

Interactive Jeopardy Style Quiz Game

Communication features can be added to encourage interaction between students and the lecturer. It can be used to augment the teaching and learning process. Facilitators can choose from a diverse range of online features to communicate and interact with learners. Differentiation is applied as the difficulty levels of the questions are different. It can be accessed at the website by typing Interactive Jeopardy Style Quiz Game in Google search

Tips/Strategies and Reminders for Teachers

Social influence is one of the factors that influences learners' intention to use technology in learning English. This factor, which includes the influence of teachers and peers, can affect students' behaviour during the learning process using such technology. Thus, the integration of mobile technology can enhance learner motivation leading to better teaching and learning for both educators and learners. Therefore, teachers should try to adopt and adapt mobile technology as an educational tool because it can affect the learning process as well as raise students' motivation towards the learning process.

Additionally, provide students with suitable and interesting digital teaching materials. Such use of technology to support language learning improves students' perception of learning as something interesting which they would like to embark on. For example, the use of Wordwall as explained in the previous section can boost learner perception and ultimately, enhance motivation.

In order to create an interactive technology-based learning environment, teachers' perception about traditional teaching and learning methods has to change. Their mindset has to be more forward-looking and they should be more open to exploring and incorporating new technologies in their teaching practices. The use of the digital apps employed with my students and described in this paper has shown that these practices can encourage students to actively

participate and concentrate on the learning activities. Calabrich (2016) reports that learners' perception of mobile devices as learning tools are positive because they provide learners with visual scaffolding as they search for information and learning material online. Additionally, the level of acceptance of tasks given by the teachers was surprisingly high as students felt confident to complete the task assigned.

Conclusion

The future of using mobile technology in language education is promising and the features provided in mobile applications are captivating. This paper shares some impactful best practices. The results of learning from my experience raise some issues that require some improvements in teaching and learning English using mobile technology. It can be concluded that technology has an impact on academic performance and also student motivation and engagement, leading the students to benefit from an enhanced quality of learning. Future work should be to eliminate the gaps in the existing techniques and to design a model to support teaching and learning English using technology in line with 21st century education to further meet the needs of Education 4.0

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9   EAP Course Design : A Practitioner's Perspective

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Abstract

While several EAP scholars have underscored the need for course design collaboration among all its concerned stake holders; subject teachers, institutional administrators, ESL teachers and students, the ground realty is that this idea is often ignored. This paper explains the critical need to put two key stakeholders, namely learners and their educators, at the forefront of EAP course design. Giving them greater control and autonomy will foster wellness for both parties and facilitate far more effective learning. The paper describes how an experienced EAP practitioner can, and should, play a much larger role than being an ESL teacher - that of curriculum designer and educational advisor. This process will be illustrated by a concrete example of a course which will include its outline, assessment and evaluation tools. The paper will also illustrate that such a process does not necessarily require a lot of additional resources.

Keywords: Course design, English for academic purposes, practitioner perspective

Introduction

My EAP experience has been teaching Advanced Language Skills and Academic Writing at the private language school EF (Education First) Singapore and I have found it increasingly challenging to find an effective common pedagogic language.

It is this need to cater effectively to such a disparate group of learners, both in terms of their cultural and academic backgrounds, as well as their language ability levels within a specified time frame that has prompted me to ask why we do not have more customized courses for our EAP learners? Is there really a need to stick to standardized texts often coming out of the U.K.? It is this question I have endeavored to address in this paper.

What is EAP?

Scholars see English for Academic Purposes as part of English for Special Purposes. Gillet (1996) sees it as a branch in which the teaching content is matched to the requirements of the learners and it is this matching of content to an ever- evolving set of requirements that is a challenge and has precipitated my desire to explore this particular specialism. Hamp-Lyons (2016) who also sees it as having specific practical needs emphasizes that it is clearly rooted in an academic context and thus distinct from ESP. She traces some of its discourse

to earlier practitioner, Peter Strevens, who described EAP as moving away from the literature and culture of English speakers to teaching a practical command of the language.

Thus, while there has been much scholarly agreement on the need to cater to special or customized needs of students, my practical, albeit arguably limited, experience has been diametrically opposite to this imperative.

The academic textbooks I have been assigned to teach do not appear to have had my learners as their target group or indeed even be particularly evolving to suit their needs and interests, and it is against this background that I have approached this process of a customized course design.

The rising demand for EAP programmes from increasingly diverse geographies is not an entirely new trend. Academics have explored this rising demand (both online and face to face) for EAP classes. It is the direct result of the rising international importance of English in academic discourse all over the world as Kennedy (2001) has pointed out. Flowerdew and Peacook (2001) have also demonstrated how EAP teachers now face an increasingly disparate set of learners.

One group of learners might have used English as a lingua franca and thereby have a deep familiarity if not an ease with using English as a second language. On the other hand, for learners from countries that have had no links to England, it is far more alien and often a "foreign" language. Another group of learners (from the former Soviet block) lies somewhere in between having used Russian as a second language and possibly English as a third. This inevitably leads to the multiple ability levels in the typical EAP classroom today and in my experience the trend scholars noted nearly twenty years ago has only gotten stronger.

However, students' needs, as well as institutional constraints and international standards do not always come together. In fact, EAP courses do not necessarily match their wants and expectations of its local student body. In their study on educational restructuring in Hong Kong, Bruce and Hamp-Lyons (2015) have documented the tensions that were found between local students' needs and desired international standards and suggest specific locally designed, fit for purpose tool rather than one aligned with universal standards.

My typical classroom used to have learners only from East Asia. Today we have students from Central and East Asia, South America, Europe. This ever- increasing demand has led me to explore the crux of the issue that has should inform course design.

What is the **Level of Specificity required by EAP Learners?**

EAP academic support material comprises texts that analyse a common set of high-level linguistic structures and vocabulary items. Some scholars believe that learners need to master the linguistic "core" that they need in order to move on to academic studies in English. Flowerdew and Peacook (2001) have examined this "common core hypothesis" and disagree. They argue that it is possible to learn the common core at the same time as learning the specific variety of EAP. They have also concluded this simultaneous learning method to be more cost effective.

In practice, teachers are often faced with low ability level students that have to be brought up to speed in terms of the discipline specific language and tasks that are required by an EAP programme.

It has been argued that with its focus on language items, a focus on a common linguistic core neglects some linguistic skills and study skills such as notetaking. However, a mixed level student body is not necessarily a stumbling block.

I believe that this is precisely what EAP practitioners can and should address in course design, in choosing resources even as they take into account the pragmatic constraints of institutional requirements such as scheduling. Differentiated tasks and course materials can be incorporated as well as remedial learning. It is against this backdrop that I embarked on and endorse a customized EAP program such as the model that will be discussed in detail.

My aim is to demystify the process of course design in a pragmatic way and provide a simple step by step guide to facilitate this process.

Needs Analysis and Commentary

Scholars have observed most EAP students undertake fixed term courses in preparation for an academic course. This is the baseline regardless of the issue of ability level addressed above. Thus, the specialism of EAP is particularly goal directed, and firmly grounded in practical needs.

So how or where can one begin? I propose starting with the common denominator. It is a specific needs-based discipline. This specific **needs-based** principle therefore has to begin with a detailed needs analysis. How should one address its increasing disparate demands in terms of divergent learners needs, backgrounds, and ability levels? This is the critical factor in informing the design of this EAP course and will be further explored and analyzed.

In order to inform the design of a **learner-centered** course there is a need to identify and define the strengths, weaknesses and desires of students. This is to ensure course relevance.

To start the needs analysis it is imperative to draw up a **profile** of one's learners. This particular profile needs some explanation. The EAP course was carried out against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and strict travel restrictions that in Singapore involved a rigorous 14-day period of quarantine at a government dedicated facility which these students undertook before they attended face-to-face classes and accounts for the small sample size. The learner profile was as follows:

LEARNER PROFILE

Demographics: 4 students

- Gender: Male and Female
- Age: 18- 20
- Nationality: PRC, Macau, Kazakhstan, Russia

Cognitive Characteristics:

- Language ability: CEFR: A2- C1
- Educational level: Year 12- formal education

Affective Characteristics:

- Attitude towards learning: positive: high motivation related to performance grades
- Preferred Location for University: Singapore, Australia, the UK
- Anxiety towards English: mid-high

Social Characteristics:

- Relationship with peers: Collaborative team players, enjoy pair and group work
- Access to electronic resources: access to the Internet 24/7
- Social background: educated, middle/upper-middle class

Based on this profile, I proceeded to the next step - the **needs identification** process. Graves (2000) has underscored the importance of the teachers being at the center of course design, and make a more effective assessment of needs before they actually start teaching. The only information I had is that my learners have a pragmatic need to complete their EAP course as a stepping stone to pursuing a tertiary degree. They made different choices about the geographic location and university subject specialization they wanted the following year, but were united by one finite aim - to begin their further tertiary studies within one academic

year. However, there were many disparities in their evolving needs both in terms of ability and academic skills needed.

Macalister (2012) discussed the use of narrative frames and needs analysis to inform the goal and content of the course. Keeping this principle in mind I honed in on two **diagnostic tools**: A needs analysis questionnaire and a focus group interview to identify similarities and disparities.

Needs analysis questionnaire

A needs analysis questionnaire is a practical and transparent tool to gather information quickly. It can be kept as a record by the institution and the wording adapted by me (an ESL teacher) rather than using other standardised forms.

Macalister (2012) also points out that teachers, being engaged with authentic situations, play a pivotal role in providing insights that would otherwise not be possible and that their stories could be adapted for material design. Thus, the design of this questionnaire was further informed by a focus group.

Focus group interviews

The focus group interviews were conducted with a group of qualified ESL as well as subject specific teachers who have been teaching the University Foundation (UFY) specialist modules for a number of years and I believe that their opinions (based on experience of this particular student profile combined with familiarity of institutional needs) was essential to hone my research.

Findings from Diagnostic Tools

Need Analysis Questionnaire

Analysis of the needs amalysis questionnaire yielded the finding that all learners wanted:

1. weekly assessments

2. speaking and writing rather than listening and reading. Therefore, listening and reading were not included in the diagnostic test that followed.

3. public speaking. In order to pinpoint specific needs (as to whether remedial conversation classes were necessary), a speaking component was included to gauge oral presentation and conversational skills.

4. writing practice. In order to target specific areas, a writing task was given as part of the Diagnostic Test.

Focus Group Interviews

The focus group interviews revealed a range of perceived learner needs:

1. familiarisation with technical terms used in various disciplines (Business, Math, Accounting, Management). This is due to the wide range of professional disciplines students want to pursue e.g. business management, architecture and dentistry.

2. study skills

3. academic writing

4. formal discourse

Diagnostic Test (DT)

In order to assess specific linguistic abilities, a Diagnostic Test was then conducted and assessed in accordance with the school's standard criterion. The aim of this diagnostic test was to conduct a Present Situation analysis (what can the learners do with their language skills) in order to reach the target situation analysis; that is, to help formulate specific measurable relevant goals and objectives about what the students will be/should do at the end of the course.

Features of the DT

1. Several skills (speaking, writing) and systems (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, discourse) were tested in different ways to get a more accurate picture and serve the purpose of triangulation of data.

2. The test comprised speaking, writing and grammar. The oral part consisted of questions/discussions and speaking about a topic.

3. It was also an integrative test which included vocabulary, pronunciation and use of discourse structures.

4. There was a indirect test of grammar structures and vocabulary in an essay writing component.

5. There were discrete test-items to assess grammar tenses and modal verbs. The purpose of grammar was an indirect test of skills underlying accurate language production

6. It was a direct test with an an authentic task i.e. a conversation on familiar topics any international student would require outside the classroom.

7. The test had face validity with a format familiar to most students (e.g. gap fill)

8. As a diagnostic tool, the test was valid as it was able to determine the learners' individual strengths and weaknesses.

It was after analysis of these three instruments, namely a) needs analysis questionnaire b) diagnostic test and c) focus group interview, that I could proceed to the next step of determining course priorities, aims and objectives and other design aspects of the course.

The course goals are what Benesch (1996) describes as "pragmatic and critical" based on real demands but also open to the possibility of change.

The course priorities identified were:

1. Business vocabulary

2. Business writing genres e.g. business emails, report writing, sales brochure

3. Speaking - discussions and short presentations (according to IELTS format)

Results of Needs Analysis

Needs analysis forms were distributed to the four students in the sample to self-identify their needs as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Needs Analysis Forms filled by the Students
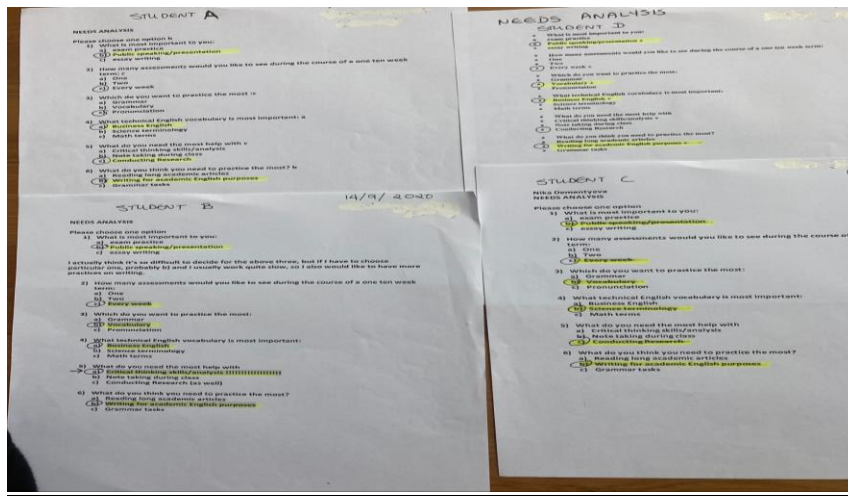
Table 1

Needs as identified by Students

Skills/Systems	No of Students	Skills/Systems	No of Students
Exam Practice	0	Critical Thinking Skills	1
Public Speaking	4	Note taking skills	0
Academic Writing	4	Conducting Research	3
Grammar	0	Academic Reading	0
		Weekly Assessment	4

Total number of students: 4

Figure 2

Visual Representation of Selected Data from Needs Analysis and Diagnostic Test Results
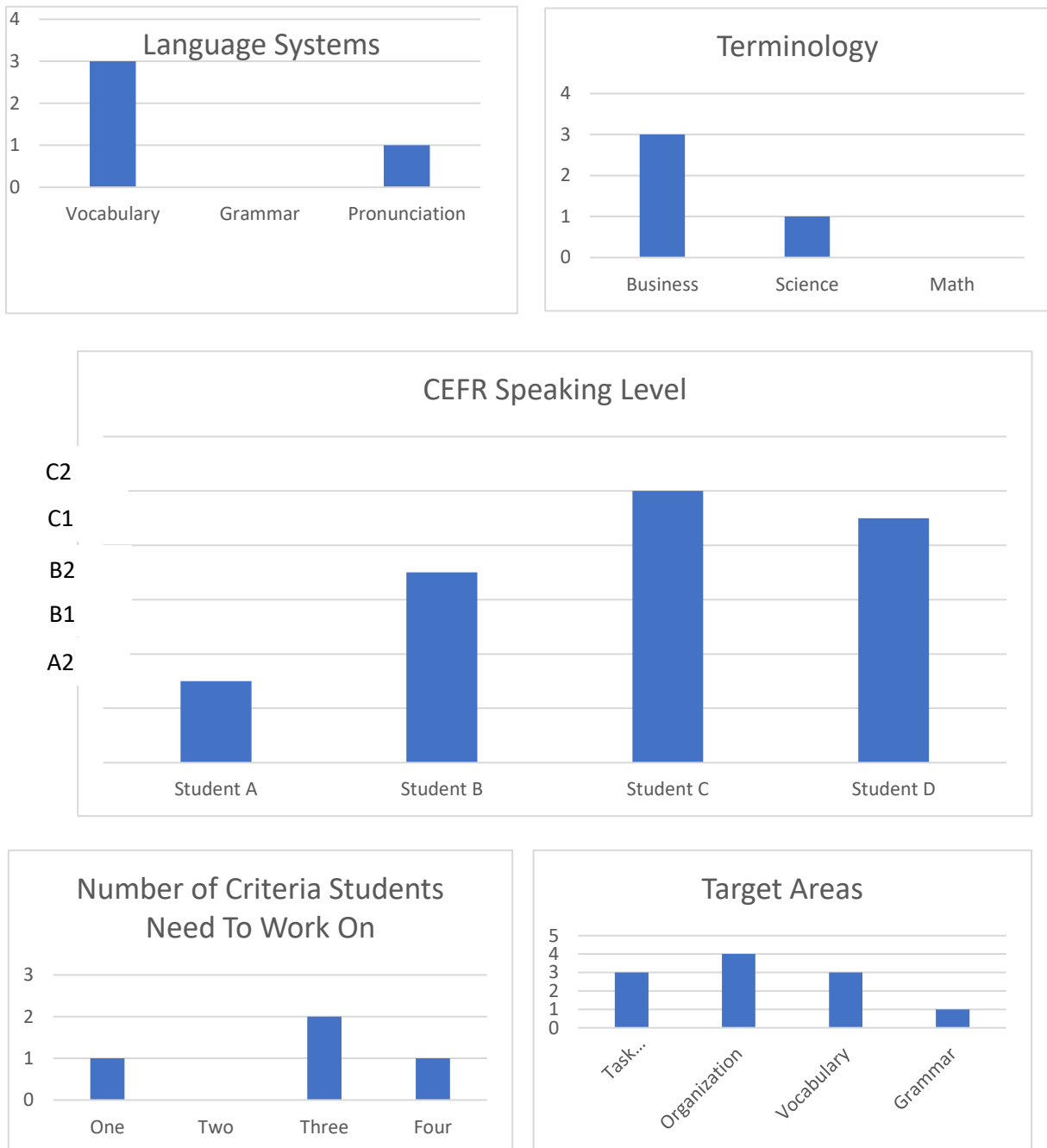
Proposed Course Design

Learning Aims

The general learning aim of the proposed course is to boost the learners' language competence for a more successful engagement in the University Foundation Year (Business) programme at EF, Singapore.

