Using 'Capital Letters Bowling' to Teach Capital Letters to Young ESL Learners

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Abstract— Capital letters is the most basic skill that every pupil should master in their writing skill before they proceed to the next skill. The purpose of this action research is to investigate the effect of using Capital Letters Bowling game in helping low proficiency primary school ESL learners in rural area to master the use of capital letters in their writing. A total of 5 ten-year-old children from a primary school in the rural area of Song, Sarawak participated in this study. An action research was employed for almost three months/12 hours to find out the effect of 'Capital Letters Bowling' on the teaching and learning of capital letters. Three instruments were used; document analysis, observations and interviews to collect the data. The data collected were then triangulated to conclude the whole research. The results revealed that integration of 'Capital Letters Bowling' game is an effective way to facilitate the young, low proficiency ESL learners in mastering capital letters.

Index Terms— language games, capital letters, motivation, rural, ESL classroom.

I. INTRODUCTION

Highlight This study focused on the correct use of capital letters forfive of my Year 4 pupils in SK. Nanga Bangkit, Song, Sarawak. The "Capital Letters' Bowling" game was used in my study to teach the correct use of capital letters in pupils' writing. This study involved five pupils who are of different proficiency levels in my class. Other than for the benefit of my pupils, this study was also carried out to understand and improve my teaching as well as for the betterment of teaching and learning profession in general.

During my second year teaching in school, I was assigned to teach Year Four pupils. In this classroom, there were twenty-six pupils. I found out that the pupils were of low achievers and high achievers in the same classroom. In my early observation when I conducted a writing lesson, I could see some of them were having problem in using capital letters correctly. It is such a disadvantage for them because they can correctly spell out the words, but without the correct use of capital letters in their writing, they would lose marks in their examination later.

As their teacher, I could not let this situation continue. I must think of a way to encourage them to use capital letters correctly in their writing. So, I conducted an intervention to find the solution to this problem. From my initial reading,

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writing capital letter in the air and writing capital letters in correct formation using a teacher model or handwriting chart were suggested (Caroline Scott, 2015, Teaching Children English as an Additional Language: A programme for 7-12 year olds). I had tried the handwriting chart to improve my pupils use of capital letters correctly. Unfortunately, I found out that this activity could not encourage pupils to use capital letter correctly in other writing activities. They mixed up the use of capital letter in their writing especially for the low-achievers pupils.

Thus, to improve Caroline Scott's ideas of teaching correct capital letter in pupils' writing, I came out with the "Capital Letters' Bowling Game". Starting Point Teaching Entry Level Geoscience stated that "making learning fun motivates students and helps them pay attention and stay focused on the subject" (Starting Point, 2013). I agreed to that statement as it is also in line with the Year 4 Malaysian ESL Dokumen Standard Kurikulum Dan Pentaksiran (DSKP) which encourages teachers to make teaching and learning process in a fun, meaningful and purposeful context (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia).

Through the "Capital Letters' Bowling Game", pupils could interact with each other. The interaction among pupils then eventually contributed to a great peer-learning process. Peer-learning process that happened makes pupils more comfortable and open when interacting with a peer and that allows pupils to share and acquire knowledge which then resulted in a greater understanding to them in using capital letters (Saga Briggs, 2013).

I chose the language games to be fully physical as there were no other means to provide fun activities in term of technologies and such since ICT technologies are lacking in the school. Computers are present in the school but there is not internet connection available. For teachers who love to use ICT-based activities in teaching, LCD projector is available based on reservation but its screen is not available in the school. It is quite disappointing because the pupils are not exposed to the development of ICT in learning even though they are studying in a school in this modern era.

II. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The objective of this study is to investigate the effect of using 'Capital Letters Bowling' game in teaching capital letters to low proficiency, young ESL learners in a rural school. This study has two research objectives and two research questions:

Research objectives:

- a) The first objective of this research was to find out the effect of games to teach capital letters in pupils' writing.
 - b) The second objective of this research is to see the



effectiveness of the Capital Letters Bowling game in helping the teacher to teach pupils to use the capital letters correctly in their writing.

