

COLOUR CODED STRIP IN SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION AMONG YEAR FIVE PUPILS

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Abstract

In English as second language (ESL) teaching, grammar is the common problem haunting whatever skills taught by the teacher. In my case, the skill concerned would be writing. Hence, I executed a two-pronged action that could address the core problem (grammar) and secondary problem (writing) faced by pupils learning ESL. The action research was conducted during my third teaching practice in one of the high performance schools in Kuching, Sarawak. The purpose of this action research was to improve my practice in the teaching of grammar and helped pupils construct sentences correctly using the "Colour-coded strip". The colour-coded strip was a tool adapted from "The Silent Way" method. In this innovation, the Cuisenaire rods were replaced with a set of coloured strips that represent different word classes. The pupils were then asked to construct sentences based on different combination of colours. Five research participants were involved in this research. They were Year Five students, with three having average proficiency and two with low proficiency in English. At the end of the action research, three out of five participants showed improvement in constructing sentences.

Keywords: grammar, colour-coded strip, The Silent Way, word classes

Abstrak

Tatabahasa merupakan masalah utama yang dihadapi oleh guru semasa mengajar pelbagai kemahiran bahasa untuk subjek Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Kedua (ESL). Dalam konteks kajian saya, masalah yang dihadapi menjurus kepada kemahiran menulis. Oleh itu, saya telah menjalankan kajian yang bercorak serampang dua mata untuk mengatasi masalah utama (tatabahasa) dan masalah sekunder (menulis) yang dihadapi oleh murid-murid yang belajar Bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini dijalankan semasa latihan mengajar fasa ketiga di salah sebuah sekolah prestasi tinggi di bandar Kuching. Tujuan penyelidikan tindakan ini dilaksanakan adalah untuk meningkatkan amalan saya dalam pengajaran tatabahasa dan membantu murid membina ayat yang betul melalui penggunaan "Colour-coded strip" (Jalur warna berkod). Jalur warna berkod merupakan alat yang diadaptasi daripada kaedah "The Silent Way". Dalam inovasi ini, rod Cuisenaire telah digantikan dengan set jalur berwarna yang mewakili kelas perkataan yang pelbagai. Murid-murid telah diminta untuk membina ayat berdasarkan kombinasi warna yang berbeza. Seramai lima peserta kajian terlibat dalam kajian ini. Mereka merupakan pelajar Tahun Lima - tiga mempunyai penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris yang sederhana dan dua mempunyai penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris yang rendah. Pada akhir kajian ini, tiga daripada lima peserta menunjukkan peningkatan dalam pembinaan ayat yang betul.

Kata kunci: tatabahasa, jalur warna berkod, The Silent way, kelas perkataan

BACKGROUND

I am a trainee teacher under the Bachelor of Teaching Degree Program (PISMP), majoring in Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL). I had

undergone the third phase of my teaching practice for 12 weeks period. I was assigned a Primary 5 class with pupils of different abilities, social as well as cultural background. There were 38 students in the class, with 22 boys and 16 girls. Most of them can converse in the English language as they come from educated family.

They were fluent, but not accurate – it was reflected in the worksheets given. Therefore, I tried very hard to improve their use of English language especially in writing. Treating the problem at surface level (such as, by asking them to make corrections) however, did not solve my problem. This is because the core problem that haunted their writing skill was grammar knowledge. In any language learning, the heart of a language is “grammar”. Previous methods used in English language teaching (example; grammar translation) also suggest that the most important part of the language is grammar. Language learning is the accumulation of mastered rules of the grammar (Cameron, 2011).

During my previous teaching practice, I taught Year Four classes in two suburban schools. My pupils had limited vocabulary and high anxiety in using English. They only speak the language in English class. Based on my observation, the 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 asked for permission to go to the toilet, they would use this phrase; “Miss, may I go to toilet, please?”