Learning Goals

There are three goals to be almost evenly implemented over the 20-hour course which comprises 10 lesson blocks of 2 hours each. Each needs to be clearly outlined at the onset of the proposed course. The learning goals are as follows:

1. Learners will be able to fill in linguistic gaps in business vocabulary.

   a) Learners will be better able to understand the content of other modules in the programme such as Accounting and Finance, Marketing and International Business (often delivered lecture style)

   b) Learners will have a greater familiarity with specific terminology related to Business and Finance for productive use

2. Learners will be familiar with certain writing genres and be able to:

   a) distinguish the purpose and style of different business texts - emails, sales pitches, reports

   b) practise these genres and receive targeted feedback on their production

3. Learners will be able to develop their public speaking skills

   a) Self-confidence will be boosted through planning and practising oral presentations

   b) Learners will be better equipped to create content for formal/business presentations-sales pitches, media conferences, business meetings

   c) Practice/preparation for IELTS Speaking Test Parts 2/3 (format, requirements, assessment criterion of standardized exam)

Key Principles of Syllabus Design

Graves (2000) has emphasized the importance of defining one's course according to the context. In light of this, the syllabus was designed based on the learners' role as future Business students.

Keeping the high ability level (CEFR C1) of most of my students in mind and that their language performance is anticipated to meet their needs, I have chosen:

1. an **ANALYTIC** syllabus as opposed to synthetic syllabus planning.

Nunan et al. (1988), distinguished between these two types of syllabi; they identified one feature of an analytic syllabus with presenting learners with language chunks that include structures of varying difficulty. I believe that at my learners' ability level, there is no need to introduce discrete language items (for example, grammar structures) and hence no need to for "synthetic" approach.

2. a **combination of PROCESS and PRODUCT**.

By this I mean that the focus is largely on the knowledge (in this case Business knowledge) and skills that the learners will gain through instruction. Business knowledge is the product. However, the process also plays a central part in that each lesson involves a series of actions directed towards an end. While the set of learning experiences is important, it is not the ultimate end although each lesson culminates in a product.

3. a **TASK-based approach**.

As Nunan (1988) points out the underlying principles for a procedural syllabus (as discussed above) and a task-based one are very similar. The syllabus is not a list of items determined through linguistic analysis but of a specification of the tasks and activities that learners will engage in. (Refer course content, sample lesson plan) These are in keeping with my learner profile (See Social/Affective Characteristics and CEFR level).

Rationale/Advantages of this Syllabus

- Incidental learning and control of language partially acquired will automatically take place during speaking tasks (for example, IELTS Speaking prep tasks) This will be facilitated by both teacher and peer feedback in keeping with Goal 3a and 3c.

- It gives the teacher a better chance to assess, in a formative and summative way, what language development is taking place as he/she has more opportunity to highlight

features of correction as learners perform their tasks. The corrections will come out of the language being produced and will be recast.

- Having a defined task will act as a motivational factor for students as opposed to being presented by a set linguistic structure or a series of exercises.

Teaching Approach

Jordan (2005) has made a distinction between a learning-centered approach rather than a learner-centered approach which involves looking at but not necessarily completely following the desires expressed by the learners. This is the principle teaching approach; for example, Student C's desire for Science vocabulary has been ignored, no specific exam preparation was expressed but IELTS preparation practice has been included. (Refer -Needs analysis questionnaire)

Ellis(2020) has described the features of tasks and the tasks in this syllabus will follow many of the features he has outlined. Tasks will be teacher generated in accordance with the principal approach stated above. Furthermore, tasks will be real life and not pedagogic exercises in keeping with the principles of syllabus design already described. They will largely be output-based in keeping with some of the expressed desires in the Needs Analysis questionnaire. They will be unfocussed in that no particular linguistic feature is the focus - instead tasks will involve holistic communication which is in line with the procedural and analytic principles described above.

Course Content Organisation

The 20-hour course will be held over a 10-week term and will consist of one 2-hour in person/synchronous lesson block per week. The lesson will comprise of a series of tasks that may not be completed in one session so may carry over to work done outside the classroom. The final lesson block will be a formal assessment - an oral presentation.

Sequence: The first lesson blocks will be devoted to goal 1 i.e. vocabulary building which will be followed by writing (goal 2) and these should give the students time to have the confidence for a speaking based (goal 3) lesson. The last 2-hour lesson block will consist of a group PowerPoint presentations on business related topics so that learners have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning.

My experience is that most learners need a little time before they feel comfortable to demonstrate their speaking and it will be also an opportunity to recycle some of the vocabulary from the first couple of lessons.

Institutional Constraints/Influences

The proposed course has been designed not to overlap with the existing modules. It is based on a combination of the selected materials from the texts listed below. Each addresses a specific goal.

Materials to be Adapted

1. *Market Leader Banking and Finance Business English* (2000) by Christine Johnson Publisher: Pearson Education Limited, England.

   - Reproduction of articles from the Financial Times. Reading techniques (gist, detail and intensive skills) will be employed to familiarise students with vocabulary for both receptive and productive purposes for Goal 1. These are chosen for their authentic materials (news articles)

2. *EF Business English Projects* (2009) by Education First.
   Publisher: Education First.

   - Selected tasks in this in-house textbook will be used to culminate in production of a different writing genre, for example, sales letter (Goal 2)

3. *Cambridge English: Objective IELTS* (2006) by Michael Black and Annette Capel.
   Publisher: Cambridge University Press.

   - Speaking exercises will serve a dual purpose; as examination preparation for subsequent module and to boost speaking confidence using Official Cambridge text preparation material. (Goal 3)

Table 2

Sample Lesson Plan

Lesson	Duration/Goal	Activities	Materials/Syllabus Principles
1	**2 hours** **Goal: #1 b** Introduction of vocabulary related to Business and Finance for Productive use <u>Sub-Aims</u> 1) Practise writing a dialogue 2) Practise reading techniques-gist and detail 3) Gauge meaning from context	• Video (without sound) of bank manager and client opening a bank account • Learners watch, then imagine dialogue and create own role play (pairs) • Reading – The One Account: "It's all for One- and One for all" (FT article) • Comprehension discussion (Group followed by True/False exe B (Teacher monitors) • Vocabulary work- Teacher elicits meaning of T/L (Ex A, B,) , Learners do exercises and then make own sentences (individual) • Change partners, create dialogue and re do role play using T/L (Pairs) • Quiz	Market leader Banking and Finance, Christine Johnson Pearson Education Ltd 2000 p12- 15 (adapted) Refer Doc 2 Task involved: Teacher generated Role Play Analytic-language chunks (expressions) Assessment: In Class quiz

Assessment

The What and the Why

Assessment involves making a judgement on learning to facilitate optimal communication. The onus is on the teacher to set up practice activities or authentic opportunities for learners to listen, think, take risks with the language in a safe environment and recycle the skills and systems needed to master or, at a minimum, make progress with the language. It can also be viewed as an effective means to evaluate a wider domain knowledge rather than just measuring specific abilities within a particular domain.

My "mandate", to borrow a term from Fulcher (2010) and others, is to both test and assess in the broader sense and is purely internal and can be established solely by me in my role as teacher. The needs relate to the context and therefore assessment is under local control for purposes of this course and I believe this is in the best interest of both the educator and learner at this stage of the programme.

While the pitfalls of testing have been well documented, EAP is a specific needs-based discipline and my learners have specified their desire for tertiary study in the UK and/or Australia and Singapore. These universities need information about a prospective student's language ability. Dependable measures of language ability are crucial. Hughes (2003) has stressed the need for standardized internationally recognized testing systems and so I have chosen only Summative testing. This course is *a complement* to the formal UFY (University Foundation Year) programme.

The purpose of the summative assessment is two-fold for learners and the teacher. This assessment will measure what learners have grasped at the end of each two-hour lesson block which is regarded as one unit of instruction.

1. It is in line with the learners' (and their parents') expectations. The motivation for summative testing is mainly from the perspective of the learners. My students, mostly Asians, are used to having a concrete record of summative tests to refer to as a gauge of their progress (often needed by parents/guardian who live overseas) which can be a highly motivating factor as this record is a chance for learners to prove their abilities. While Fulcher (2010) has pointed out that the evidence for the purpose of testing to motivate has been largely anecdotal, I believe that it will be a crucial factor for my students to review their classwork and will have a beneficial backwash, that is, a positive impact on learners' motivation or engagement. Having specific grades will allow students, teachers and the academic institution to visibly demonstrate learner progress from the point of entry to the end of the academic year.

2. As a teacher I need to see the gaps, if any, between instruction and learners' internalization of the material so as to close these gaps and focus on future learning activities. Summative assessments will help me achieve this. Furthermore I have ensured that the frequency of assessment is in direct keeping with the students' expressed desires in the needs analysis.

Bachman and Palmer (1996) have warned us against falling prey to the many misconceptions and limitations of language tests and have concluded that there is no single "model" test. By definition any single model will disadvantage at least some students. Keeping their principle of "usefulness" of testing in mind which I see as validity; (that is, is the test testing what it's supposed to measure?), I have decided not to use any single formal test/s or an existing exam. I believe that it will not serve any particular purpose for this course and may in fact, have the detrimental effect of creating anxiety. Therefore, formal exams/tests will not dominate the assessment. Instead the summative assessment will be in the form of an "achievement" grade awarded at the end of each lesson block. It is based on in-class quizzes and assigned speaking and writing tasks. These factors and the course objectives have informed my assessment design.

Assessment Criteria

Assessment criteria are designed in accordance with the IELTS assessment criteria but will be applied using CEFR band descriptors. The assessments have the criterion validity that Hughes (2003) has described, with predictive and concurrent validity. In this course the functions are very clearly specified according to the course objectives (e.g. IELTS speaking tasks) so the criteria outlined are a valid measure. Ideally Hughes (2003) asserts that the teacher should not be the tester but given resource constraints on the ground this assessment has practicality in terms of administration. The final lesson uses another tester. The final grade will be the average over the 10-week term.

Assessment Methods

The assessment methods of this course are designed as part of a **reference framework** for students, teachers and the academic administration of the school in conjunction with the complementary UFY Business programme. Table 3 shows the mapping of assessment methods against the course goals. Learners will be awarded a grade at the end of the term.

Table 3

Mapping of Assessment Methods against Goals

Goal	Assessment Method
1. Filling in linguistic gaps - business vocabulary	Vocabulary Quiz
2. Familiarity with writing genres	Written submissions
3. Oral presentations for unfamiliar audience	Recorded (audio/video) submissions

Course Evaluation

Just as this course began with research about the needs of learners, it must conclude with research into its efficacy. Therefore, a survey will be carried out and it will be administered to :

- the learners on course completion
- the teachers of the main UFY programme whose modules this complement. It will therefore be administered in the middle so teachers have had a chance to assess its value. The respondents are my colleagues who were part of the Focus Group that were interviewed for the Need Analysis and helped inform its design.

In addition, as I will be delivering this course I will keep a weekly reflective journal and use these notes to supplement the survey.

Conclusion

This course has addressed the main EAP issues. This discipline demands very specific linguistic goals for a disparate student body with various cultural backgrounds and linguistic abilities. In order to cater to the needs of the learners as well as the EAP course itself, the course design is informed by thorough needs analysis. The criterion-referenced assessment component is also carefully planned to facilitate individualised instruction and cater to each learner's individual ability level.

Despite some institutional constraints, the course will be a success as it will reduce the affective filter learners have when they start the formal UFY program. It will also expand their vocabulary in a tangible way, as well as boost oral presentation skills and writing conventions that learners are unlikely to be familiar with. This will be of great benefit to both learners and

their teachers. I believe the course evaluation will find that the course has successfully provided for a stronger foundation for the learners' academic English studies particularly in terms of their communicative skills. It is in this way, I believe that educators can fulfill specific needs of an increasingly diverse and disparate group of EAP students thus catering to the wellness of both educator and learner effectively.

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10   EFL, SDGs And Leadership In Theory And In Practice

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Abstract

The Global Leadership Program at Kyushu Sangyo University is a collaboration between the university's International Office and the United Nations (UN) Habitat office, located in Fukuoka. Up to 20 second year undergraduate students per year are accepted into a program lasting for 5 semesters. During this time, the participants receive lectures from the UN Habitat staff, work on their English and leadership skills, and undertake internships at Japanese and international companies. This paper discusses the what, why, and how of the Global Leadership Program and its links to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords: Sustainable development, SDGs, EFL, leadership

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide a complement to the online presentation materials at iELT-Con 2021. We specially address what the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are, why involvement from Japan is crucial, and how EFL and Leadership classes can help. It is hoped that – taken together with the online presentation – the audience at iELT-Con this year will understand the aims of the Global Leadership Program (GLP) and how it works to develop future leaders with a genuine desire to make a difference.

For more information on the composition of the GLP, please see the online presentation. In short, however, it is a collaboration between one private university and the local UN Habitat office, both located in Fukuoka, Japan. Second grade students are allowed to apply for the 2.5 year commitment if their grades and English abilities are high enough. Successful candidates are trained in special English classes, as well as working with the staff from the UN Habitat office, and intern at both Japanese and international companies.

The Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 SDG goals are an "urgent call for action by all countries", focusing on the 5Ps of people, prosperity, planet, peace, and partnership (United Nations, n. d.). Collectively, the goals aim to improve the environment, eliminate poverty, and improve health and education on a global scale. In order to achieve this, wealthy nations need to cooperate with the less well off, make compromises on their ambitions, and consider their own social shortcomings.

SDGs in the Japanese Context

According to data from the World Bank, in 2020 Japan had a GDP of almost five trillion dollars. (World Bank, n.d.). While there can be little doubt that Japan is financially capable of making a serious contribution to the SDGs, it can be hard to see that it is serious about genuine change. Recent examples include a 68-year old cyber-security minister who had never used a computer (BBC, 2018), a former Prime Minister who claims that global warming is improving the taste of Japanese rice (Japan Times, 2021), and a female minister for empowerment and gender equality who is actually against both (McCurry, 2021). As Boudreaux (2007) notes, it is women who are at the forefront of change in the world's poorest countries. Discussing Japan specifically, Landes (1988) said that its treatment of women is its biggest impediment to progress. Japan's high marks for SDGs are all on local issues, but the rankings for international partnership and gender equality are far worse than they need to be.

Japan has the opportunity to contribute more equitably on a global scale, and out of fairness to the female half of its own population. It should make far more effort. However, this will not happen without education and programs that develop future leaders.

EFL as a Base for SDGs Education

While Japan may be financially able to contribute to a fairer, more sustainable world, its efforts are significantly hindered by its language, which is not widely used in international contexts where Japan could help promote SDGs. As a result of this, Japanese leaders either need to learn languages which are in wider use, or employ those who are already fluent. Learning about SDGs in English from the experts at the UN Habitat office provides a huge advantage for GLP members intending to work in fields relating to sustainable development. In addition to the lectures and discussions the UN Habitat staff put on, the GLP students also take one semester of English taught in an integrated (CLIL) manner, in which vocabulary and content are selected to push their development as future professionals.

In order to create a framework for this approach, the English semester has a focus question (Novak, 2010) to tie together all the ideas presented. The focus question for the class is: "What knowledge and skills will help us in 3rd grade and beyond?" A question such as this allows for the teaching of concepts, vocabulary, and abilities that average students in Japan would find challenging, but a motivated group with a common purpose will consider to be ideal for their future careers.

Vocabulary is drawn from the AWL, or Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000) with an initial 15 words being selected by the instructor and a subsequent 10 words chosen by the

participants. The aim of including such a limited selection of words is to focus on vocabulary depth, rather than breadth – another way of saying that it is the detail in which the students can make use of the lexis that is important. Figure 1 shows an example word card as given to the GLP participants.