Research questions:

- a) How does the 'Capital Letters Bowling' game helps pupils to use capital letters correctly in their writing?
- b) How does the 'Capital Letters Bowling' game helps the teacher in the teaching of correct use of capital letters in pupils' writing?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the school, I had identified that five pupils have difficulty to use capital letters correctly. I found pupils' use of capital letters and small letters in their writing were jumbled up. Teachers should teach pupils to use capital letters correctly at the age of ten since it is very much stressed in Year 1 and Year 2 Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (KSSR) writing module (Ministry of Education). I was keen to look on the aspect of punctuation which is teaching the correct use of capital letters in this action research. Based on the KSSR blueprint, it is compulsory to teach Year 4 pupils to use capital letters correctly.

In addition, I was interested in this study to ensure that my pupils' writing would appear attractive to the readers with the correct use of capital and small letters (Boyntoi, 2009). It is important to teach pupils to make their writing appear attractive to the readers because the pupils may wantto be a successful writer in the future since language games support higher-order learning and thinking skills (HOTS) which are very important for learners to develop themselves as future professionals (Rahman & Bakar, 2018; Thirusanku & Yunus, 2014). Thus, it makes me keen to teach pupils to use capital letters correctly by using the "Capital Letters Bowling Game". It would be beneficial for the school as the pupils would be able to achieve good result in their writing for Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR).

In definition, language games are language learning through gameplay (Godwin-Jones, 2014). There are two types of language games; digital and non-digital or physical games with both being widely used to aid language lessons. Non-digital language games such as board games; Snake and Ladders and Grammar Monopoly, Dominoes and Wheel of Grammar (WOG) are still relevant among teachers and learners. Whereas Quizlet, Edmodo, Frogplay and Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG) are among the choices for schools which are equipped with proper facilities for digital language games to take place.

I had created a non-digital game for this action research mainly due to the very limited source of ICT availability in the school. Furthermore, learners play an active role (Thirusanku & Melor, 2014) and the active involvement from the learners when accomplishing language games creates consciousness on the importance of practicing the grammar forms in their interaction freely. By playing the "Capital Letters Bowling Game", pupils have learned through a fun learning environment. Fun learning environment is important to ensure pupils focus for a longer time in the teaching and learning activity. It is supported by Brenda Litchman who said games would enhance learners' interest and provide

meaning and value (Litchman, 1999).

Language games have activities to suit ESL learners' language needs and for them to learn in an effective and encouraging environment. Godwin-Jones (2014) claims that "games can offer an immersive environment in which extensive use is made of the target language" (p.10) which is similar to digital games as stated by Chik (2012) that, "learners can practise foreign language learning and use autonomously through activities they were passionate about, and moved the learning process beyond classroom" (p.96). Both non-digital or physical and digital language games attract ESL learners' interests to participate in the lesson despite not having any ICT materials or even having to learn boring topics.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

My research participants were the 5 pupils of Year 4 class ina local primary school (SK) in a rural area in Song, Sarawak. There were 26 pupils in the classroom, aged 10 but I focused on the 5 participants who were having difficulties to punctuate capital letters correctly. In the classroom, they were seated in five groups, where there are five pupils in a group. Individually, the pupils had different exposure to the English language at home depending on their parents' awareness to the English education. That resulted in the mix-ability classroom of my Year 4 pupils. My research participants consisted of low-achiever pupils. Among the 5 of them, there were three boys and two girls. They have been exposed to English as second language learning for almost three years. They come from low socio-economic status families which normally indicate minimal exposure and usage of English language as daily communication tool.

B. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

I chose Kemmis and McTaggart cyclical action research model because it consisted of four stages which involves planning, action, evaluation and critical analysis of practices based on collected data in order to introduce improvements in my study (John Dudovski, 2016). Having an organised planning was really helpful to ensuremy action research ran smoothly for the next stages. Besides, this model helped me a lot to evaluate my research as it provided a great guidance to analyse and reflect on my findings before everything was successfully done. As I was focusing on the five participants of my Year 4 class at the school to be studied, this model was very practical on it focused on specific situation and context. In addition, it also could be used with both qualitative and quantitative data.

C. RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION

The "Capital Letters Bowling Game has four sets of bowling allies. For this game, I selected 16 pupils to play the game. The 5 participants that I had selected earlier were included in the 16 of them. The 16 pupils then formed four groups of four which consisted of high-achievers and low achievers pupils. I decided to split them into smaller groups so that they would have more opportunities to be involved actively during the game. It is supported by Springer who said that, "when



34 www.ijntr.org

students work together in pairs or small groups, the quantity of interaction is increased, ((Spinger et al (1999) and evidence from research reviewed by University of Bristol (2013)). Using small groups with my Year 4 pupils were effective to minimise behaviour problem that may occurred. In groups, pupils were assigned to an individual task. For example, a group of four pupils were playing the game; one person as the writer, one person as the checker and two persons as bowlers. The bowlers rolled the ball towards four bottles in front of them. The bowlers then collected sentences strips from the bottles that they able to strike. They read it to the writer for him to rewrite the sentence strips with the correct use of capital letters. After the writer writes the sentence, then the checker checks whether it is written accurately.

Marks were given for every correct use of capital letters. However, extra marks have been added to the particular group that had rolled for "strike". The "strike" means the group were able to write three sentences accurately. For one cycle of the game, pupils were only given 3 minutes to complete it. The pupils needed to change their role after one cycle of the game is completed.

V. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Document Analysis

Pre-test and post-test have been conducted in this action research. Pre-test result had been collected to identify pupils problem. Post-test result was collected after the implementation of the "Capital Letters Bowling Game" to be the variable in identifying the differences that my five participants made. Then the results of pre-test and post-test were compared to see the achievements that the participants had made after the use of "Capital Letters Bowling Game" to teach them to write using capital letters accurately. The analysis of the data would be explained more in the data analysis techniques.

Observation (Checklist)

I had documented the anecdotal record of pupils' worksheets and exercise books to see which pupils were and were not using capital letters accurately in their writing. By having the anecdotal record, I was able to identify five pupils to be the participants of this action research. In getting the anecdotal record, I was conducted two interventions such as giving worksheets and written tasks to the five participants. The first intervention was to identify my participants and the second was to see their improvements in using capital letters correctly in their writing. The second intervention was done after the five participants had played the "Capital Letters Bowling Game". After the second intervention, I saw there were some improvements that my participants had achieved in their writing by using capital letters accurately.

As for the observation purpose, I prepared a checklist to see the number of my participants who had shown improvements. In addition, the observation helped me to check for nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how pupils communicate with each other, and check for how much time was spent on every set of the "Capital Letters Bowling Game" (Kawulich, 2005). The improvised checklist based on Kawulich (2005) could be seen in the appendix. The

record of the checklist was analysed in the data analysis techniques in this report.

Interview

I had a questionnaire for the interview sessions with the five participants. The interview sessions were to confirm the participants' problem in punctuating capital letters correctly and to get their responses on their improvements in using capital letters correctly after playing the "Capital Letters Bowling Game". The interview data collection method was an advantage in this action research because it was face-to-face interaction with the participants. It reduced because the participants giving false statement as their responses were associated with the verbal and nonverbal ques which could be identified by the me as the researcher (Susan E. Wyse, 2014).

In addition, the used of questionnaire for the interview sessions kept the participants focused and on track. It was because the questionnaire were designed with reference to professional samples suggested by Andrew P. Johnson (2012) in his book A Short Guide to Action Research. Moreover, the questionnaire helped me to come out with the data that is based on the scala which would increase the responses' reliability (Stefan Debois, 2016).