In the example given, the article “the” was omitted – the right structure would be “Miss, may I go to *the* toilet, please?”. 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 pupils translate their first language structure to the second language.

I tried addressing the issue in class by using substitution table to make pupils’ aware of the structure of sentences. Other than that, I used games to encourage participation in using grammatically correct sentences and reinforced the right structure whenever my pupils committed a mistake. Special attention in the area was also given during Grammar lesson every week. However, it did not seem to work. I feel disappointed as no improvement could be made. Pupils were conditioned to the incorrect structure used.

Issue of Concern

In my third phase of teaching practice, the same problem occurred. 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).

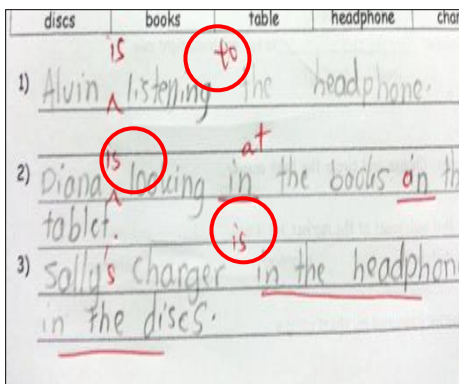


Figure 1. Omission of linking verb “is”

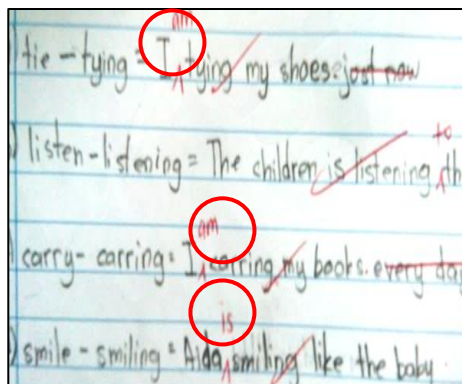


Figure 2. Omission of linking verb “is” and “am”

As a teacher, I believe that I must try various methods in teaching to satisfy the learner’s different needs, proficiency and learning style. The new KSSR Standard Document outlines that teachers should employ various strategies in teaching grammar so that learning becomes effective, interesting, fun and relevant (MOE, 2013). Of all the methods used, I hoped to adopt and adapt a method to teach “sentence patterns”. The “colour-coded strip technique” was a subset designed from one of the ESL methods to solve the issue raised in this research.

Research Focus

Based on the problem identified, I decided to carry out an action to lessen my pupil’s error in producing sentences. Two focuses were selected in this research that consisted of:

- method in improving own teaching practice for grammar using the “colour-coded strip”, and
- technique in improving pupils learning on sentence patterns

Research Objectives

I identified two objectives for this research in relation to the research focus. I aimed to:

- improve my own practice in teaching grammar (SVO pattern) for English as Second Language in Primary 5 classroom using the “colour-coded strip”, and
- explore how the colour-coded strip technique help Primary 5 pupils in learning sentence patterns (SVO), thus producing grammatically correct sentences

Research Questions

The research questions posed in this study were as following.

- How does the “colour-coded strip” technique improve my practice in teaching grammar for English as Second Language among Primary 5 pupils?
- How does the “colour-coded strip” technique help Primary 5 pupils in learning sentence patterns (SVO) to produce correct sentences?

GRAMMAR AND THE SILENT WAY

According to Brown (2010), grammar is the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence. This statement

denotes that grammar deals with the form or structure of languages. There are several methods used in the teaching of grammar. They are the Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method and Audio-lingual method. However, the only method identified with heavy emphasis on grammar is Grammar Translation Method. The other two methods do not focus on the overt teaching of grammar. Aside from these three methods, there are other methods practiced in English Language Teaching, though most placed different emphasis in the language components.

The "Silent Way" for example, was not prominently used to draw ESL learners' attention to form, though it is an established ESL method. It is a method designed to teach communicative aspect of a language. In this research, the method becomes an attempt to make student "notice" or raise "consciousness" on the English language structure. According to Pint (2003), Gattegno (proponent of the method) 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.