Figure 1

A Word Card from the GLP

SPELLING

    contrast

WORD FAMILY

Person	Action	Result	Quality	Something else?
	contrast	contrast	contrasting	

MULTI-WORD (collocations and colligation)
1. a sharp contrast   contrast sth (with sth)
2. in contrast to sth / sb   contrast strongly / sharply with sth
3. the contrast between sth & sth   contrasting opinions

SYNONYMS
1. compare
2. differentiate
3. clash

EXAMPLE SENTENCES
1. The contrast between the two men could hardly be greater.
2. The documentary contrasts the reality of war with its image.
3. The couple had contrasting opinions about childcare.

As can be seen, the participants are asked to learn 5 things about the word: its spelling, the word family, its collocations and colligations, words that are approximately synonymous, and example sentences that include at least some contextual hints as to the word's meaning (Carter, 2018). With regard to the word family, this is taught as "PARQS" an acronym for Person, Action, Result, Quality, and something else (often an adverb). This allows to us reduce confusion between nouns for people and nouns for works or processes (musician / music; speaker; speech) and also creates and SVO pattern, considered helpful for students learning English as a foreign language (i.e. somebody makes something). The GLP members are given communicative activities each week to strengthen how deeply and fluently they can use the words they are asked to learn during the semester.

In addition to learning vocabulary, participants work on their reading skills. The readings are created by the course instructor, and make use of vocabulary from the course as well as leading to discussions on topics such as study skills, leadership, and language development. Figure 2 shows an example reading text, based on the content of a TEDx talk.

Figure 2

A Reading Text from the GLP

Learn like a pilot

Bill Crawford was one of the world's best airplane pilots. After he retired he became a college professor, and these days he uses his experience of flying planes to teach his students.

He explains to his students that in his job as a pilot his working time was divided into three different stages: planning, performing, and review. Planning means the research and preparation needed before flying somewhere, performing means flying the plane to its destination, and review means focusing on the results of these first two stages. He says that planning took up 39% of his time as a pilot, performing was 58%, and review was 3%.

There is a major difference between being busy and being productive. For this reason, Crawford makes two key points to his students. The first one is that too many people spend too long on the performance stage, and not enough time on planning or reviewing. These people are stuck, he says, because they are not getting the chance to learn from their experience.

His second key point is about the importance of the review stage. He said it is essential to do to the review stage every time, and in the same way. After completing each flight, pilots ask themselves the same 5 questions. The 5 questions are:

What happened today?

What went right?

What went wrong?

Why did things go wrong?

What can I learn from this?

Although the review stage is only 3% of a pilot's time, it is the most important stage when it comes to improving both performance and planning. By asking themselves these questions after each flight, pilots can continue to get better and better at their jobs. With just 5 questions and a short amount of time, pilots are great learners.

If we want to be less busy and more productive, we could benefit from learning like a pilot. By managing our workload in three separate stages, and by conducting a structured review each day we can overcome many challenges and develop high level skills.

As shown in Figure 2, the reading text is spread over 2 pages. This allows for better discussion as the first page poses a problem, while the second introduces a solution. In addition, on the first page, there is somewhat surprising data about how pilot's time is divided. It appears to students that the time for performing the task is the most important, as it is in the majority. However, as the second page makes clear, the review stage, comprising only 3% of a pilot's time is what counts when it comes to skill development. The separation between productivity and being busy is also highly useful to students, whose time management is often not what it might be. Finally, the concept of a "structured review" is entirely new to participants, and yet one they can apply to a range of contexts, such as their presentations, exams, even performing at their part-time jobs.

Over the 14 weeks of the class, students will learn 25 words at a fair depth, make 4 planned presentations and one unplanned "instant" presentation, and read about and practise a number of ideas in a similar style to the "Learn like a pilot" reading shown in Figure 2. As each of these actions is connected to the question "What knowledge and skills will help us in 3rd grade and beyond?", there is an appearance of a coherent whole, even though the tasks draw on a range of sources and methodologies.

EFL as a Base for Leadership Instruction

Leadership in Japan tends to be a function of seniority, with little guidance or training in the reasoning behind how decisions are made. As such, useful materials published in Japanese tend either to be translations of foreign works, or highly idiosyncratic and of limited applicability to university students.

As already shown above, the GLP makes use of the Academic Word List to train students to deal with words that are useful but not necessarily conversational; we take a similar approach introducing useful concepts from the field of leadership. Specifically, we make use of models rather than lists or "how-to" methods of leadership, as these lack real-world applicability (Pfeffer, 2015) and bring us back to the limitations of locally published content.

We first introduce the 3G model from Reed (2017), which discusses the need for interviewees to appreciate the qualities of "good", "global", and "grit", in which personality and character is represented by the term *good*, problem-solving and breadth of worldview is characterized as *global*, and grit refers to a candidate's ability to demonstrate they do not give up easily. The 3G model is appealing to university students in Japan (and elsewhere) as it explains what they need to show in order to find work. It encourages them to think for themselves rather that parroting responses taught to them by the career counsellors every university in Japan has. This type of independence is highly useful in breaking free from a seniority-based leadership style.

In addition to the 3G model, students encounter the Be-Know-Do model, as used by many companies and organizations (Hesselbein, 2004), and this is discussed in the context of appraisals and promotions – something leaders should understand well. They also are taught the Future-Engage-Deliver model, from the UK's Steven Radcliffe (Radcliffe, 2008). Radcliffe makes the case that leadership requires envisioning a future situation, having others commit to that vision, and then collaborating to make it occur. This model is an excellent opportunity for students to learn how projects get off the ground, receive approval, and move forward. In short, these three models show a projection of career success: the 3G model discusses getting hired; the Be-Know-Do model elaborates on how promotions occur; and the Future-Engage-Deliver model explains one way that leadership is developed through positive outcomes from effective project management. As such, then, the GLP's focus on EFL reading materials helps students with the knowledge and skills they will require in the future.

Conclusion

This paper serves to add to the ideas presented online during iELT-Con 2021: those ideas predominantly focused on issues such as who the participants are, and how a research project on proximal and distal views of the instrumentality of SDGs knowledge might inform future iterations of the GLP. Here, we looked in more detail at the EFL aspects of the program, and the societal challenges Japan faces in terms of getting to grips with both leadership and ensuring its own sustainable development as well of that of a more global stage.

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11   Implementing Better Multiple Choice For EFL Learning And Testing

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Abstract

This paper describes and explains procedures and techniques by which teachers can create their own materials and collections of multiple-choice (objective-response) items for language practice and testing for their courses. The focus is specifically on how to devise and deploy effective multiple-choice questions (MCQ) to enable language practice and testing that are more organic to assigned courses and their designated syllabuses, materials, and classroom content. It is hoped that these explanations and examples will serve, for example, teachers who have to give grades based on objective and quantified evaluation to large numbers of students and who do not have time for alternative means (e.g., oral interviews).

Keywords: Evaluation, testing, multiple-choice questions, objective-response

Introduction

Language teachers who have to evaluate large numbers of students and give them quantified grades often use multiple-choice tests. Experienced teachers often create their own collections of multiple-choice (objective-response) items for language practice and testing for courses. This paper focuses specifically on how to devise and deploy multiple-choice questions (MCQ) to enable language practice and testing that are more organic to assigned courses and their designated syllabuses, materials, and classroom content. It is hoped that these explanations and examples will serve, for example, teachers who face situations in evaluation and grading that require fairness, consistency, validity, and reliability on a relatively large scale and who do not have time for alternative means (e.g., oral interviews).

The East Asian EFL Context

In East Asia, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students are often familiar with relatively conservative, cross-linguistic types of assessment tasks such as those testing discrete grammar points and translation. Using EFL in Japan as an example, it has to be said that there are many problems and deficiencies with such a limited approach to assessment. For one, the overall framework of language remains stuck in a mode that goes from English (L2, SL, FL) into Japanese (L1, standard dialect). This then seems to reinforce the idea that understanding and communication only take place in the L1 (e.g., Japanese), not English.

A second weakness, especially with reading comprehension questions, occurs when students are asked to translate short extracts of a longer text, the entirety of which they have no hope of reading with much comprehension. That is, the reading texts being tested are too difficult for the majority of the students taking the test. Such a mismatch of texts and reading levels renders any tasks derived from them as invalid for norm-referencing. This is why criterion-referenced tests are safer on the issue of validity if a test has not been normed on appropriately proficient and sufficiently large populations.

A third issue is whether or not taught courses and programs are really capable of preparing the students for a wider world of testing where the 'English-only' multiple-choice question is prevalent. Now, it could be argued that the MCQ itself is also often seen as just another conservative type of question and a bane in ELT and education. However, the MCQ dominates important, high-stakes language tests, such as the TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS, etc., so it cannot so easily be ignored.

Better MCQs and How to Use Them

Use the Most Frequent Words

Choose the most frequent and most useful vocabulary from the syllabus, the textbooks, lesson plans and class content. When you devise and select test questions, target items, and distractors, try to stay with the most useful and most frequently used words and phrases of English. It would be better for students to learn and be tested on a new use or meaning of a core word than an obscure item, and this principle will help you to help your students better to prepare for standardized tests. It is preferred in materials writing and test-setting to draw a very large set of vocabulary from the course content and then to put it on a list from which to refer and work. Next, identify the most frequent items and choose from these at random if needed in order to reduce the list of words on the exercise or test down to a smaller number.

Use Digital Texts and Word Frequency Software

One method for extracting the words from the textbook is to get an electronic copy of it. These are more available nowadays due to so much teaching and learning going online. So textbook publishers have made some of their materials available in .html and .pdf formats. If there is no e-book available, the text can be scanned with OCR software and then converted to text. All or a selected part of the text can then be put into word frequency software that is available as free applications for the desktop or for use in a browser online (just search "word

frequency online"). This results in a syllabus- or textbook-specific corpus from which to extract target items and distractors.

Write Strong Questions and Answers First

Work on constructing a good question or test items first, and then worry about the distractors. To quite an extent, the best distractors are already there - in the textbook, on the text-specific corpus of vocabulary, and from word frequency lists that are available online in the public domain. Distractors can take far too much time to prepare if the materials writer or test-maker tries to call them up from their own English and memory. For a faster method of choosing a variety of plausible distractors, rely on the textbook, textbook glossaries, lists of chosen words extracted from the texts, and the most frequent words of English instead. For more advanced-level students, try to choose distractors at the same level of difficulty and/or frequency as the target items. This will prevent giving away the answers since the target items may stick out relative to the easier distractors.

If coming up with three distractors proves too difficult, try for two good ones instead. Two good distractors are better than three bad ones. Choose distractors that come from the same parts of a text or syllabus as the target items. If these are used up, draw from the larger list or from a list like the 2000 most frequent words of English. If it is too difficult to find suitable distractors for the chosen key word, choose a different key word. In this way, the key vocabulary, used in a meaningful context, is still being practised and/or tested. Work at making distractors plausible. However, keep in mind that what is plausible for a fluent user of English might be completely different for a beginner. Also, language background can be a factor. For example, take the sentence "She is a safety worker". This, to most fluent users of English, would be rather obviously wrong and the word "safety" would not be a good distractor for "safe". But in Japanese, the word for "safe" and for "safety" is often the same word (*anzen*). So this is a plausible distractor for beginning EFL students in Japan, and most likely one that the test setters of the TOEIC know about and include their tests.

Try a variety of different distractors. Use semantic distractors. Use grammatical distractors. Use phonetic distractors. Use distractors that are about the same length and of around the same frequency of use. Use distractors that come from the same texts as the test items. Mix and match the types of distractors.

Remember, what is a plausible distractor for someone who is at the beginning level of EFL may be hard for a materials writer or test-setter to anticipate if they are fluent users of English and/or from a different language and culture background as the learners. So the test item writers need to be prepared to experiment. What EFL students have difficulty with and

need to master when compared to native speakers can often prove very surprising.

Try to make the questions and the tests organic to the type of class being taught and the content of its syllabus. For example, if the class is a very low-level General (or Common Education) English class, try using the simplest English possible when writing the questions. If the course, for example, is a listening one, try using some short, written dialogues instead of single sentences. Look at current TOEIC Listening questions to see relevant examples. If the course focuses on reading, try short paragraphs instead of just single sentences.

Also, formulate questions that are more realistic, relevant and communicative by basing them on things like: facts about the local city, facts about the university campus, current events, etc. For example, if a course is centered on Business English, why not try writing questions based on the week's business news (e.g., *Volvo in trouble over safety, recalls hundreds of thousands of cars*)?

Whenever possible, item writers and test-setters need to avoid harmful and misleading cultural bias. However, the TOEFL and TOEIC, for example, assume that students are quite familiar with American culture (often dressed up as "university campus life" or "global business culture"). If multiple-choice questions are given as vocabulary practice, the questions might also help introduce students to cultural learning points and help them to build up background knowledge about many aspects of American culture or other important Anglophone cultures, such as those of the UK, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, etc. It might depend on the goals and study-abroad opportunities that students have. It is one thing to object to the American-bias of the TOEIC, but that does not mean it is going to go away.

Pilot the Materials, Evaluate Frequently, and Accumulate Questions

After a test or exercise and answer sheet have been written, instructors should sit down at a separate time and take the test or exercise just like a student. This is the best time to catch mistakes and typos and saves the embarrassment of having to correct problems when students are actually taking the test or exercise. This often makes apparent how best to revise a question for more clarity or precision in evaluation.

Conduct multiple vocabulary tests throughout the time period of a taught course. For example, administer a weekly vocabulary quiz that correlates closely with the material covered in the previous week. Additionally, recycle vocabulary items and distractors from previous materials. It is fairly easy to recycle an item by re-writing the question around it.

Keep accumulating word lists, distractors and test questions. With a sufficiently large archive, the course can then include longer quizzes or tests of at least 35-50 questions and

administer them with much more frequency, for example, once a week. Longer tests given more frequently are requirements for more valid and reliable evaluation which yields grades.

Increase the total collection of test questions by using important synonyms, synonymous phrases, and paraphrasing. Students need to get familiar with the most common ways of basically saying the same thing. Doing this is key to making progress in both listening and reading tasks on tests like TOEFL, IELTS, and TOEIC.

The day before giving a multiple-choice quiz or exam for a grade, practice a set of examples with the students. This is especially important if it is the first time students have ever faced such a task. Do them together as a class with the examples written on the board. Also, if they are new to identifying and studying key vocabulary on their own, give them a larger list of words to study from which you will randomly select your smaller set of test items.

If switching instructions and questions from the usual (in Japan anyway) English-to-Japanese framework, break down the English into very short sentences and instructional steps. This is recommended for written or oral instructions. Once a set of instructions is drafted, try breaking them down even further into smaller steps. Try to demonstrate everything students are being asked to do. However, remember to practice demonstrations before doing them in class for the first time. This helps teachers to anticipate and avoid unnecessary problems during class and timed testing.

MCQ Examples

Next is a look at basic types of multiple-choice questions and uses them to show distractor types as well (e.g., pragmatic / situational , semantic, grammatical, phonetic, lexical, including grammatical-inflectional, semantic-derivational, etc.). The correct answer is always 'a' in these examples, with the distractors being b, c, d.

Basic Sentence
Example 1
The weather at the beginning of the week started very cold, but it _____ milder by the weekend.
a. became   b. become   c. begin   d. complete

Example 2
After work I like to watch T.V. programs in order to _____.
a. relax   b. look   c. discuss   d. describe

Example 3

To save electricity, when you leave the room, please turn _____ the light.

a. off   b. in   c. of   d. at

Dialogue

Example 1

A: How is it _____?

B: Oh, not bad. Yourself?

a. going   b. doing   c. getting   d. feeling

Example 2

A: Do you think we should take our umbrellas?

B: Yes, the weather _____ says that it is going to rain soon.

a. forecast   b. forest   c. fortune   d. cloud

Synonym Single Sentence

Example 1

Sony Corporation is a famous electronics manufacturer that was __founded__ in 1945.

a. established   b. forced   c. focused   d. ordered

Example 2

Sony Corporation __manufactures__ many different types of consumer electronics in its factories in Japan and overseas.

a. makes   b. removes   c. explains   d. thinks

Synonym Dialogue

Example

A: Mommy! Mommy! I'm so hungry I can't stand it!

B: O.K. Calm down, dear. I'm __preparing__ lunch right now.

a. making   b. putting   c. causing   d. crying

Definition Sentence

Example 1

If you _____ something, it means your habit is to like it.

a. prefer   b. prepare   c. refer   d. infer

Example 2

_____ is an overall economic condition of falling commodity and asset prices.

a. Deflation b. Inflation c. Decision d. Exhaustion

Definition Matching Synonym

Example

Deflation is an overall economic condition of <u>falling</u> commodity and asset prices.

a. declining b. increasing c. deciding d. progressing

What is _____?

This type of MCQ requires three examples illustrating the meanings, uses, nuances and common collocations of a key vocabulary item. Remember, the correct answer has to work in all three examples, so you can use other words that work in only one sentence as distractors (for example, *fix*, as in *fix a flat*, meaning *change a tire*.