VI. DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

Document Analysis

By analyzing the pre-test and the post-test result, I could identify the improvements that the pupils made in punctuating capital letters correctly in their writing. The improvements that the pupils made was calculated by using the formula:

X-Y =The improvements achieved

 $(Post\text{-}test\ mistakes) - (pre\text{-}test\ mistakes) = The\ improvements \\ achieved$

Thus, to analyse the data from the pre-test and the post-test, I used the post-test mistakes of using capital letters in participants' writing and minus it with their pre-test mistakes. As a conclusion, I was able to get the positive differences which meant that the pupils improved the use of capital letters accurately.

Observation (Checklist)

I made a checklist to observe pupils' progression throughout the intervention session. The observation increases the validity of the data collected as it offered me 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations (Research Methods in Education: Loius Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison (2011)). The checklist focused on the nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with who, grasp how pupils communicate with each other, and check for how much time was spent on every set of the "Capital Letters Bowling Game" (Kawulich, 2005). In addition, the checklist also covered the aspects of capital letters that pupils were able to grasp. For example, in this checklist, pupils were tested on how to punctuate proper noun and begin the sentence by using capital letters accurately. Thus, this checklist have increased the validity of the data that I had collected.

Interviews

I conducted the interview sessions with pupils before and after the intervention of the "Capital Letters Bowling Game".



From the interview, I manage to collect the participants' responses about their own opinion in using capital letters in their writing. In the first session of the interview, I asked the participants whether they had problem to punctuate capital letters correctly in their writing. In the second session, I asked for the effect of the "Capital Letters Bowling Game" on them using capital letters correctly in writing.

"By providing access to what is 'inside a person's head', it makes it possible to measure what a person thinks" (Research Methods in Education: Loius Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison (2011)). In relation to the statement given by Loius Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison (2011), I conducted the interview sessions with my participants in order to get the data and analysed my intervention based on participants' opinion and experience. The interview sessions were a lot easier as I conducted it with the help of questionnaire as a guide to keep the participants' responses on track to completion (Susan E. Wyse, 2014). Thus, the interview sessions helped me to look for individual's perspective of the "Capital Letters Bowling Game" in helping them to use capital letters correctly in their writing.

Data Checking Techniques

In order to strengthen the validity of the data collected, I have used the triangulation method to check it. The triangulation method helped me to check on the reliability of the data collected and its connection to the objectives and my research questions. I have divided the triangulation process into two sections. The first section is the methods used and the second section is explaining the data obtained from of this action research. I usedthe data triangulation method to check the collected data to help me find out the reliability and the validity because it involved multiple data sources in investigations to produce understanding (Cohen, D and Crabtree, B., 2006). First, I looked into the research question. To answer this question, I looked at the analysis interview instrument which was the questionnaire, checklist from the observation and the anecdotal record of the result of the pre-test and post-test that I had conducted.

The first section of my triangulation checking techniques consisted of the interviews methods, observation (checklist) method and the document analysis method which encompassed the pre-test and the post-test result of the specifically capital letters test designed. Through the interviews, I obtained much data regarding the participants' progression along the way of this action research. I looked at the responses given by participants before and after the intervention of the "Capital Letters Bowling Game". Based on the responses given by the participants, their ability to write using capital letters correctly are improved. This shown that the "Capital Letters Bowling Game" was a suitable intervention to be used in teaching the correct use of capital letters.

The result from my observation based on the participants' progression was in line with the result that I obtained from the interviews. After the intervention of the game, the participants showed a great improvement with no mistakes recorded because they were helped by their friends to re-check and re-correct their responses, the participants still showed improvement in the post-test given as the number of

the mistakes made decreased.

In addition, the document analysis result also showed a positive outcome about the participants' progression after the "Capital Letters Bowling Game" intervention. Before the intervention, participants' pre-test result showed jumbled use of capital and small letters in their writing. On the other hand, the post-test result of the participants' capital letters test after the intervention of the "Capital Letters Bowling Game" showed that their mistakes were minimised. This proved that the intervention of the game was successful to help and teach the participants to acquire the knowledge of using capital letters accurately in their writing.

