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## 1.0 TITLE OF INNOVATION

**SENTENCE SCRABBLE** (English Language)  
(*Penyertaan Kategori Pelajar Guru*)

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

- a. Reduce error in producing sentences
- b. Allow pupils to enjoy learning sentences

## 3.0 BEFORE INNOVATION

During my previous teaching practice, I noticed that pupils faced difficulty in determining the right sentence patterns of the English language. Their placement of parts of speech (example; verb, pronouns, nouns) in conversation resembles those used in their first language. For instance, when my pupils ask for permission to go to the toilet, they would use this phrase; "Miss, may I go to toilet?."

In the example given, the article "the" was omitted. This could result from direct translation made in pupils' mind before relaying it orally. Article "the" may also be omitted as there is no such structure exists in the Malay language. Nesamalar, Saratha and Teh (2005) describe this problem as "missing copula" in the English sentence. They emphasised that the problem result from own language interference; where students translate their first language structure to the second language (Refer to Table 1).

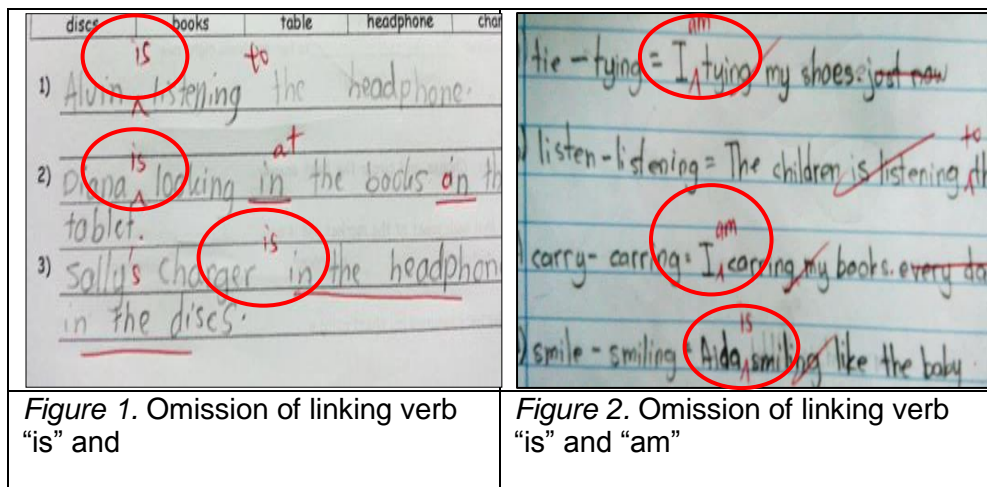
Table 1

*Example of Malay sentence, their English equivalent and translation made by pupils*

Copula	Malay (without copula)	English (with copula)	Possible translation made by students
Linking verb "is"	Amira adik saya.	Amira <u>is</u> my sister.	Amira my sister.
Determiner "a"	Aishah sedang membaca buku.	Aishah <u>is</u> reading <u>a</u> book.	Aishah reading book.

In my third phase of teaching practice, the same situation occurs. Though this time, my pupils were more proficient than the previous two schools. I became more aware of the parts of speech that pupils may not understand

its function in the English language. For example, linking verb – “is”, “are”, “am”. Few of my pupils omitted this part of speech in their writing (Refer to Figure 1 and Figure 2). I identified this problem in a diagnostic test administered before teaching the Year 5 class and few exercises.



#### 4.0 PROBLEM IDENTIFIED

My pupils’ worksheet leads me to a conclusion that their sentences were either truncated, jumbled or replaced with incorrect word class. As a teacher, I believe that I must try various methods in teaching to satisfy the learner’s different needs, proficiency and learning style. It is important for my pupils to learn about “sentence patterns” as English is widely used in today’s world. I also want them to enjoy learning how to construct correct sentences as fun environment reduces anxiety.

#### 5.0 INNOVATION

##### 5.1 INNOVATION APPROACH

The innovation was an effort carried out to improve pupils learning and comprehension in sentence construction through fun activity. There are various methods and approaches in teaching grammar. One of the approaches used in teaching grammar is to focus on form. In this approach, we look at how sentences are constructed and how accurate are these sentences. Critical issue emerged in this approach is overt/ implicit teaching of grammar. Overt teaching of grammar integrates the deductive approach that starts with the presentation of a rule and is followed by examples by which the rule is applied. Thornburry (1999) states that pointing out features of the grammatical system is a form of consciousness-raising. He encapsulates an idea where the method may trigger a train of mental processes that in time will result in accurate and appropriate sentence

production. Knowing this, I adopt an overt teaching approach in my innovation.

The innovation was also an adaptation of the Silent Way. This method is characterized by a problem-solving approach to learning (Brown, 2010). According to Pint (1997), Gattegno developed a number of highly adaptable "tools" that can be used to make students aware of the intricacies of a language's grammar. The tools include colour-coded chart that contains various words and coloured rods (Cuisenaire rods) to represent different parts of speech or object in a given context. It is a very isolated technique that most teachers would not use in normal classroom.