The action implemented in this research was an adaptation of the Silent Way. Instead of using it for communicative aspect, it was developed to help students 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 was given to the research participant when forming a sentence. It was based on their maturity in cognition – the research participants were students from the primary school instead of adult learners.

The young learners have a very short attention span. They get easily distracted, even by minimal incident of a friend passing by their class. Learners 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 use of colours in a lesson allows these problems to be minimised. Mariam and Muhammad Faiz (2013) state that colours influence memory performance by increasing our attention level and arousal. Colour has been shown to alter the level of alpha brain wave activity, which is used in the medical field to measure human alertness (Engelbrecht, 2003). Silent way, integrating the use of coloured rods help learners to be more aware of the structure taught to them.

METHODOLOGY

McNiff and Whitehead (2002) state that action research is a practical way of looking at your own practice in order to check how it is as you feel it should be. Hence, the prominent research participant was my own self. The second research participant was my pupils. The pupils were selected to represent their class through "purposive sampling". Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholas, McN and Ormston (2014) explain "purposive sampling" as a process whereby members of the sample are chosen with a purpose – to represent a type in relation to key criterion. The key criterion

adopted for my research participant is their “common problem”, where they form a sentence without missing or replacing particular word class. They also have the potential in improving their accuracy though they are among the members with low and average proficiency in the class. I had selected five students as my research participant - three males and one female. All of them were from Year 5 class (11 years old).

Three methods were used to collect data in this research. The methods were observation, interviews and document analysis. The first method chosen was observation. Students’ ability in fulfilling the research objectives as well as their behaviour was observed in every session conducted. I took part in the process as a participant observer. A participant observer is an observational role adopted by researchers when they take part in activities in the setting they observe (Creswell, 2012). I conducted the planned sessions and observed students’ behaviour at the same time. Field notes were used to record the observation.

Interviews were carried out once the intervention was completed. The interview planned for this research took a form of semi-structured interviews. I used this instrument as it allows my research participant to describe their experiences using their own words. This concurs with Burns (2010) statement that semi-structured interview allows researcher to make comparison across the participants’ responses, as well as allowing individual diversity and flexibility.

The last method used to collect data in this research was document analysis. I analysed the students worksheet gathered from different lesson, relevant to the research. I also included previous diagnostic test made before teaching the class and other tests in order to compare students’ ability in the research area. This kind of document, as emphasised by Burton and Bartlet (2005) provide striking evidence on the way practice changes over time and prompt further questions to be asked concerning the whole nature of teaching and classroom life.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION

Tools

In every session, the colour-coded strip (*Figure 3*) and word colour chart were used to help pupils notice and remember the pattern introduced “Subject + Verb + Object” (SVO). The colour-coded strip was adapted from the Cuisenaire rods used in *The Silent Way*. Instead of using rod of different colour and length, I used different coloured strips with the same length. In this innovation, different colour of the strip represents different word classes. For example; blue represents pronouns, green represents article, red represents verbs and purple represents nouns. Pupils will write on the strips based on the patterns taught.

The red coloured strips came in two variations. The first one was the same as other strips (one colour) whereas, the other one comes with two columns (different gradient of colour). The function of the two columns red-coloured strip (*Figure 4*) was to emphasise linking verbs (am, is and are) in continuous tenses. This adaptation was made considering most participants omitted linking verbs in their sentences.