Example

● Some people like to eat the same food every day for lunch, but others like to _____ it and eat a variety of dishes.
● On the way to work today, my bicycle had a flat tire, so I had to _____ it.
● The weather forecast in the newspaper says today will be fine but will then _____ to rain later tonight.

What is _____?

a. change b. turn c. fix d. return

     Other question types and combinations are possible. For example, an exercise or test could incorporate a short paragraph instead of a sentence or a dialogue with selectively or randomly clozed words or phrases. This could provide good practice for an important type of TOEIC reading problem. See Figures 1-4 below for more information and examples. Figures 1 and 2 contain more information about and examples of the tested grammatical and lexical aspects. Figure 3 lists distractor types with example answers and distractors while Figure 4 gives MCQ examples and explains which aspects of language pertain to them. Also, keep in mind that categories of questions, target answers, and distractors are not exhaustive and can overlap, with examples falling into more than one category.

Figure 1

Grammatical Aspects

Adverbs (including Adverbs of Frequency)
Count and Non-Count Nouns
Comparative and Superlative
Conditionals
Gerunds vs Infinitives vs. Participles
Modal Verbs
Nouns and Noun Forms
Passive vs Active
Passive vs Active + Causative Verbs
Perfect Tenses
Present Tenses
Simple vs Progressive Aspects of Tenses
Prepositions (of Place, of Time)
Pronouns
Subject-Verb Agreement
Verbs and Verb Forms

Figure 2

Lexical Aspects

Confusing Word Pairs (e.g., affect vs effect, of vs have, etc)
Conjunctions
Key Synonym Pairs
(e.g., return-get home, return-give back, eat dinner - have dinner, etc.)
Linking Words
Noun Clauses
Phrasal Verbs
Standard Expressions
Word Families (including Common Prefixes and Suffixes)
Word Choice / Diction
Unnecessary Words

Figure 3

Distractor Types and Examples

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1. Similar length and structure
examples
look take place call
mistake forget replace return
resistant persistent insistent consistent

2. Similar spellings or pronunciations
examples
contain complain convince correct
walk work wake week
farm firm form harm
rug run rum rung
light late right rate
face force fierce hoarse

3. Inflections
examples
happy happier happiest
to do do doing did done
to get get getting got got(ten)
to have have has having had
to make make making made
to destroy destroy destroyed destroying

4. Derivations
examples
protect protection protector protective
interest uninterested disinterested interested interesting uninteresting
bore bored boring
response respond responsive responded responder
man mannish manly to man
derive derivation derivational derivative
visible visual vision vista
succeed success succession successful successor
produce producer production product
Illegal illegitimate illiterate illicit
irregular irresponsible irrelevant irresponsible
immobile immaterial impartial
intolerable incorrect indecent inflexible indifferent
unlawful unhelpful uninterested uninteresting unnatural unrepentant
disrespectful disinterested disorderly disproportionate

5. Semantically related words and synonyms
examples
get obtain acquire procure buy purchase
make create invent manufacture produce
succeed achieve accomplish attain prevail realize
quick fast instant speedy
interesting fascinating compelling
boring uninteresting bland
well healthy healed restored
sick ill unwell ailing

6. Opposites / antonyms / important semantic contrasts
examples
legal illegal
regular irregular
regulated unregulated
good great wonderful terrific vs bad awful terrible horrible
useful beneficial vs. useless worthless
skilled skillful vs. clumsy awkward unskilled

7. Grammar / structure words
examples
on in at to by for as with etc.
when if while during since from
and but or so yet
some both any either neither none many much
```

Figure 4

MCQ Examples

```
1. I went to the Uniqlo store and bought some warm _____ for autumn and
winter.