Instead of using it for communicative aspect, it is developed to help students to write correct sentences. Brown (2010) argues that the Silent Ways was too harsh a method, as the teacher is too distant to encourage a communicative atmosphere. He suggests that students need more guidance and overt correction. Considering this, overt explanation of grammar rules is given to the research participant when forming a sentence. It is based on their maturity in cognition – the research participants are students from the primary school instead of adult learners.

## 5.2 DESCRIPTION OF INNOVATION

In this innovation, the colour coded-strip represents different word class (Refer to Table 2). Students will be drilled on the code for each colour. Explanation on the function of each word class will also be given. Then, they will form sentences based on the colour provided. A colour-coded chart will be used to enhance memory on the words that are represented by the colour.

Table 2

*Colour code used in the colour-coded strip*

<b>Colour</b>	<b>Code</b>
<b>Purple</b>	Nouns
<b>Red</b>	Verbs
<b>Green</b>	Articles
<b>Blue</b>	Pronouns
<b>White</b>	Adjective
<b>Yellow</b>	Adverb
<b>Pink</b>	Preposition
<b>Grey</b>	Conjunction

As an extension, pupils will be asked to play the "Sentence Scrabble" game. The colour-coded strip will have a mark on the top left part as the typical scrabble tile (Refer to Figure 3). Students will take the strip in each round

and form sentences by writing on the strip. They will then place the strips on the “Sentence Scrabble Board” (Refer to Figure 4).



Figure 3. Colour-coded strip

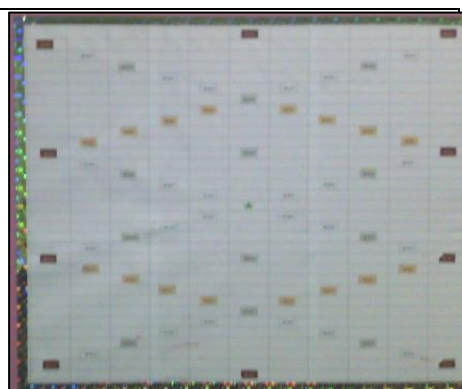


Figure 4. Sentence Scrabble board

## IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATION

### 6.1.1 Phase 1

In this phase, pupils learned about different word classes such as nouns, verbs, articles, pronouns and so on. Then, they associated the word class with the colour explained. I used a colour-coded chart to help them remember the code for each word. After that, pupils formed sentences based on different word pattern such as Subject – Verb –Object (SVO). They were different patterns that pupils could use to write sentences using this method. For example, they can use Noun- Verb – Article- Noun (NVAN) or Pronoun, Verb, Articles, Nouns (PVAN) patterns. Pupils wrote the sentences on the colour-coded strip.



Figure 5. Pupils writing on the colour-coded strip

### 6.1.2 Phase 2

In this phase, pupils were briefed about the typical scrabble game as a revision. They have prior knowledge in playing the game. There were few changes made in the scoring system. Marks will be multiplied when the coloured-strip was placed on columns labelled 2x word score, 3x word

score, 2x sentence score and 3x sentence score as compared to the typical scrabble (2x letter score, 3x letter score, 2x word score and 3x word score). Pupils have to form sentences as in Phase 1 to play the game. Marks will be counted to determine the winner of the game.



Figure 6. "Sentence Scrabble" game

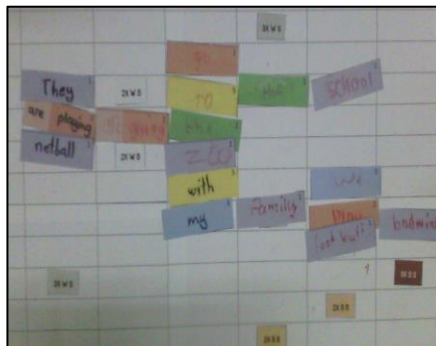


Figure 7. Sample of sentences formed by pupils

## 6.2 AFTER INNOVATION

I carried out my innovation until April 2015. By the end of the month, pupils were able to make sentences based on the structure taught. They were also able to identify their mistakes once prompted. This had helped them in producing sentences without missing any word classes. They enjoyed the "Sentence Scrabble" game as it encourages competition.

## 7.0 BENEFITS OF THE INNOVATION

The "sentence scrabble" game is a "holistic game". Pupils may improve their linguistic competence at various levels. The game incorporates knowledge not only in Sentence Patterns, but also in Subject-Verb-Agreement, Tenses and Vocabulary to be exact. It also attracts students' attention to learn in fun and meaningful ways. Read (2007) emphasise that learning through games give initial opportunities to recognise and respond to language non-verbally. She further emphasise that games allow children to produce chunks of language, in context which require enjoyable repetition.

The young learners have a very short attention span. They also face difficulties in storing information of a lesson to long term memory, especially when they have limited vocabulary in the language. Hence, the process of retention and internalisation of structure becomes an everyday struggle for a language teacher. Integrating the use of colour in the coded-strip help learners to be more aware of the structure taught to them. Mariam and Muhammad Faiz (2013) state that colours influence memory performance by increasing our attention level and arousal.

### References

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