Figure 3. Colour-coded strips

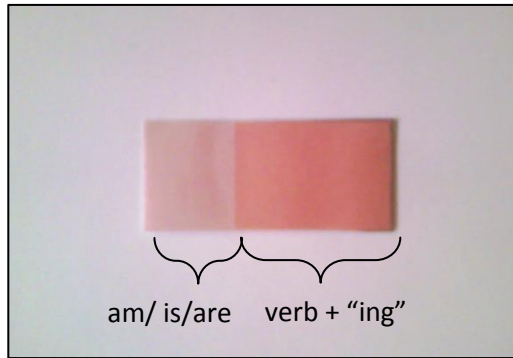


Figure 4. Two-columns red coloured strip

The word colour chart (Figure 5) was designed as a complement for the colour-coded strips. The word colour chart provided a range of words for pupils to choose from in order to construct sentences. Pupils were also given autonomy as they can come up with their own words. The word colour chart acts as a reference for determining the word classes that pupils chose to use.

Pronouns	Article	Nouns	Verb
I	a	car	is
you	an	ball	have
he	the	rice	has
she		elephant	are
we		boy	am
us		Kota Kinabalu	walk
they		Rahman	talk
			eat
			smile

Figure 5. Word Colour Chart

There were few combinations of words classes in SVO pattern. Pupils were introduced to three major patterns (Refer to Figure 6).

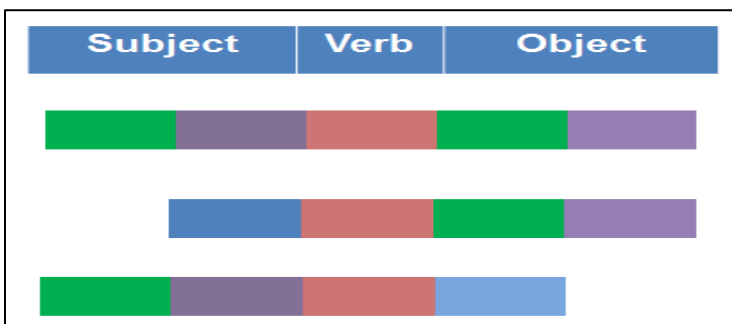


Figure 6. SVO sentence patterns using the colour-coded strip

Sessions

The action was conducted in the *Bilik Operasi SPBT* (BOSS room). Isolated class was chosen to avoid interfering with pupils' formal activity where attendance was taken. During the third practicum, the action was implemented for 45 minutes for the first three sessions whereas, the next two sessions was conducted during English class, with permission from my Mentor. Time allocated for the two sessions was 30 minutes.

Five sessions were carried out throughout the action. In the first session, I introduced the different word classes that pupils would use during the research (Figure 7). In this session, emphasis was given to nouns and articles. Pupils were taught how to use article with nouns (noun phrase). This stage was important in order to make them realise on the importance of article in the English language – as the structure does not exist in the Malay language and other language in Malaysian context.

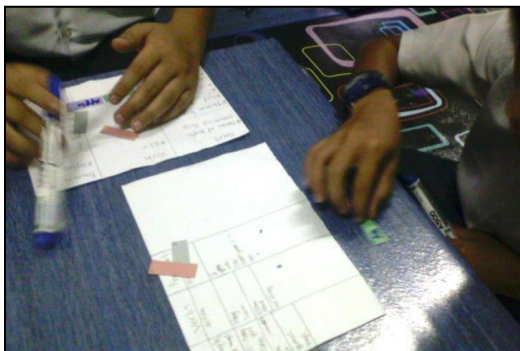


Figure 7. Pupils writing their own notes

Next, I moved on to clarifying the function of verbs. Here, emphasis was given on the linking verbs (am, is and are). After that, the SVO pattern was introduced. I let pupil experiment with the patterns by constructing sentences as shown in Figure 8 and Figure 9.