a. close
b. clouds
c. closing
d. clothing

Language aspects: phonetic, spelling

2. I _____ to the Uniqlo store and bought some warm clothing for autumn
and winter.

a. go
b. goes
c. want
d. went

Language aspects: inflections (verb), phonetic, spelling

3. I went to the Uniqlo store and _____ some warm clothing for autumn and
winter.

a. buy
b. purchase
c. built
d. bought

Language aspects:  inflections, lexical semantics

4. I went to the Uniqlo store _____ bought some warm clothing for autumn
and winter.

a. are
b. but
c. or
d. and

Language aspects:  word length, lexical semantics, structure words (copula,
coordinators / conjunctions)
```

Conclusion

Some language teachers may dislike the multiple-choice question and tests made from such questions. However, if a teacher wants a manageable way to assess and recycle vocabulary in large classes, it is one of the best types of tests. Multiple-choice quizzes and tests in only the SL or FL will also help prepare students better for the all-important high-stakes proficiency exams. Multiple-choice exercises, quizzes, and tests can be used in all types of classes, such as speaking/conversation, listening (especially standardized test listening), reading, vocabulary study, grammar review, etc.

Teachers who create their own materials and tests should set a variety of questions and stick to the syllabus and the most frequently-used vocabulary of English. Doing this will probably help their students more than using methods of assessment that can not be scored consistently, fairly or objectively. Objective testing tied more closely to the language points of a given syllabus can also help avoid the trap of punishing or rewarding current language abilities. Moreover, with the shift to online teaching, Google Classroom, for example, makes machine-scoring of such assessments more accessible and convenient than ever. The biggest difficulties are that input into Google Forms to create exercises, quizzes, and tests is extremely time-consuming, and that their use is limited to within the Google domain or online virtual classroom.

12   Metacognitive Strategies Used By L2 Listeners In Think-Aloud Protocols During The Pandemic

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Abstract

The concurrent think-aloud protocol (TAP), the truthful representations of learners' mental activity or processes, allows researchers to collect valid and veridical data at the time of language learning or use events taking place (Zhang & Zhang, 2020) and has been used to tap the metacognitive strategies employed by L2 listeners. This study aims to investigate what metacognitive strategies were applied for successful comprehension and if those could help raise metacognitive awareness. The research sample comprised of 20 Bangladeshi undergraduate EFL learners in both the treatment group (N=10) and the control group (N=10). They received pedagogical sequence and traditional product-based instruction respectively over five weeks along with TAP sessions. Triangulation is achieved by a mixed-method research methodology. The result showed that TAP could trace several metacognitive strategies used at various levels to tackle comprehension, which helped to raise the learners' metacognitive awareness. It implied that teachers may apply pedagogical sequence for better listening comprehension.

Keywords: Think-aloud protocol, MALQ, metacognitive awareness

Introduction

Listening, the "Cinderella" skill (Mendelsohn, 1994; Vandergrift, 1997) is arguably the least understood and most overlooked of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in the language classroom (Nation & Newton, 2008) in Bangladeshi curriculum. It gained attention during the communicative language teaching (CLT) era highlighting the urgency of teaching listening for effective oral communication. Nevertheless, the scenario of teaching listening in Bangladesh at the undergraduate level is almost synonymous with Goh's (2008) report on "the key phase in the evolution of L2 listening instruction, reflecting a deepening understanding of the construct of learner listening as a cognitive and communication skill within the field" (p.189) having no distinct phases in reality. The traditional teaching of listening techniques, which merely expect learners to answer comprehension questions based on a listening passage, are still common practice in many classrooms. Hence, most L2 listening classes became 'the product of listening' (Goh, 2008) investigating different listening conditions which directly affect the overall comprehension. Teachers focused on the product, they had no attention towards the process of learners' comprehension or 'how learners arrive at comprehension' (Fahim, 2014).

After analyzing textbooks through several decades, i) listening during behaviourist paradigm as bottom-up or linear processing of information in the 1960s, ii) listening during interactionist or sociolinguistics paradigm as top-down and context-driven interpretation through the 1980s and iii) socio-cognitive models of comprehension from the 1990s onwards more focus has been placed on the learning or teaching L2 listening. The shift of paradigm also brought changes in their input, instructional focus and learning activities. Now, metacognition takes place in teaching listening. Raising metacognitive awareness among learners with the existing texts has become a challenge of the time because this can bring great success in teaching listening. Therefore, the employment of both strategy-based instruction and metacognitive awareness development has been called for because the former refers to a set of classroom procedures that explicitly train learners to employ relevant strategies to improve their performance (Cohen, 1998). Simultaneously, the latter focuses on learners' self-discovery in developing knowledge, belief and awareness about the learning process with appropriate scaffolding and facilitating from the teachers (Wenden, 1998). Furthermore, there is virtually no randomized intervention study to explore the effectiveness of metacognitive awareness in developing the metacognitive knowledge and listening performance of Bangladeshi undergraduate level learners of the total English learning population. Hence, conducting an intervention study to investigate learners' use of metacognitive strategies to raise metacognitive awareness is not only academically significant but also of great practical value for listening instruction in Bangladesh.

To screen the metacognitive strategies, the think-aloud protocol would be one of the best fitting tools along with the metacognitive awareness questionnaire incorporating five factors of metacognition and pre-test and post-test to gauge the change among them. Because TAP can screen what is happening "at the time the language learning or use events are taking place"(p. 8) when such a procedure is used for collecting information about how language learners go through the learning process (Cohen, 1996). Therefore, this study was carried out to examine the inventory of metacognitive strategy of L2 listeners employed by Bangladeshi undergraduate students for successful L2 listening comprehension and subsequently, if there is any correlation between strategy use and the rise of metacognitive awareness for listening comprehension. The two research questions for this study are as follows:

i)   What were the metacognitive strategies used by L2 listeners for successful comprehension?

ii)   To what extent did these metacognitive strategies help them raise their metacognitive awareness?

Literature Review

Scholars have opined that learners who had good strategic knowledge were also more likely to use strategies. Strategies contributed directly to language learning as well as language use (Cohen, 1998; Cohen & Macaro, 2007). Strategies helped learners improve comprehension, retention, and recall of information; and, at the same time, they assisted in planning for overall listening development as part of their language learning effort (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Nevertheless, 'strategy use' involves an individual's ability to use appropriate strategies to achieve cognitive, social, and affective goals. Strategy use is the development of specific procedures or actions to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-regulated, more effective, or more transferable to new situations. It builds on strategy knowledge and includes awareness of when and how to use specific strategies. Here, mention is made that strategy knowledge is related to declarative knowledge and strategy use to proceduralized knowledge. According to Cohen and Macaro (2007), some characteristics of learner strategies that are applied to listening strategies are as follows:

a) Strategies are conscious behaviours involving cognitive, social, and affective processes.

b) The use of strategies is managed by metacognition.

c) The amount of attention learners give to strategies they employ varies according to different factors.

d) Strategies are mainly employed in an interactive and orchestrated manner to form a network of processes for achieving better comprehension or learning outcomes, but sometimes individual strategies are used.

e) Some strategies contribute to language development directly while others may not.

f) The quality and use of strategies by individual learners are influenced by internal and external factors.

g) At the macro-level, strategies are viewed as a general strategic approach to a task, and at the micro-level as specific strategies for realizing that approach.

h) Knowledge about and use of strategies can be jointly constructed and managed by learners working together.

Researchers have identified some common strategies that proficient listeners use more than less proficient listeners. These common strategies are referred to as metacognitive strategies, planning, monitoring, and evaluating comprehension. Strategies help learners control their thinking and learning while listening, as well as manage their coverall learning

process, to become skilful L2 listeners (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Good metacognitive control over appropriate strategy use is an essential aspect for long-term listening success (Graham & Macaro, 2008). Vandergrift and Goh (2012) presented a list of listening strategies in light of studies by Goh (1998, 2002), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Vandergrift (1997, 2003), and Young (1997) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Inventory of Metacognitive Strategies and their Divisions (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012)

Metacognitive Strategies	Sub-metacognitive strategies
1. Planning: Developing awareness of what needs to be done to accomplish a listening task, developing an appropriate action plan and/or appropriate contingency plans to overcome difficulties that may interfere with the successful completion of a task.	**Advance organization:** Clarifying the objectives of an anticipated listening task and /or proposing strategies for handling it.
	Self-management: Understanding the conditions that help one accomplish listening tasks, and arranging for the presence of those conditions.
2. Focusing Attention: Avoiding distractions and heeding the auditory input in different ways, or keeping to a plan for listening development.	**Directed attention:** Attending in general to the listening task and ignoring distraction; maintaining attention while listening
	Selective attention: Attending to specific aspects of language input or situational details that assist in understanding and/ or task completion
3. Monitoring: Checking, verifying, or correcting one's comprehension or performance in the course of a task.	**Comprehensive monitoring:** Checking, verifying or correcting understanding at the local level.
	Double-check monitoring: Checking, verifying, or correcting understanding across the task during the second time through the oral text.
4. Evaluation: Checking the outcomes of listening comprehension or a listening plan against an internal or an external measure of completeness, reasonableness and accuracy.	**Performance evaluation:** Judging one's overall execution of the task.
	Strategy evaluation: Judging one's strategy use.
	Problem identification: Identifying what needs resolution or what part of the task still needs to be completed.
	Substitution: Selecting alternative approaches, revised plans or different words or phrases to accomplish a listening task.
5. Inferencing: Using information within the text or conversational context to guess the meanings of unfamiliar language items associated with a listening	**Linguistic inferencing:** Using known words in an utterance to guess the meaning of unknown words.

task, to predict content and outcomes, or to fill in the missing information.	**Voice and paralinguistic inferencing:** Using the tone of voice and/or paralinguistic to guess the meaning of unknown words in an utterance.
	Kinesics inferencing: Using facial expressions, body language, and hand movements to guess the meaning of unknown words used by a speaker.
	Extra linguistic inferencing: Using background sounds and relationships between speakers in an oral text, materials in the response sheet, or concrete situational referents to guess the meaning of the unknown words.
	Between parts inferencing: Using information from different parts of the text to guess at the meaning
6. Elaboration: Using prior knowledge from outside the text or conversational context and relating it to knowledge gained from the text or conversation to embellish one's interpretation of the text.	**Personal elaboration:** Referring to prior experience personally.
	World elaboration: Using knowledge gained from experience in the world.
	Academic elaboration: Using knowledge gained in academic situations.
	Questioning elaboration: Using a combination of questions and world knowledge to brainstorm logical possibilities.
	Creative elaboration: Making up a storyline, or introducing new possibilities into an event.
	Visual elaboration: Using mental or actual pictures or visuals to represent information.
7. Prediction: Anticipating the contents and the message of what one is going to hear.	**Global prediction:** Anticipating the gist or the general contents in a text.
	Local prediction: Anticipating details for specific parts of a text.
8. Contextualization: Placing what is heard in a specific context to prepare for listening or assist comprehension.	**Linguistic contextualization:** Relating a word or a phrase heard to an environment where the word has appeared before.
	Schematic contextualization: Relating a clue to some factual information in long-term memory.
9. Recognizing: Transferring what one has processed into forms that help understanding, storage, and retrieval.	**Summarization:** Making a mental or written summary of language and information presented in a listening task.

	Repetition: Repeating a chunk of language (a word or phrase) in the course of performing a listening task.
	Grouping: Recalling information based on grouping according to common attributes.
	Note-taking: Writing down keywords and concepts in abbreviated verbal, graphic, or numerical form to assist the performance of a listening task.
10. Using linguistics and learning resources: Relying on one's knowledge of the first language or additional languages to make sense of what is heard, or consulting learning resources after listening.	**Translation:** Rendering ideas from one language to L1 in a relatively verbatim manner.
	Transfer: Using knowledge of one language (e.g. cognates) to facilitate listening in another
	Deduction/Induction: Consciously applying learned or self-developed rules to understand the target language.
	Resourcing: Using available reference sources of information about the target language, including dictionaries, textbooks, and prior work.
11. Cooperation: Working with others to get help on improving comprehension, language use, and learning.	**Seeking clarification:** Asking for an explanation, verification, rephrasing, or examples about the language and/or task.
	Joint task construction: Working together with someone other than an interlocutor to solve a problem, pool information, or check a learning task.
12. Managing emotions: Keeping track of one's feelings and not allowing negative ones to influence attitudes and behaviours.	**Lowering anxiety:** Reducing anxiety through the use of mental techniques that make one feel more competent to perform a listening task.
	Self-encouragement: Providing personal motivation through positive self-talk and/or arranging rewards for oneself during a listening activity or upon its completion.
	Taking emotional temperature: Becoming aware of, and getting in touch with, one's emotions while listening, to avert negative ones and make the most of positive ones.

The aforementioned strategies were enlisted based on their role in facilitating listening comprehension and overall listening development. Metacognitive strategies, according to Vandergrift and Goh (2012), include:

a) helping to process and interpret information by manipulating and transforming the aural input,

b) observing the way information is processed or learned,

c) taking appropriate steps to manage and regulate these cognitive processes,

d) managing emotions, and

e) involving other people or exploiting learning resources to assist in comprehension and learning.

The active use of strategies along with skill is triggered by comprehension goals that include achieving the purpose for listening to a particular text, establishing a coherent meaning of the text or discourse, and utilizing information and knowledge gained for listening (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Drawing on the study of Michael Rost (1990), one of the reasons to use metacognitive strategies for listening, Goh (2002) mentioned that goal-directedness is compatible to the purposeful process.

According to John Field (2008), a listener has to engage "two different types of listening behaviour" (p.85); i) decoding processing, and ii) meaning building processing. When a listener comes across a stream of acoustic cues, the listener first translates it into the sounds of the target language, and then, sounds to words and phrases in the listener's vocabulary, and finally into an abstract idea, and all these happens in decoding process. After the decoding process for literal meaning, the listener draws on his/her knowledge of the world and recalls what has been said or discussed in the conversation on a broad canvas, and finally, makes an important decision on the information. This whole processing altogether is referred to as meaning building processing. However, two processes were operating simultaneously but with different types of difficulty (Field, 2008). In decoding processing, the unfamiliar nature of the spoken language caused by the gap in the learner's knowledge of vocabulary and grammar or not recognizing sounds due to natural continuous speech leads to a weakness in listening skills. On the other hand, meaning building processing fails if the listener either cannot handle the information extracted from the text or pays more attention to the decoding process or marked the relationship between different pieces of information. So, in transactional listening texts, listeners process the information starting from phonemes, syllables, word-forms, (i.e. decoding processing), chunks, syntax, intonation and meaning (i.e. meaning-building processing). During meaning building, two phases always play the major role; meaning enrichment attained by inferring and information handling attaining by understanding factual information. In this phase, listeners mostly apply context or the knowledge source, deriving meaning, adding to meaning, selecting information, integrating information and recognizing the overall argument and structure.

Think-aloud Protocol (TAP)

The TAP is accepted as a research method for collecting data through learners' verbalisation of "what is going through their minds as they are solving a problem or performing a task" (Gass & Mackey, 2000, p. 13) since it is a truthful representation of learners' mental activity or processes that are taking place while language learning or use. Hence, L2 researchers, as evidence of direct access to learners' short-term mental states or working memory, applied this TAP to collect the real data. Between concurrent think-aloud and retrospective think-aloud, for this study concurrent think-aloud is considered because learners are reporting at the time while they are engaged in an activity or a learning task. In concurrent TAP, the effect of the time lag on the data can be avoided. TAP can be classified into three types; Type 1 TAP does not need verbal recording because their thinking processes are readily discernible, Type 2 TAP requires researchers to recode these thoughts into explicit verbal code, and finally Type 3, during TAP learners are asked to provide specific information which is retrospective (Ericsson & Simon,1987). After this, Type 2 TAP has been selected because of its accuracy in representing the cognitive processes, despite causing learners to spend slightly more time on the task. Moreover, researchers collect think-aloud protocols from learners, code them, and then analyze them to find out. Furthermore, learners verbalize their thought processes without any justification or explanation. This verbalization is treated as non-metalinguistic think-aloud (NMTA) (Type 2). Therefore, to gather data for this study non-metalinguistic Type 2 concurrent think-aloud protocol has been applied.

Methodology

Research Participants

The participants of this study comprise 20 learners, both male and female, in the first semester of their first year of Bachelor of Arts in English at a private university in Bangladesh. After answering the demographic questionnaire, the learners were randomly assigned to the control group (N=10) and experimental group (N=10). Their age ranged from 17 to 22 years and their mother tongue was Bangla. They also had exposure to English academically for 12 years and their self-listening hour was about 4.33 (μ) hours per week. Most of them used materials for their self-listening (75%) which was out of syllabus (66.7%) rather prescribed in the syllabus. As for listening materials, news in English (42%) and watching movies in English (42%) self-learning were most frequently used.

Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire

The metacognitive awareness listening questionnaire (MALQ) contains 21 statements with five distinct factors related to learners' metacognitive awareness and regulation of listening comprehension strategies; planning and evaluation, person knowledge, problem-solving, directed attention, and mental translation.

Table 2

Five factors and the item numbers of the MALQ from Vandergrift and Goh (2012)

Five distinct factors of the MALQ	Statements on the MALQ (item numbers)
Planning and Evaluation	1, 10, 14, 20, 21
Person Knowledge	3, 8, 15
Problem- solving	5, 7, 9, 13, 17, 19
Directed Attention	2, 6, 12, 16
Mental Translation	4, 11, 18