Thus, by comparing the results of the three data collection methods, I concluded that the collected data in this action research was valid and reliable. To the second research question of this action research which is how does the 'Capital Letters Bowling Game' helps the teacher in the teaching of correct use of capital letters in pupils' writing?, the result of the data triangulation checking mentioned earlier would be the reply. From the result of the data triangulation, it confirmed that the "Capital Letters Bowling Game" was able to help the teacher to teach the correct use of capital letters in pupils' writing. Hence, it is possible for teachers to try out the intervention of the game. However, teachers are also encouraged to try out the intervention outside the context, situation and environment described earlier in this report; to increase the validity and reliability of the data collected.

VII. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The collected data are tabulated based on their respective collection methods. Below are the data from the anecdotal record of the pre-test and post-test result that have been carried out. The data are based on participants' responses.

In order to see a clearer improvements that the participants have made after the intervention of the "Capital Letters Bowling Game", I have tabulated the data as follow:

Participan	Pre-Test	Post-Test
ts	Result	Result
	(Number	(Number of
	of Mistakes	Mistakes
	Made)	Made)
A	20	4
В	22	5
C	9	2
D	22	2
E	14	2

Comparison between participants' pre-test and post-test result.

Based on table above, it is clear that all participants improved. All the participants scored 80% marks and above which is equivalent to the A and A+ grades. The data from the table 3 then been transformed into a graphic form to see the participants' improvements. Anonymous surfer in the eNotes.com (2015) has commented that the uses of graphic such lines and chart are the best way to present data because the information is accessible in a quick glance at it.



36 www.ijntr.org

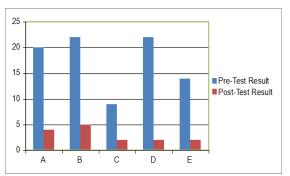


Chart of the comparison between participants' pre-test and post-test result.

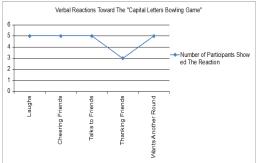
Based on figure above, all of the participants were able to minimise their mistakes up to 5 and less in the post-test result of the test item. Participant A's result increased from 20% to 84%, he was able to improve his mastery in punctuating capital letters correctly by 64% which is from 20 mistakes made in the Capital Letters Test 1.0 and only 4 mistakes were made in the Capital Letters Test 2.0. Participant B with the 12% marks in the Capital Letters Test 1.0 and 80% marks in the Capital Letters Test 2.0 was showing a 68% improvement. She managed to minimise her mistakes from 22 mistakes made in the Capital Letters Test 1.0 to only 5 mistakes made in the Capital Letters Test 2.0.

In addition, Participant C also improved himself in the Capital Letters Test 2.0. His marks improved from 64% in the Capital Letters Test 1.0 to 92% in the Capital Letters Test 2.0. He improved by 28% with the number of mistakes minimised from 9 to only 2. Participant D with the 12% marks in the Capital Letters Test 1.0 has improved to 92% marks in the Capital Letters Test 2.0. He managed to minimise his mistakes by 80% with only 2 mistakes made in the Capital Letters Test 2.0 compared to 22 mistakes made in the Capital Letters Test 1.0. Last but not least, Participant E improving from 44% marks in the Capital Letters Test 1.0 to 92% marks in the Capital Letters Test 2.0. She managed to improve by 48% with only 2 mistakes made in the Capital Letters Test 2.0 compared to 14 mistakes been made in the Capital Letters Test 1.0.

Based on the findings of the pre-test and post-test result mentioned, it cannot be denied that the participants were positively influenced by the "Capital Letters Bowling Game" in punctuating capital letters correctly. The most influenced participant was Participant D, a high-achiever pupil in the class. He was able to construct grammatically correct sentences and speak English language fluently. Thus, it must be easier for him to grab the content knowledge that I had infused in the game. In addition, Participant A and B are the low-achiever pupils in the class. They also managed to show great improvement in punctuating capital letters after the intervention of the "Capital Letters Bowling Game". It showed that the game possessed a great ability to impart its content knowledge to the participants.