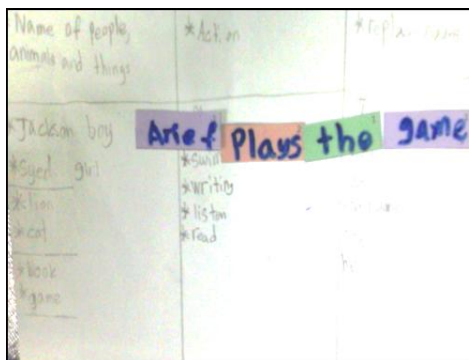


Figure 8. Ahmad's notes and sentence



Figure 9. Ahmad and Adi writing sentences

In the third session, I introduced another word class, which was the pronoun. Pupils were already familiar with the word list. They used it frequently in the English language. Then, pupils were asked to construct sentences in relation to all the structures that they learned (Refer to Figure 10).



Figure 10. Iskandar writing a sentence

In the fourth session, Exercise 1 was administered (Figure 11). This exercise was supported with guidance. I gave hint for each question by displaying the pattern that pupils need to use. This exercise would determine whether the colour-coded strip help to instigate pupil's ability to produce correct sentences or not.



Figure 11. Ahmad and Adi writing their answer in Exercise 1

Lastly, Exercise 2 was administered. The exercise was slightly difficult than the first. This time, no guidance was given to the pupils. The exercise served as a test to determine whether the sentence patterns knowledge had internalised among the pupils. Figure 12 showed that Iskandar and Adi were having difficulties in answering Exercise 2.

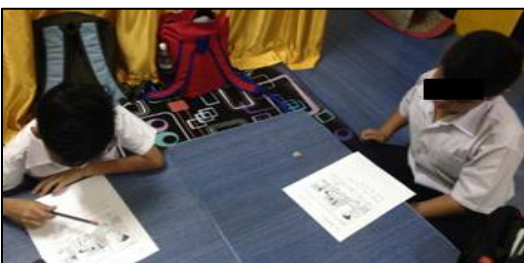


Figure 12. Iskandar and Adi answering Exercise 2

FINDINGS

- **How does the “Colour-Coded Strip” Technique Improve My Practice in Teaching Grammar for English as Second Language in Primary 5 Classroom?**

This research allowed me to come up with alternatives in teaching grammar by referring to one of the main method in English Language Teaching. Other than that, I also improved my skills in developing effective teaching tool. Previously, I used substitution table and games to teach grammar. Useful as it may be, the two strategies was not enough to make pupils aware of the sentence patterns used in English sentences. For instance, substitution table depends a lot on how frequent I use the table in class (drilling). Whereas, games need a lot of preparation and the implementation may get clouded by pupils' response.

I wanted to develop a strategy that would give me other choice in teaching grammar. Using the colour-coded strips, I integrated writing as well as listening and speaking skill to make pupils aware of the patterns of sentences. My critical friend gave a positive response towards this new strategy. She mentioned that it was a “very creative way to assist pupils in forming correct sentences” and it was a “good alternative” (Figure 13).

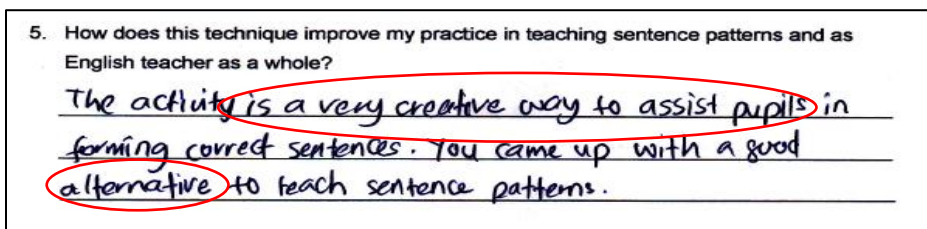


Figure 13. Critical friend's response towards my practice

Developing the colour-coded strip was a new and challenging experience for me. Bringing the context of my concern into “The Silent Way” gave me idea to adapt the Cuisenaire rods into colour-coded strip (Figure 14). It was my first attempt in adapting tool from a famous English Language Teaching methodology.