This questionnaire was graded on a 6-grade Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6) without a neutral point so that respondents could not hedge. It was not a test with right or wrong answers, rather their forthright and honest responses were important. This questionnaire had been administrated after pre-test and post-test that were administrated at the beginning and the end of the intervention respectively of the five-week intervention.

A pre-test at the beginning of the intervention and a post-test at the end of the intervention were administered to understand the effect of the intervention. Participants, both in the experimental and control groups, attended the forty-minute tests each time. The tests were designed to gauge the effects of metacognitive instructions on L2 listening comprehension using five texts; four texts to test the top-down processing and one text on the bottom-up processing with 35 multiple-choice questions (MCQ). All the texts had the flow of natural speech, real-world conversation, British accent and contemporary subject matters were considered.

Results and Discussion

This section provides the main results or findings and discussion under each research question (RQ).

RQ1: What were the metacognitive strategies used by L2 Listeners for successful comprehension?

Analysis of the TAP data showed that for meaning building processing, learners of the experimental group applied more strategies frequently than that of the control group. They used the local prediction (78.2%) strategy the most frequently, and then, directed attention, extralinguistic inferencing, personal elaboration, academic elaboration, and global prediction (47.8%). They moderately applied comprehension monitoring, substitution, world elaboration (30.4%), and scarcely selective attention, performance evaluation, voice and paralinguistic inferencing, questioning elaboration (8.6%). However, they did not apply problem identification and summarization at all. Learners of the control group applied directed attention (40%) most, and selective attention, comprehension monitoring, performance evaluation, substitution, extralinguistic inferencing, personal elaboration, world elaboration, academic elaboration, questioning elaboration, global prediction, local prediction and summarization at various degrees which were less frequent than that of the experimental group. Figure 1 shows the most used metacognitive strategies for meaning-building processing screened from TAP data collected from the control and experiemental groups.

Figure 1

Most used metacognitive strategies for meaning-building processing screened from TAP data.
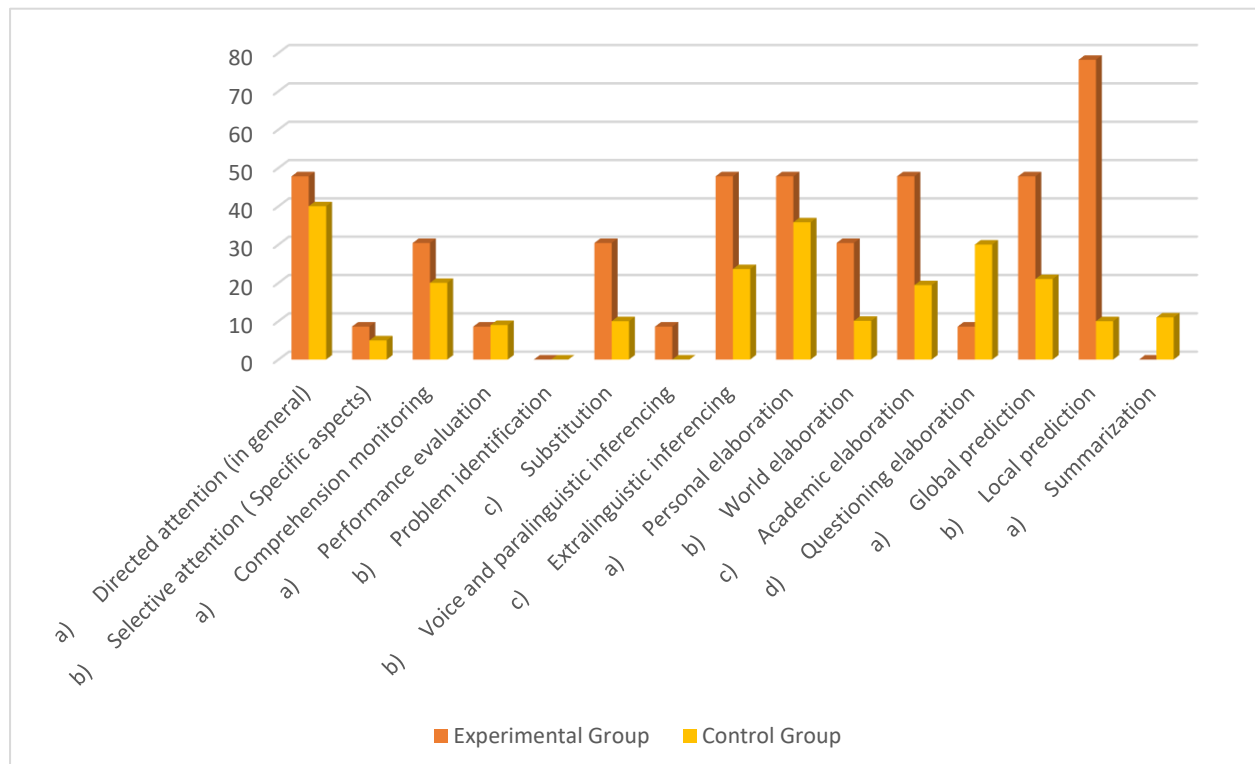
Meanwhile, Figure 2 shows the most used metacognitive strategies by participants of the experimental group and control group for decoding processing screened from TAP data. For decoding processing, it was found that learners of the experimental group applied strategies more frequently than that of the control group. They used the grouping (100%) strategy the most frequently, and then, linguistic contextualization (95.6%) where schematic contextualization and translation (86.9%). They moderately applied linguistic inferencing (78.2%), repetition and seeking clarification (47.8%). They also applied the resourcing strategy (30.4%) while between parts inferencing (8.6%) was the least. For the control group, learners applied all the mentioned strategies but less frequently.

Figure 2

Most used Metacognitive Strategies for Decoding Processing screened from TAP data
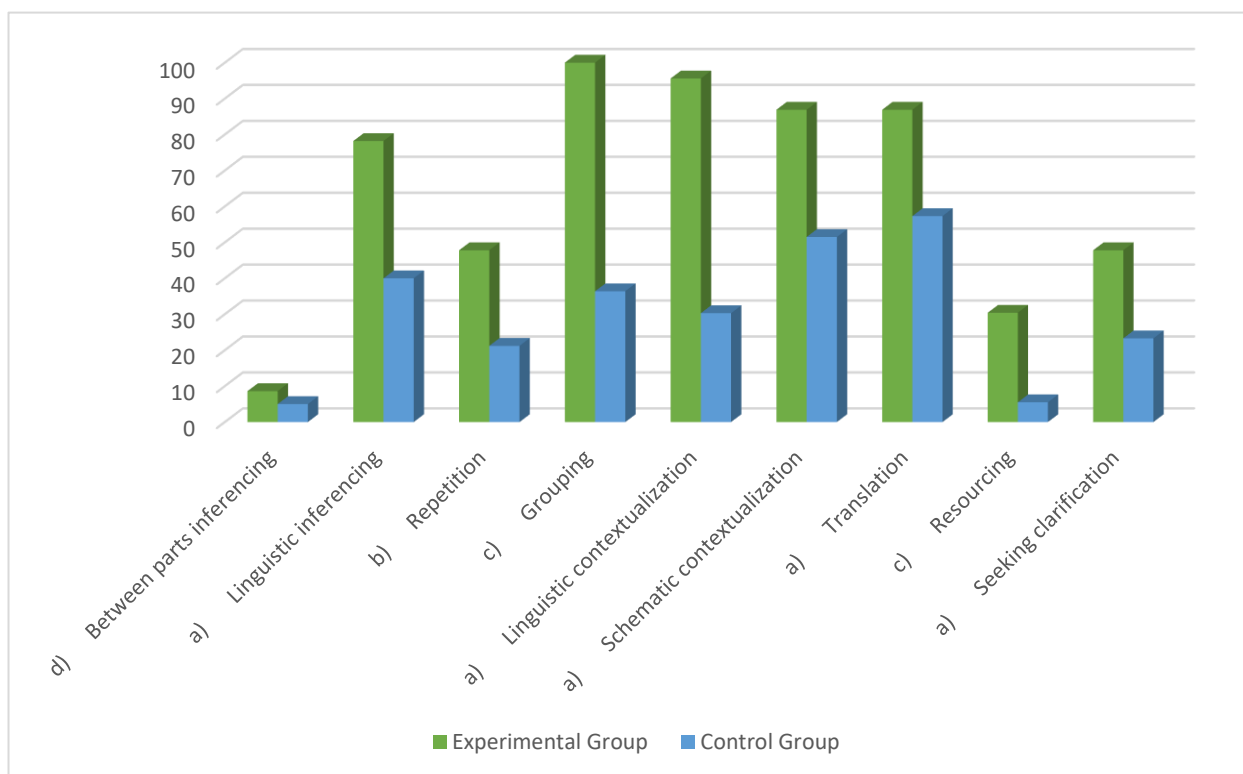
Combining the aforementioned strategies it was found that learners applied 10 strategies altogether from the list of 12 metacognitive strategies. Reorganizing (100%) strategy used the most, while contextualization (88.8%) in the second most. They also applied inferencing and elaboration (66.6%) quite frequently. Prediction and using linguistic and learning resources (44.4%) were also applied significantly. Application of strategies evaluation (33.3%), focusing attention (22.2%), cooperation (11.1%) and monitoring (5%) were worth mentioning.

Figure 3 shows the frequency Count of the Metacognitive Strategy (overall) applied by the participants of the experimental group and control groups screened in the Think Aloud Protocols.

Figure 3

Frequency Count of the Metacognitive Strategy Use during Think Aloud Protocols
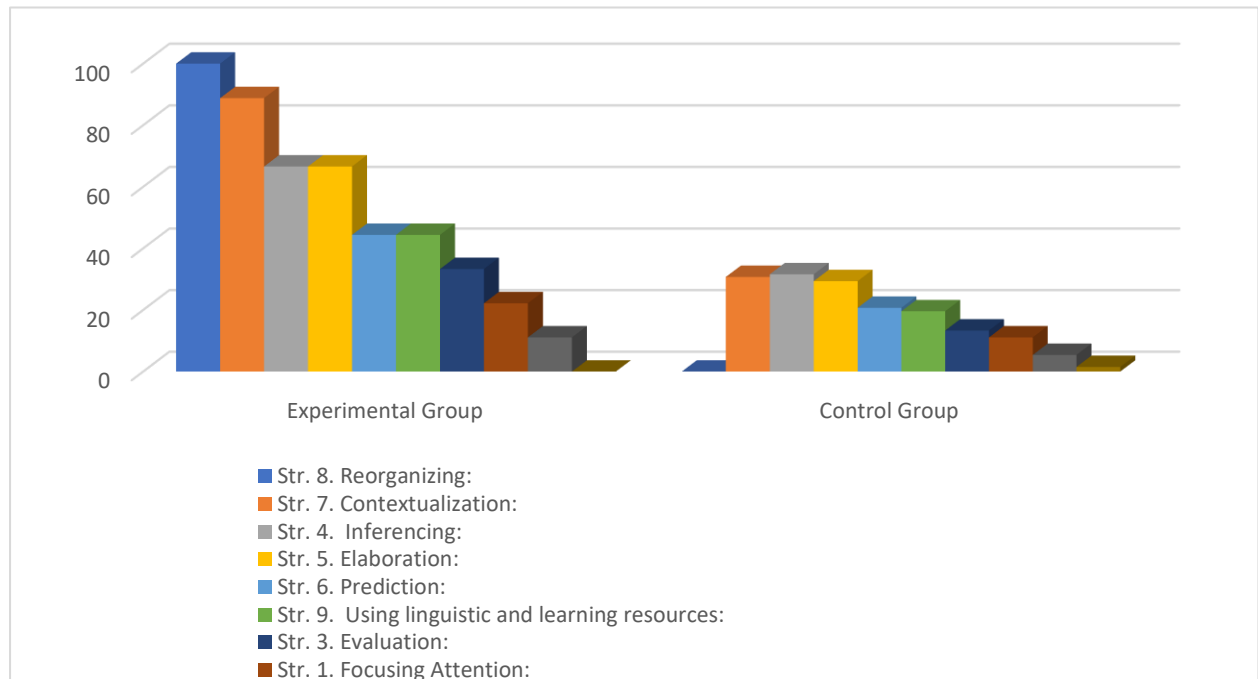
RQ2: To what extent did these metacognitive strategies help them raise their metacognitive awareness for successful listening?

The changes in learners' comprehension were evident from the mean (μ) scores of three parameters of listening comprehension; i) factual information or specific information, ii) inference and iii) assimilation, which was reflected in their total score.

Table 3

Mean Scores of Pre-Test and Post-Test Categorized into Meaning-Building Processing (MBP) and Decoding Processing (DP)

		Experimental Group		Control Group	
		Pre-Test	Post-test	Pre-Test	Post-test
Total Score (40)		21.33	30.17	17.00	15.00
Meaning-building processing	Factual information (26)	13.50	20.17	9.83	10.17
	Infer (6)	1.33	4.00	1.83	2.00
Decoding Processing	Assimilation (8)	6.00	6.50	5.33	2.83

Table 3 shows that for the experimental group, meaning building processing under the categories of factual information (20.17) and inference (4.00) had increased more than that of the pre-test. The learners of the same group in their decoding processing in the category of assimilation (6.50) had also increased. Therefore, the overall score (30.17) of the group showed an improvement. Furthermore, post-test scores of the control group showed an improvement in meaning building processing while not in decoding processing. To sum up, it was evident that learners of the experimental group applied various metacognitive strategies more frequently (mentioned earlier) that helped them to gain better comprehension.

Table 4

Mean Scores of five aspects of MALQ during Pre-test and Post-test

	Experimental Group		**Control Group**	
	Pre-Test	Post-test	Pre-Test	Post-test
Planning and Evaluation	4.30	5.03	4.67	4.73
Problem-Solving	4.39	5.36	4.75	5.36
Person Knowledge	2.89	4.61	3.83	4.61
Directed Attention	4.46	5.21	4.71	4.71
Mental Translation	3.00	4.33	3.44	3.33

From the MALQ scores in Table 4, it was found that learners' of the experimental group used five aspects of metacognitive awareness increasingly and more frequently after the intervention. Learners were more capable to link their person knowledge (4.61) and doing mental translation (4.33) than pre-test. They also applied planning and evaluation (5.03), problem-solving (5.36) and directed attention (5.21). Conversely, learners of the control group showed less frequent use of metacognitive aspects than the experimental group, and in some cases, than their previous use in pre-test like mental translation (3.33) and directed attention (4.71).

Table 5

Correlations between the five factors of MALQ and Total test scores

	Planning and Evaluation	Directed Attention	Person Knowledge	Problem-Solving	Mental Translation	*Total Test Scores*
Planning and Evaluation	1.000					
Directed Attention	0.089	1.000				
Person Knowledge	0.281	0.731	1.000			
Problem-Solving	0.377	0.733	0.261	1.000		
Mental Translation	-0.728	-0.497	-0.237	-0.709	1.000	
Total Test Scores	0.604	-0.255	0.303	-0.340	-0.145	1.000

Finally, from the Pearson correlation analysis (Table 5), it was evident there was a strong positive correlation between learners' L2 listening comprehension and metacognitive awareness, r (4.09) = 0.98, p < 0.001. It also showed that the interrelationship was stronger between directed attention and problem-solving (73.30%) and directed attention and person knowledge (73%). Planning and evaluation showed a significant bond with total test scores (60%), problem-solving (37.70%) whereas person knowledge had relationships with total test scores (30%), planning and evaluation (28%) and problem-solving (26%). There was also a relation between planning and directed attention (9%). However, the other relationships were not either negative or insignificant in raising metacognitive awareness for L2 listeners' successful comprehension.

Conclusion

This study provides evidence of learners' various metacognitive strategies use for better comprehension and all the metacognitive strategies highly positively correlated to their successful L2 listening comprehension. The experimental group participants applied more strategies successfully for their better comprehension, which resulted in higher scores in the post-test in both their decoding processing and meaning-building processing. It is also reflected in the five factors of the metacognitive knowledge that showed the high orchestration of metacognitive awareness. All these results proved that metacognitive awareness improved through the help of metacognitive knowledge could lead learners to be autonomous. Therefore, this study implicated that these materials along with the metacognitive instruction could be included in the current curriculum after revising the whole syllabus of L2 listening for learners better comprehension to upgrade them to a higher proficiency level.

Author's Note

All the data mentioned in this paper are original and collected for the pilot study of my research online during the pandemic.

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13   An Investigation Of Special Education Needs And Inclusive Education Practices Of Mainstream Government Schools In Sri Lanka

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Abstract

In Sri Lanka, the exclusion and separation of learners with disabilities, different abilities, and special education requirements are no longer acceptable, and all children are entitled to the same rights, including education. To that aim, the purpose of this study was to investigate the views and experiences of students, teachers, and parents about inclusive education practices used to address the special needs of children studying in mainstream government schools in Sri Lanka. Twenty-one participants from three schools in the Kelaniya Education Zone in the Gampaha District were selected as respondents. Using non-probability Purposeful Sampling, eight children with mild to moderate learning disabilities, five parents of children with impairments and eight teachers and the In-Service Advisor (ISA) of special education in the particular education zone were selected. Semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather data from the respondents. Participants reported a dearth of training opportunities for teachers, lack of different pedagogical knowledge, scarcity of resources, and unawareness about necessary inclusive strategies and absence of favorable atmosphere in the schools were barriers to inclusion. In addition, participants emphasized the need to provide locally relevant, contextually applicable inclusive pieces of training, practical and compatible inclusive education models, and change the delivery model, curriculum content, and evaluation method.

Keywords: Inclusive education, special educational needs, disabilities, different abilities, mainstream

Introduction

Every student has a human right to receive their education in a conducive learning environment. Therefore, students with special needs must be provided with equal opportunities to acquire knowledge and enhance their skills like other students in a regular setting. To provide such an environment, the stakeholders of schools have a big responsibility to facilitate a supportive learning environment and implement appropriate inclusion to treat students with different abilities in the school settings in Sri Lanka. The UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) clearly states that differently-abled children are entitled to all of the fundamental freedoms and rights that other children enjoy. They are entitled to inclusive and high-quality education on an equal footing with other children besides the additional support they may require to facilitate their education. This research is vital in order to bring to light educators' and stakeholders' perspectives on the

implementation of Inclusive Education strategies, as well as to assist the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka in implementing appropriate intervention strategies, planning for the future, and developing teacher-education programs to improve curriculum delivery in the government school system and other Sri Lankan schools.

Background of the study

Through working as a teacher in mainstream classrooms in government schools for more than twelve years and possessing seven years of working experience as a teacher educator at the National Colleges of Education and while observing the lessons of student teachers, most of the time, the researcher has noticed that there are issues relating to theory and practice concerning teaching students with diverse needs. The researcher believes that whether one work involves teaching students with diverse learning needs or assisting others who teach, it is crucial to understand the theory that underpins practice and the possibilities and options available for creating exciting, innovative learning opportunities for all learners. Including children with disabilities is a relatively new concept in Sri Lankan schools, but the researcher believes it is critical since it is built on special attention for marginalized groups and exceptional children and it emphasizes the same curricula and circumstances for all.

Research Questions

The study examined the following questions.

1. What is the essential nature of inclusive education practised in government schools in Sri Lanka to accommodate learners with varying abilities and learners with special education needs?
2. How far does inclusive environment facilitate the needs of children with different abilities and special education needs?
3. What are the challenges that educators and stakeholders in the education sector encounter concerning inclusive education practices?

Research Design

This is a qualitative study in which descriptive data was gathered using qualitative data collection instruments. Students, teachers, and parents of special need children were interviewed using semi-structured interviews to learn about their perspectives and experiences with inclusive education strategies used to address the special needs of children in Sri Lankan government schools. The participants in this research were chosen purposefully

and randomly to get a representative sample and a wealth of data. In the data collection procedure, the researcher directly intervened. The data in this research was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The researcher implemented various procedures throughout the research process to preserve trustworthiness and ethical concern.

Significance of the Study

There are few studies in this field currently, and no significant effort has been made to investigate the current situation of inclusive teaching approaches in Sri Lankan government schools. As a result, the findings of this study may be valuable to students with various learning obstacles, their parents, teachers who work with students with special education requirements, educators in the school education sector, and community members of learners with various learning barriers. The findings of this study may be helpful to policymakers working for the Ministry of Education and other relevant authorities in Sri Lanka, particularly regarding educators', principals', and teachers' general impressions of the use of Inclusive Education practices in their schools. Policymakers may gain insight into educators' perspectives on the implementation of Inclusive Education and their views regarding the importance of learner diversity as a prerequisite for academic accomplishment.

The findings of this study may be beneficial to parents of children with special education requirements. They will understand the current inclusive education practices implemented in government schools, which will be useful for adapting to the school system to get a better education for their children. Sometimes, their children may be marginalized and discriminated against, exclusion from the general education system due to lack of knowledge on potential inclusive education practices. Educators, principals, teachers, parents, and other school stakeholders' attitudes toward inclusive education will be positively shifted toward quality delivery of the curriculum as designed and assessment processes that can accommodate all learners, particularly students with varying abilities. Future scholars in this field may be able to apply the findings of this study in their own research.

Literature Review

Inclusion of SEN Students

The meaning of inclusive education can be described as every student, including the disabled, children with special needs, and those with different abilities, need to be given the right and opportunity to education in the regular learning environment with regular classroom students. According to Smith et al. (2016), inclusive education is both a concept and a practice.

"Exceptional children," "disabled," and "handicapped" were all used interchangeably to refer to SEN students. The phrase "special education" refers to the science of diagnosing and evaluating exceptional children to offer them tailored teaching and programs that meet their specific requirements (Rousan, 1998). According to Sukys, et.al (2015), inclusive education seeks to ensure quality education, acceptance and respect for diversity, and consideration of all individuals, including differently-abled students, to avoid any discrimination or disdain.

From developing countries, recent information on successful inclusive education trends has been provided. In developing nations, several variables continue to influence and regulate the growth of inclusive education. For instance, one of the main factors which influence the development of inclusive education can be stated as the attitude of the society members toward children with different abilities. The integration of students with different abilities into the usual regular classes has developed the attention of scholars, researchers, educators, several government agencies and education-related organizations at large (Tesfay, 2005). The significant barriers to inclusive education are society's limited understanding of the concept of inclusion of students with disabilities, different abilities, and special needs, as well as negative attitudes toward children with disabilities, different abilities, and special needs, and a hardened resistance to change (Tirussew, 1999).

According to the literature on inclusive education, the fundamental difficulty with the integration of inclusion is that many societies have not recognized and taken the necessary measures to improve their schools, curriculum, and teaching and learning practices to accommodate students with special needs. As a result, inclusive education must be involved in significant change socially and culturally (UNESCO, 2005).

Inclusive Education in Sri Lanka

To be more meaningful, inclusive education requires schools, school stakeholders, school administrators, policymakers, and relevant authorities to identify and respond to the different needs of students. They must take steps at the school level to accommodate the needs of all pupils, including those with special needs and those who do not. Also, through proper curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching methodologies, educational resource usage, and having a good corporation with their society members and stakeholders, all relevant parties must be committed to providing and ensuring quality education.

Therefore, it appears that the Sri Lankan education authorities also have a duty and commitment to implement a proper inclusive education strategy at the school level by providing necessary resources, training, staff, attitude change, required appropriate curricula, necessary school arrangements, and setups, conducive teaching and learning environments.

In a study conducted by Gunawardena and Ekanayake (2009), they discovered that inclusive education practices are being used in schools located in urban, rural, estate, and conflict-affected areas. Regular classroom teachers' inclusive education knowledge and skills are lower than special education teachers (Hettiarachchi & Dias 2014). Abeywickrama et al. (2013) used a sample of three government schools in Kandy District to study the experiences of children with disabilities, their parents, and teachers in special education. They discovered that teachers and parents dominate the learning environments in certain schools.

It appears that, as researchers have pointed out, the number of children with special education requirements, such as learning difficulties and autism, who attend ordinary courses in Sri Lankan government schools has not been recognized. Children with intellectual disabilities, hearing/visual impairments, or physical disabilities make up the majority of students designated as having special education requirements. Most Sri Lankan school teachers lack comprehensive and appropriate training and awareness on inclusive education practices that can be implemented in regular classrooms to cater to students with special educational needs (Alwis, 2015). However, Sri Lanka struggles to provide high-quality inclusive education and equal education to students with disabilities from marginalized groups.

Methodology

Participants

For data collection, a total of eight children were selected from two mixed government schools. Four boys and four girls with disabilities studying in mainstream classrooms have been selected to gather information. All the participants are from secondary schools representing different age groups. Two with learning disabilities, two with intellectual disabilities, two with sensory impairments and two with physical impairments made up the sample. To acquire information from participants, one-on-one interviews were held. Five parents of children with disability were also interviewed, with semi-structured interview schedules to learn about their perspectives and experiences. In total, six teachers were chosen to gather information. Five teachers who are teaching in secondary schools representing different education and professional qualifications in mainstream government schools and the In-service advisor (ISA) of special education in the particular education zone were invited to be a part of the study. The latter is the only zonal official who is in charge of the inclusive education section. Each of these participants was given a participant number. To acquire information from participants, one-on-one conversations were held. To learn more

about their perspectives and experiences, semi-structured interview schedules were employed.

Instruments