During the intervention of the "Capital Letters Bowling Game" to teach capital letters with my participants, I observed their achievements and reactions toward the game. It was not a surprise to me to see that the participants were able to correct every sentence strips correctly during the game because they were helped by their friends who were excellent

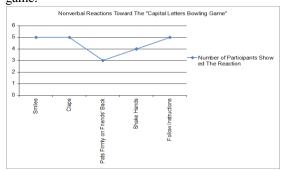
in punctuating capital letters in their writing. It was because I allowed another other high-achiever pupils in my class to participate in the game with the participants. I have allowed the high-achiever pupils to participate in the game in order to increase the number of participants. By increasing the number of the participants involved, it created the sense of competition while playing the game. The sense of competition that occurred has resulted in a great cooperation among the group members (Naela Mustika Khikmah, 2013). It was beneficial for my five participants because they were seen happy playing with their friends without realising that they were actually acquiring the knowledge content of the correct use of capital letters in their writing. I observed their verbal and nonverbal reactions.



Participants' verbal reactions toward the "Capital Letters Bowling Game"

Based on figure 8, Participant A, B, C, D and E were showed positive verbal reactions while playing the game. All of them were laughing, cheering and talked to their friends while playing the game. It showed that they were happy playing the "Capital Letters Bowling Game". All of my five participants also asked for another round of the game. They seemed comfortable playing the game. That is the nature of young learners who are active and enjoy playing (Paul Braddock, 2016).

Furthermore, the participants' verbal reactions also followed their nonverbal reactions while playing the "Capital Letters Bowling Game". The nonverbal reactions reflected a deeper understanding on the participants' emotions while playing the game.



Participants' nonverbal reactions toward the "Capital Letters Bowling Game"

From figure 10, it can be seen that Participant A, B, C, D and E were smiling, clapping their hands and followed the instructions given perfectly. It showed that they were really engaged with the "Capital Letters Bowling Game". Three of them even patted on their friends' back to give encouragement while playing the game. It showed that they were really competitive. At the same time, they were aiming



Using 'Capital Letters Bowling' to Teach Capital Letters to Young ESL Learners

to correct the sentence strips that contained errors accurately. In addition, four of my action research participants were also shaking hands with their friends. It means the participants were making the game as a platform for fair competition.

VIII. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Incorporating game in teaching and learning for this action research was the right decision. As stated by the Starting Point-Teaching Entry Level Geoscience (2016), game is a form of aids to the learners because it is motivational and fun. The "Capital Letters Bowling Game" that I conducted to teach capital letters with the participants was really helpful in the learning process as supported by Godwin-Jones (2014) which stated that "the strong motivational factors involved, game playing can be a powerful agent for learner autonomy, a potential resource for long-term language maintenance, and an entry-point for gaining interest in learning new languages" (p.11).

Besides, the application of different classroom activities and learning strategies is crucial to assistlearners with various needs (Chambers & Yunus, 2017) as these can encourage learners to participate and engage in the lessons. Teachers should be more creative in searching for alternatives in teaching those basic skills. Not only they must deliver the content of the lesson, they also should motivate the pupils to participate in the lesson. Teachers are the centre of an educational journey and play a crucial role in engaging students in the learning process (Suliman, Nor & Yunus, 2017).

The strength of incorporating "Capital Letters Bowling Game" was also seen in encouraging the participants to write by using capital letters correctly in their writing. It was proven by Participant D and Participant E along the way of the completion of this action research. Encouragement such as presents and praises on participants' excellent used of capital letters in their writing had developed their awareness on the importance of punctuating capital letters correctly. Encouragement is important to the participants at their age because as young learners they need to be pushed so that they would not out of their focus in learning the right writing elements (Rafael Lopez, 2015).

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38 www.ijntr.org