In this study, the qualitative research design was utilized to investigate this research topic. To collect data for this project, semi-structured interviews were utilized to gain information from teachers, children with impairments and their parents. The participants in this research were teachers, Children with impairments and their parents from 1AB, 1C, type 2, and type 3 schools in Colombo and Gampaha. The participants in this research were chosen purposefully and randomly to get a representative sample and a wealth of data. In the data collection procedure, the researcher herself gathered the data. The data collected through interviews were analyzed to identify themes, followed by coding and pattern identification and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The researcher implemented various procedures throughout the study process to preserve trustworthiness and ethical concern.

Data Analysis

Interviews

Thematic analysis was used in analyzing the responses in this study by generating patterns. Before that, the researcher looked over the responses to see if they were relevant to the study's objectives. The researcher made various precautions during the research procedure to maintain trustworthiness and ethical consideration.

The majority of children with disabilities said that playing, painting, and extracurricular activities motivated them to go to school. Save the Children UK (2002) has emphasized the relevance of fun learning activities in establishing an inclusive environment for children with impairments. According to the children, there are several difficulties they confront in an inclusive setting. According to Miles (2007), a genuine inclusive environment should give adequate support within a mainstream setting. As one of the physically impaired children mentioned, there were no provisions to accommodate wheelchair users. Therefore most of the time, he had to remain in the classroom when there were outdoor activities. He related his experience "I find it difficult to climb steps to go out. Therefore I stay back in the classroom and do drawing. I like drawing."

A student stated that "I prefer special education classroom for the inclusive classroom because the teacher is very close to me". Children with different abilities always seek the

attention of the teacher. Usually, in Sri Lankan classrooms, 40-50 students study, and when the number of students in a classroom is high, the teaching and learning process will be complicated for all the children as there are only one teacher and no teaching assistants. The teachers will not be able to pay attention to the individual student problems since that situation.

However, there are benefits to studying in the inclusive classroom, such as appreciating and understanding individual differences, respect, and preparation for adult life. Few of the students showed boredom in their inclusive classroom, and one child stated that the need relating to their impairment was better met in a particular school than in a mainstream classroom. However, most of the students mentioned that they liked to go to school and are happy because they get the opportunity for social contact even outside the school. So they are happy in the inclusive classroom despite low achievement. Moreover, their attendance rate was also high in the inclusive classroom.

Parents are keen to educate their special needs children in mainstream schools to provide them with a normal childhood and are generally optimistic about their future (Majid & Khan, 2004). Parental satisfaction with their children's educational achievements and expectations should be considered because all initiatives' long-term viability depends on it. Parents revealed mixed opinions towards including their children with disabilities in regular classrooms. A mother of a child with mild cognitive disability stated that "Mainstreaming my son had improved his social skills, behaviors, and self-confidence" in the inclusive classroom. "My daughter is unable to follow the teacher's instructions and write dictated notes promptly. Therefore, to get personal attention, she needs to be put into a special education unit" said another mother of a 12-year-old sensory impaired child.

"The special class (SEN) is seen by society as a place for disabled subclass people," said the mother of a child with intellectual disabilities. As a result, even if she is not excellent at them, she wanted to enroll her child in a regular classroom to acquire a regular curriculum. They believe that having an inclusive education is critical to reintegrating into society. An illiterate mother claimed that having a disabled child is a punishment from God and a burden on society. As a result, this superstition directly impacts whether or not their children should be educated. Families with disabled children would be inspired if society had more inclusive views and higher expectations for them (Stubbs, 2008). "If a teacher has inclusive attitudes toward disabled children, other students in the classroom will reflect it as well," stated the mother of a 12-year-old boy with sensory impairment. Teachers' attitudes are one of the most critical aspects of ensuring that special needs students are included in school in any country.

 Two of the parents of disabled children viewed the Special Education Unit as a safe environment for their children as teachers were more encouraging and supportive. They noted

that their children's specialized requirements were met in special education units, while one parent mentioned their children's obstacles and difficulties in mainstream courses. A parent of a child with cognitive difficulties underlined the need for special educators' assistance. Almost all of the parents underlined the importance of adapting the style of delivery, curriculum material, and assessment method to match the various capacities of their children. They recommended that policymakers take this into account, so stakeholders at the grassroots level can implement them and achieve success.

Another problem that most parents mentioned was a lack of collaboration between two stakeholders, parents and the school. Less feedback from school and teachers made them unaware of the achievement level of their students. Parents are found ready to support the school in different ways, even providing personal funds to upgrade the school to better their inclusive learners.

The success of inclusion is determined by several elements, including teachers' attitudes and the quality of instruction they provide their students. In general, most teachers favored inclusion and believed that general education setting were best for students with special needs. They shared a belief that including students with special needs in general education classrooms may benefit students with disabilities. They believed that inclusion would encourage social contact and good communication between students with and without special needs from an educational viewpoint. Some teachers viewed that students with special needs will advantage because their social and academic abilities would be enhanced to place them in a general education setting. They elaborated on their belief that children with disabilities should be taught in the general education classroom. When a child with a disability has the option to stay in the same classroom with other students, he or she receives the attention and sympathy of others and learning support from other pupils. Then children learn more about loving and respecting children with disabilities. If they are kept separated, they would never know to treat them with compassion.

Almost all of the teachers were dissatisfied with the degree of inclusive education training they had access to. The lack of appropriate and sufficient training appears to be a problem cited by these Sri Lankan mainstream teachers as a barrier to establishing and implementing inclusive education in their context. There is an understanding that specific instructional strategies must be used to help students with disabilities in mainstream inclusive education effectively. In Sri Lanka, according to Furuta (2009), a lack of teacher training chances, a scarcity of resources, and a large classroom are all significant concerns. As a result, training programs should deliver regionally relevant, contextually appropriate, inclusive elements of training that allow all students to access mainstream education. A teacher with

short-term training experience on special education, proposed that 'training provided for special education teachers is insufficient for the teachers teaching in the inclusive classroom. Inclusive teachers require different pedagogical knowledge, skills, and psychology to teach the mainstream syllabus. Therefore, in-service or pre-service training should be given to all teachers to equip them with knowledge and skills in handling differently-abled children.

The In-service advisor stated that "All of the instructors teaching in inclusive classes need to be trained on inclusive education so that their attitudes change as well. The readiness to engage in inclusiveness will be enabled by this attitude adjustment". Alghazo et al. (2003) agreed that positive teacher attitudes combined with knowledge of inclusion are crucial in the mainstreaming and inclusion process. He also stated that 'teachers' awareness about local educational strategies pertinent to students with disabilities reported very poor in schools. This unawareness about educational policies also causes adverse attitudes to inclusive education. Moreover, it was recognized that teachers with more experience offer students with disabilities in inclusive situations with more teacher compliments, reinforcement to do their best, chances to answer questions, and more sensibly monitoring of their work than teachers with fewer years of inclusive experience did.

In the discussion on how students with disabilities may negatively affect the classroom environment, few teachers voiced their ideas, saying that they are very much concerned about general education pupils, particularly about the students with high educational attainments. Another teacher with many years of experience working in the inclusive classroom expressed her concern about the negative effect on the classroom environment. "Students with special needs require special attention different from general education students. If more time and attention are given to the student with special needs, other students will not be happy with that, and it will cause unfavorable classroom conditions. Hence it is a problematic task for the teacher to teach them in one classroom. Both special needs students and general education students will not advantage from learning in this type of classroom".

The school administration's level of special education support was also noted by Sari et al. (2009) as an essential factor impacting teachers' perceptions. It's possible that teachers who are well-supported don't see including students with impairments as a "burden" or extra effort. A newly appointed teacher contributed to this by suggesting, "In the mainstream classroom, no necessary equipment for children with disabilities is supplied. Special tools must be supplied in the classroom to help their motor skills". This emphasizes the importance of providing support to a child with a disability who needs to access the curriculum in an inclusive mainstream school.

Inadequate classroom time offered for teachers in inclusive classrooms was another issue for teachers. The majority of teachers identified mandatory island-wide examinations as a significant impediment to achieving inclusive education. They claimed that the pressure placed on teachers by the Department of Education is why they do not want special needs students in their classrooms. They are aiming for a 100% pass rate. Jayaweera (1999) also projected the issues teachers face because of this examination-oriented education system even more than an era ago.

Even though about two-thirds of the partakers supported the notion of inclusion, almost all general education teachers agreed that the general education classroom was the best place to improve students with disabilities.

Discussion

Though it is widely agreed that children with Special Education Needs should be integrated into mainstream classes to maximize their academic progress and personal development, there are numerous impediments in the Sri Lankan educational system. When evaluating parental perspectives, it was evident that a shift in attitudes and notions was required. Since Sri Lankans' views and attitudes around disability have a significant influence, it is critical to building realistic and suitable inclusive education models for children with disabilities while considering their requirements. Though the main focus should be on the needs of the pupils, consideration should also be paid to the needs of the parents. Every parent is a great asset to the school. In the case of a child with special needs, parental participation is essential. Environmental constraints and access concerns must be overcome to increase support services such as transportation and social welfare. Despite several attempts for disabled children in Sri Lanka, present educational methods do not reflect global trends in inclusive education. As a result, reinforcing strategies and bridging the gap to fulfil the needs of stakeholders at the grassroots level is critical for success.

According to the practitioners' evidence, teachers teaching in mainstream classrooms in government schools in Sri Lanka do not have a clear idea of inclusive education and inclusive education plans. Therefore, a favorable atmosphere cannot be seen in the schools in providing the students with special needs, the students who have diverse capacities, talents, and proficiencies. Most school teachers in Sri Lanka do not have proper and appropriate training and awareness on inclusive education strategies that can be used in regular classrooms to cater to students with special education needs (Alwis, 2015). Therefore it is questionable if students with special needs are receiving sufficient support from their parents,

teachers, peers, and community for getting their education in regular classrooms with other normal students.

Inclusive education is not merely an isolated venture for the courtesy of a few experts. For this purpose, it is vigorous that every teacher, functioning at any level of the education structure, should know how to make education more inclusive: this means gaining knowledge on how to increase the presence, participation, and attainment level of all learners and knowledge to support the inclusion of students with disabilities. The conflicting views of inclusive education in theory and practice and attitudes against its implementation provide a barrier to its implementation, as per Mittler (2000), who emphasizes the critical role of teachers in inclusive education. As a result, meeting the training needs of mainstream teachers, which could include mandatory pre-service training and ongoing in-service training, is a prerequisite for inclusion to transition from theory to practice.

Recommendations

The researcher made several recommendations for decision-makers, teachers, and researchers based on the findings. First, providing components of training that are locally relevant, contextually applicable, and inclusive, allowing mainstream instruction to be accessible to all students. Second, by understanding the requirements of children with disabilities, change the mode of delivery, curriculum material, and evaluation technique to meet the diverse capacities of different students and build realistic and suitable inclusive education models for them. Third, to achieve success, it is necessary to reinforce strategies and bridge gaps to address the needs of stakeholders at the grassroots level. Fourth, to promote an inclusive atmosphere for children with disabilities, provide support services and fun learning activities.

Furthermore, encouraging willingness to engage in inclusion will require attitudinal change among stakeholders. Other important considerations include providing training for school administrators and improving exceptional education support given by the administration. Last but not least, incorporating technology can help teachers improve their knowledge and skills by providing them with access to current learning materials and professional networking.

Conclusion

Stakeholders, school administrators, policymakers, and relevant authorities must identify and respond to the different needs of students for inclusive education to be more

meaningful. They must take steps at the school level to meet the needs of all children, including those with special needs and those who do not. Also, through proper curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching methodologies, educational resource usage, and having a good corporation with their society members and stakeholders, all relevant parties must be committed to providing and ensuring quality education.

Therefore, it appears that the Sri Lankan responsible authorities also have a duty and commitment to implement a proper inclusive education strategy at the school level by providing necessary resources, training, staff, attitude change, required appropriate curricula, necessary school arrangements, and conducive teaching and learning environments.

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14   Use Of English To Bolster Inclusion In Special Education Centers

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Abstract

Northern Mexican border cities need to bring the English language to classrooms to care for immigrant students with special educational needs. This intervention project consisted of guiding 26 teacher trainees into bringing the English language to eight Special Education Centers in Tijuana, Baja California. The teacher trainees are in the third semester of the Bachelor in Inclusive Education program at Escuela Normal Fronteriza Tijuana (ENFT). English-teaching assignments look forward to identifying English speakers' cases attending such centers to ensure their inclusion in educational activities and study the possibilities for Spanish speakers to learn a foreign language to bolster their brain development and communication skills. The methodology has a qualitative approach and the procedure includes an English family background diagnostic, an English language diagnostic test, teaching a 30-minute vocabulary acquisition activity as part of the Mathematical thinking class, using the transversality of the subjects, and handing out a video presentation with teacher trainees experience and reflection. Trainees collected data through surveys in Google Forms, observation reports, and video recordings. The results include teacher trainees' realization that around 38% of students speak English and their commitment to bolster their inclusion by bringing the language into the classrooms.

Keywords: English language, inclusive education, special education, teacher trainees.

Introduction

Escuela Normal Fronteriza Tijuana (ENFT) is a Teacher Training Higher Education Institution in Tijuana, Baja California, located at the northern side of Mexico, bordering San Diego, California, United States of America. In this city, it is not uncommon to find English-speaking people. Although the residents are usually bilingual, there are also plenty of monolingual English-speakers living in this city and attending schools. As stated in the 2015 census report made by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), in Baja California, 4.1% of the population was born outside of Mexico. From this percentage, 82,233 of those people live in Tijuana, making it the city in Mexico with the highest number of residents born in a different country. Therefore, there is a constant need to bring the English language to classrooms throughout northern Mexican border cities to cater to the needs of English-speaking immigrant students.

These facts lead professors to wonder why there is little information about English-speaking children attending the Special Education Centers (SEE), such as the Unit of Support Service for Regular Education (USAER) and Multiple Attention Centers (CAM). There is a lack

of a program to include English-speakers in Mexican schools, and the English program for Normal Schools is only taught in three out of six semesters in the Bachelor of Inclusive Education.

Who takes care of English-speaking children who attend the Special Education Centers in Mexican border schools? What happens to them? This action research with a qualitative approach, focuses on studying the frequency in which English-speakers enroll in our schools, their permanency, and the reason for their academic failure, if applicable. ENFT's trainers provide trainees with English language teaching assignments to identify English speakers attending such centers, looking to ensure their inclusion. Trainees should also study the viability for Spanish-speakers with special needs to learn a foreign language. Finally, the trainees can also contribute to students' academic success, and boost their language skills development.

Problem Statement

English-speaking children attending the different Special Education Centers in Mexico have the necessity of having English-speaking teachers. This need is particular in the northern border of the country. However, the usual approach in handling these cases is to force the learners to learn Spanish, even if their family language is not Spanish. This often leads to barriers to learning and participation in class. More often than not, parents opt to remove their children from these centers and do what they can to enroll their children in bilingual private schools, individual therapy, or simply giving up.

Research Objectives and Questions

General Objective

For trainees to reflect on the importance of bringing the English language to Special Education Centers through English diagnostics and teaching practices, they can feel motivated to learn or perfect their language skills and look for strategies to bolster the inclusion of English-speakers in their classrooms.

Specific Objectives

The following are the specific objectives of this study:

1) To gather information about the number of English-speakers attending the Special Education Centers in Tijuana, Baja California.

2) For trainees to have an intimate experience with English-speakers with disabilities as part of their training process.

3) Making the information public to raise awareness of English programs' importance in Teacher-Training Higher Education Institutions.

Research Questions

How many English speakers are confronting communication barriers in schools at present time? What can an English teacher trainer do to help minimize the problem? What kind of training should teacher trainees receive to minimize this problem when they become teachers? Are three semesters of English language acquisition in the Inclusive Education Bachelor program sufficient learning for trainees to alleviate this problem when they are professionals?

<center>**Rationale For Study**</center>

Similar research or programs on the inclusion of English instruction in the specific context of this study been difficult to come by. There are no studies on English-speakers with disabilities studying in Mexico or monolingual English-speakers with disabilities studying in Spanish-speaking countries. There were studies for Spanish-speakers with disabilities learning English, bilingual children with disabilities, special education in Mexico, and English teaching in Mexico. Most research focuses on Spanish-speakers learning English (mostly Latin-American people in the USA), and not the other way around. The ones in Mexico do not target languages, or they do not cover disabilities. Studies that support this paper are analyzed in the next section on the background on special education in Mexico.

Also, specific data on the number of English-speaking children with disabilities in Mexico was not found. The data available is about people with disabilities in general and students with disabilities in schools. There is also information about migration and the number of American citizens living in Tijuana, but there is no correlation between English-speaking students and disabilities. Some relevant related data is reviewed in the next section.

Literature Review

Background On Special Education In Mexico

The current Education Program in Mexico has the purpose of guaranteeing that public education is free, secular, of quality, equity, and inclusion (SEP, 2018a). For such matters, it is founded on the current national and international legal policies. Accordingly, the Strategy for Equity and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities, Outstanding Aptitudes, and Severe Difficulties on Learning, Conduct, or Communication (SEP, 2018b) establishes the concept of inclusion. This strategy not only targets students with disabilities but also those who may have unequal access to education due to cultural differences, language, genre and so on.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Computing (INEGI, 2018), about 7,877,805 (6.6%) Mexicans have a disability, and 7.7 million are five years of age and older. For minors, the school admission will be through any of the Special Education Centers [*Servicios de Educación Especial* (SEE)] as SEP (2018a) establishes. These SEE are divided into two categories: School Services and Support Services. The facilities that are exclusive for children with disabilities are called School Services, and they include a Multiple Attention Center [*Centro de Atención Múltiple* (CAM)], and Multiple Attention Center for Labor [*Centro de Atención Múltiple Laboral* (CAM Laboral)]. The Support Services are established at primary education schools to support students with minor disabilities that attend regular classrooms. Those centers are Unit of Support Service for Regular Education [*Unidad de Servicios de Apoyo a la Educación Regular* (USAER)] and the Resource and Information Centers for Educational Integration [*Centros de Recursos e Información para la Integración Educativa* (CRIE)].

Teacher Training In Special Education

Till 2018, teachers were trained in a Special Education Bachelor with four attention areas: motor, visual, intellectual, and hearing and speech (SEP, 2018). After 2018, the program changed to Inclusive Education, having not one, but the four areas in one bachelor degree. The teachers of Inclusive Education also have to attend to all students that confront language and participation barriers. These are not the child's natural characteristics, but those organizational, normative, administrative, pedagogical, physical, and attitude conditions, including migration (SEP, 2018b, p. 24). As Licea (2020) points out, "many children attending Mexican classrooms have previously gone to American schools, have English backgrounds, or [...] have the necessity to learn the language" (p.24).

Undoubtedly, when talking about teacher training, one must speak of the process. In Normal Schools, it is usual to present a theoretical part along with practice right after. Trainees acquire knowledge and apply it at the same time. More current strategies such as flipped classrooms suggest approaching real-life problem-solving material at the school. "The flipped classroom strategy advocates tout numerous benefits [...] especially for those teaching in hybrid or blended settings" (Milman, 2012, p.9).

The English language should not be taught differently. It is crucial to provide teacher trainees with real-life practice with students that confront a language barrier besides a disability and attend our SEE. Consequently, it is essential to prepare teacher trainees to include the English language in day-to-day classes. Krashen (2009) explains that "immersion has taught us that comprehensible subject-matter teaching is language teaching. In fact, the subject-matter class may even be better than the language class for language acquisition" (p. 53). For this reason, transversality is crucial when introducing a new language to the class. Even if its purpose is to attend primarily to the English speaker, the other children may benefit from the lesson.

With regard to teacher trainees' classroom experience during their training and their subsequent practice when they graduate, Richards (1991) points out "most teachers develop their classroom skills fairly early in their teaching careers. Teachers entering the profession may find their initial teaching efforts stressful, but with experience, they acquire a repertoire of teaching strategies that they draw on throughout their teaching" (para.1). To this end, after teaching, it is vital to conduct self-assessment, peer evaluation, and provide reflective feedback. Richards (1991) defines reflective teaching as:

> An activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and action (para. 1).

Hence, it is essential to provide teacher trainees with the opportunity to teach in English and have feedback and space for self-reflection to guide them towards the greater success in their teaching career. If the trainer does not provide time for self-reflection, all the effort can end up being useless.

Research On Language Teaching In Special Education

Regarding the feasibility of disabled children confronting barriers for learning and participation in acquiring a second or foreign language, Hambly and Fombonne (2012) studied children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. They found that "there were no significant differences in language level [of] bilingually-exposed children with ASDs. [They] did not experience additional delays in language development" (p. 42). Their study proves that teaching English in Special Education Centers has no contraindications in language development.

Supporting the same outcomes, Klingner and Vaughn (1996) mentioned having found improvements in reading comprehension in children with learning disabilities inserted in bilingual classrooms to learn English as a second language. Bird et al. (2005) provided evidence of similar language profiles between bilingual and monolingual children with Down Syndrome. "There was no evidence of a detrimental effect of bilingualism. That is, the bilingual children with DS scored at least as well on all English tests as their monolingual DS counterparts" (p.187).

Regarding children with visual impairment, Aslantaş (2017) shares that "experiments conducted in neuroscience showed that people have stronger verbal memory which contributes to their foreign language education" (p. 95). It is essential to clarify that the spectrum in visual impairment is quite broad, and the child's ability will vary depending on their characteristics. Therefore, there is no evidence that learning a second language is a communicative obstacle for these children. On the contrary, the benefits are relatively high, especially if they already have an English family background.

Lastly, teachers and parents are always concerned about the interference that a second or foreign language may cause in children who have a communicative disability, stating that this would confuse them and make the situation worse. In that matter, Lowry (2012) explains that there is no evidence of that being true. Yelland et al.'s (1993) study indicated that "bilinguals show significantly greater word recognition skill than the monolinguals, thus strengthening the argument for a causal role in reading acquisition for word awareness" (p. 423). They prove that instead of confusing them, it has potential benefits for their communication skills.

Methodology

Research Design

This study was conducted as an action research with a qualitative approach.

Sample

The sample comprised 26 teacher trainees from the third semester of the Bachelor in Inclusive Education program of Escuela Normal Fronteriza Tijuana. They were practicing in two CAM and seven USAER, with a total of 26 groups and 78 students.

Methods of Data Collection

The data collection methods involved semi-scripted interviews, diagnostic tests , questionnaires, video report, and survey administered via google forms.

Scope and Limitation

Some centers were not covered in this study. There are eight CAM in Tijuana, but it was only possible to include two in the study. With regard to USAER, seven were covered, and there are 45. Most teachers are unaware of the number of English speakers in their classroom and they prefer that trainees practice on other topics. Some trainees were not given the right amount of time to practice their teaching, since the institution considered it unnecessary. There was only one teaching practice and they will not have another opportunity.

Ethical Considerations

All identities of participants have been protected. The information provided in this paper corresponds to a particular time and particular center locations. Trainees' interviews have been labelled in codes that correspond to their initials, the interviewer's initials, and the interview date. They are MED-LCL-JAN/15/2020, SBC-LCL-JAN/15/2020, CRK-LCL-JAN/15/2020, AMJ-LCL-JAN/17/2020, PVJ-LCL-JAN /17/2020, and LAM-LCL-JAN/17/2020, and will be used as references.

Procedure

Teaching practices (practicum) were conducted in the School Services previously assigned by ENFT to the 26 Inclusive Education trainees from the third semester. The centers included two CAM and seven USAER throughout the city. The action consisted of four stages: the first stage was making a diagnosis regarding the children's family background. The second stage was conducting an English language diagnostic test. The third stage was a 30-minute lesson. Finally, the fourth stage was a presentation, reflection, and feedback. In the first stage, the family background diagnosis means identifying English-speakers, Mexican-American

children, and families where the English language is an essential means of communication and children's interest in the language. This diagnosis was conducted through an eleven-question questionnaire that parents responded to in the school. Some questionnaires were sent home, and others were complemented with interviews.

In the second stage, the trainees set a test to assess their students' English language ability. These tests were applied differently, depending on the type of students, grade, age, and type of disability. Some asked oral questions for the class to answer, some used materials, and others made a written test complemented with interviews. After having known the level at which every student was, the third stage started. The teacher trainees prepared a lesson plan related to the Mathematical Thinking subject. They must teach a Mathematics class; therefore, the assignment consisted of conducting a recap of the Math activity but in English. If most students were not English-speakers, then the lesson had to include only particular vocabulary, at a level their learners could handle.

The purpose of the teaching practice was to include English speakers in a subject matter class and start with some words for the non-speakers. After that, the fourth and last stage started. It consisted of a video presentation about the trainees' overall experience, including reflecting on their practice. Then, all the teacher trainers of that group, along with their peers, provided feedback. Trainers also responded to a survey regarding their experience and all of their findings. The survey was conducted using Google Forms.
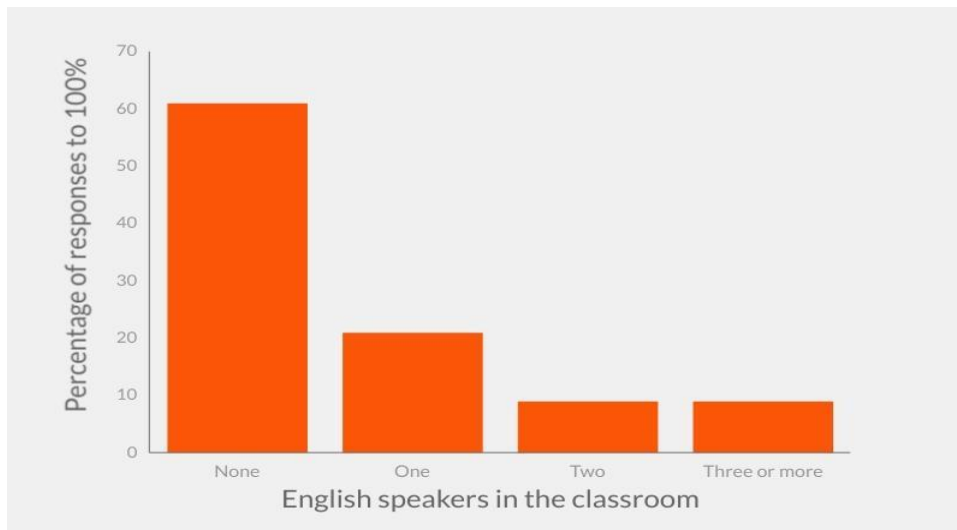
Findings

The findings have been gathered and presented in four categories: *About the Center, About the Students, About the Practice,* and *About the Trainees.* These categories permit a better understanding of the situation, the limitations, and the scope that the research accomplished. They show the importance of bringing the English language to the Special Education Centers and the relevance to the trainees' teaching experience.

About the Center. As stated before, the teaching practices were conducted in two CAM and seven USAER. These centers specialize in disabilities. Findings of the frequency in which disabilities were present among the learners are presented in Figure 1. The most common barrier was Learning disabilities, representing 27% of the students. Autism was next with 25%, followed by Down Syndrome with 13%. Motor disability 11%, while 9% of the students have a language disorder. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), visual and hearing impairment, and unknown cases were all tied at 3.75%.

Figure 1

Types of disabilities
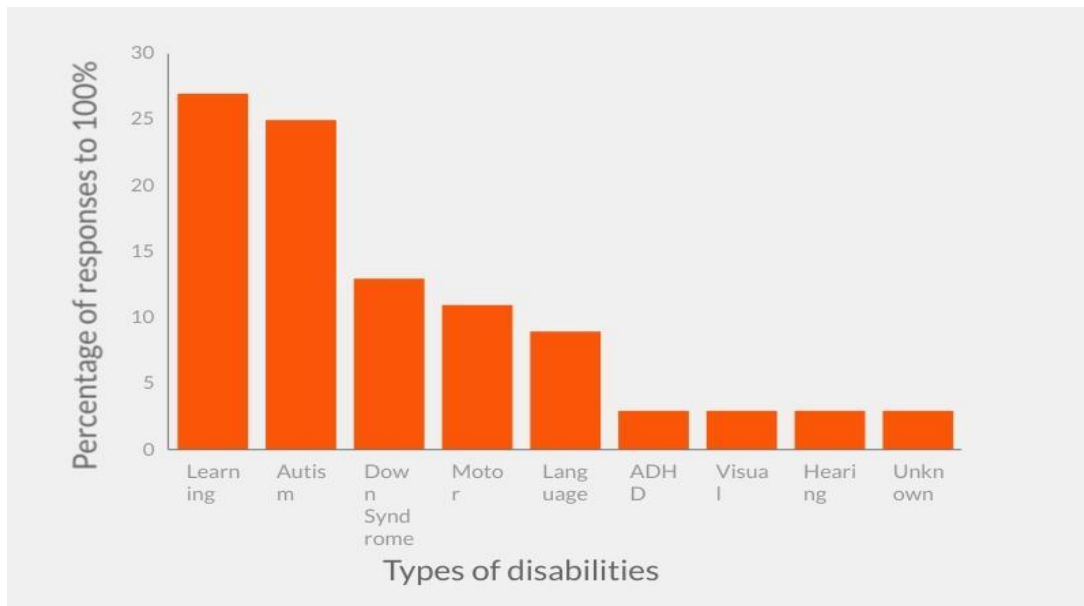
It is relevant to state that children attending USAER are in regular schools but have a professional caring for them. The aim was to work with children with disabilities only since it is the purpose of this research. For this reason, trainees who practice in these centers had one student each, while those practicing in CAM had an average of six students each. Regarding the school level and grades of the students, the teaching practices were in Kindergarten and Elementary levels. The distribution was three Kindergarten groups, four groups of Elementary First Grade, two Second Grade, two Third Grade, two Fourth Grade, one Fifth Grade, and three Sixth Grade. This fact illustrates the broadness and reach of the research.

About the Students. As shown in Figure 2, the study found that 61,5% of children do not have any English family background and do not know the language. Nonetheless, 38,5% of the classrooms have at least one child who does. In many cases, one child represents 100% of the students in one group, as clarified before, and only CAM has actual groups of children with disabilities. At the same time, USAER usually handles one student per group. However, most of these children are not monolingual English-speakers; some were born in the USA, went to school there, are bilingual, have English-speaking family members, or need to learn the language.

Figure 2

English speakers in the classroom

Nevertheless, the findings in Figure 2 also show three English-speaking American children in their classrooms; one bilingual child attending USAER and two monolingual English-speakers attending the two CAM centers. The bilingual child does not face barriers in learning and participation other than those intrinsic to his/her motor disability. As for the monolingual children, one has Down Syndrome, and the other one has Autism. Both children are American and come from bilingual Mexican and monolingual American parents, who are currently living in Tijuana, and their family language is English.

Both children have a trainee observing, assisting, translating, and being the link between the teacher and the family. Teachers tell the trainees that the children have to learn Spanish because "it is their mother tongue" (BCS-LCL-JAN/15/2020), but neither child accepts the language since they are only in contact with it during school hours, thus finding it unnecessary. One family is trying their best to raise the money to put their child in individual private therapy and a bilingual private school because they do not see any advancement. The other child is still attending the center.

About the Practice. Regarding the acceptance of the practice of including the English language in the class proposed by the trainees, some recurrent responses were that teachers do not see the relevance and ignore that some of their children speak English as a native, second or foreign language. For example, some trainees shared their experiences, saying that:

In the school, the USAER teachers and the group teacher did not want us to conduct the activity because they do not have English as a regular subject. But the children were very interested in learning, and it is a shame that they do not have this class in this Elementary. (MED-LCL-JAN/15/2020)

I was frustrated that they did not let me carry out the activity and did not give me time to apply it. I ended up giving a super fast class and taking time from other subjects. I wish that they would have given me the time needed so that I could have done a better job. (SBC-LCL-JAN/15/2020)

When talking about the groups and their levels, children had very different outcomes from their teachers. As can be seen in Figure 3, 30.8% of the students were very attentive and excited about it, 34.6% accepted the lesson, 23.3% were not interested, but the activity went through, while 11.3% disrupted the class. Regarding the successful practices, one of the trainees said, "I was impressed that my group knew more than I anticipated, the activity went way better than I expected" (CRK-LCL-JAN/15/2020). On a similar vein, another said that "the activity went well, the learning was very productive, so much that my student overachieved the topic and I had to teach them another topic too" (AMJ-LCL-JAN/17/2020). Another successful experience was that "I was impressed on how attentive and interested my students were, they wanted more classes. It is a shame that they can't have the subject permanently, but I am grateful that they learned what I could teach them" (PVJ-LCL-JAN/17/2020).

Figure 3

Students' acceptance of the class
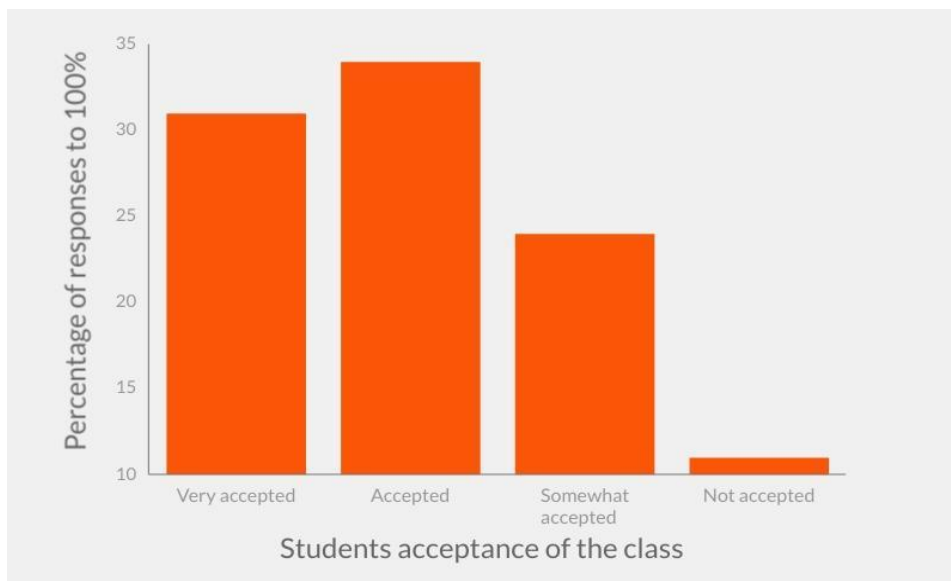
Nonetheless, as stated before, subject matter classes might be more successful than language classes. In this regard, one trainee said that "the child was not interested in the Mathematics class, but when I repeated it in English, he started paying attention. I had to reduce the level of complexity, but he learned some English vocabulary and Mathematics as well" (LAM-LCL-JAN/17/2020). Of course, there were unsuccessful cases in which the students did not show any signs of interest or knowledge. Two trainees reported that these students were non-verbal, one from a group of six and the other an individual group.

About the Trainees. One of the main aims of this study is for the teacher trainees to recognize the need to bring the English language to the classrooms in Special Education Centers. During the fourth stage, they presented results, reflecting on their practice, and were subjects for feedback. The trainees recognized the importance of bringing in the language, but also their areas for improvement. 15.4% of the trainees said they plan to keep up with the practice, feel motivated and enthusiastic about the outcomes, as shown in Figure 4. 57.7% of them expressed their willingness to continue with similar activities, but need further preparation in the subject. 19.2% said that they would do it, but only if it was with a different group or child since their disability prevented them from participation, and 7.7% are not willing to repeat it.

Figure 4

Trainees motivation to keep practicing

Even though most of the teacher trainees felt motivated by the challenge, the majority of them asked for further training. However, the English program for the Inclusive Education

Bachelor ends right after this third semester. Therefore, this teaching practice is and will be the only one that they will undergo during their training years, in contrast to the other Bachelors, who undergo six semesters of the English class. Some modification to the current Inclusive Education program should be considered.

Discussion of Findings

Having presented the findings, now it is time to go back to the original problem, objectives and research questions. Regarding the problem of not having English-speaking teachers, one can conclude that it is still there. Children are not cared for, and they continue dropping out due to language barriers more than the disability itself. Nonetheless, the aim is to create awareness of this situation among professionals, and now that they have a closer look at the problem, one could expect it to be minimized in time.

The problem statement brought out four questions that will now be answered.

1. How many children are confronting communication barriers at present? During this research, the trainees found two children who are monolingual English-speakers. Also, at least one child in 38.5% of the classrooms has some English-speaking background, although they are bilingual.

2. What can an English teacher trainer do to help minimize the problem? The teacher trainer can conduct similar practices. They can also encourage trainees to keep up with their English language learning and to include it in their everyday activities, even if the English class ends in the Third Semester. Also, motivate them to teach it when they graduate and become teachers.

3. What kind of training should teacher trainees receive to minimize this problem when they become teachers? Ideally, they should be trained in the relationship between disability and language learning and adopt a communicative approach in teaching the English speakers and strategies to teach them Spanish. They also need to be trained in deciding which cases are feasible for children to learn a second language (either English or Spanish), and how to teach English to Spanish speakers with a disability. Also, knowledge of the benefits and repercussions of bilingualism would be useful.

4. Are three semesters of English language acquisition in the Inclusive Education Bachelor program sufficient learning for trainees to alleviate this problem when they are professionals? No. It has proven to be enlightening to trainees who already have a level of proficiency of B1 or higher since they can focus on attending to these children. But this is not the case for beginner speakers. They have to start with their own learning in order to teach others, and two semesters of A1 and one of the A2

levels (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages CEFR) is simply not enough.

Conclusion

The trainees' experiences and reflection of their teaching practice are crucial to establishing the necessity and feasibility of bringing the English Language to the different Special Education Centers' classrooms. Trainees could observe children's benefits of participating in Mathematical classes and English language acquisition during their activities. They identified the need for inclusion for the cases of monolingual English-speakers and the responses of bilingual children when they could hear their family language in the classroom. Furthermore, the trainees are more aware of the importance of learning the language and will continue to prepare themselves to address these situations which they might encounter in their future professional lives as teachers.

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