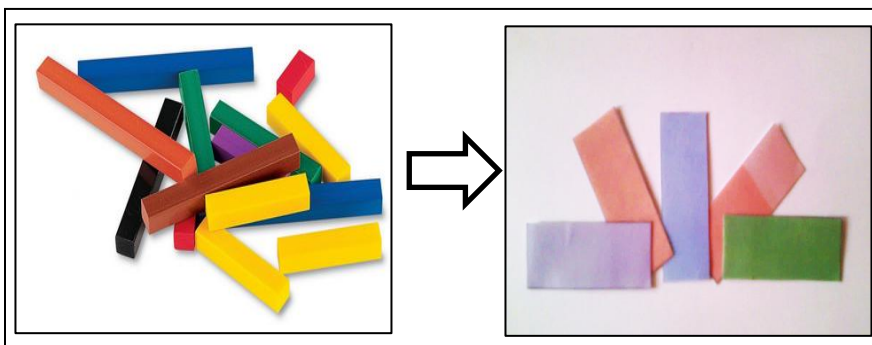


Figure 14. Adaptation of tool

I had to analyse the features that were suitable for this tool in terms of size, durability and colours. I also brainstormed how the tool can be used effectively. For example, the first time I tried using this tool, my Critical Friend and participants commented that it was quite small. Hence, I make adjustment to the size of the tool so that pupils will be comfortable when using it (Figure 15).

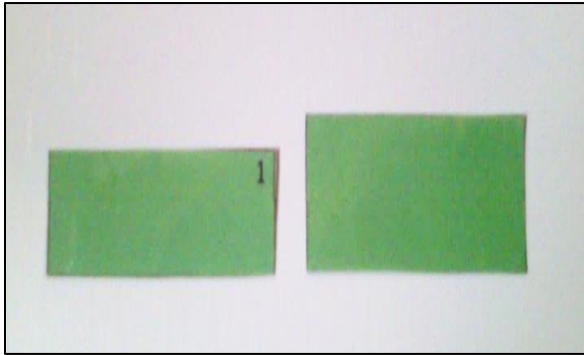


Figure 15. Adjustment made to the tool (size)

In Figure 16, I reflected that pupils' pay attention to the tool that they used. It is important for them as previously they had difficulty in writing on the colour-coded strips. Although it was a small effort, Ahmad appreciated it. "He smiled as he touched and analysed the new strips".

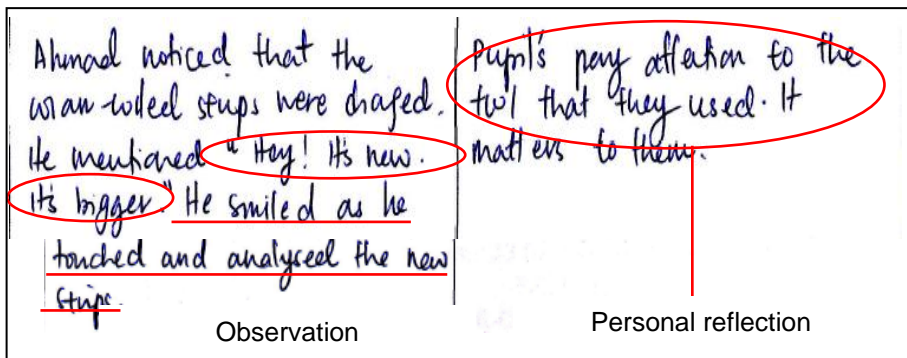


Figure 16. Ahmad's comment in the third session

FINDINGS

• How does the "Colour-Coded Strip" Technique Help Primary 5 Pupils in Learning Sentence Patterns to Produce Correct Sentences?

The colour-coded strip had impacted pupils in terms of their ability to remember the sentence patterns and constructing correct sentences. It was an enjoyable activity for the pupils and it gives them confidence in writing.

The colour-coded strip integrated the functions of colour and arrangement to capture pupil's attention. They started to notice the patterns by remembering the functions of each colour as well as how it is placed in a SVO sentence. Pupils gave

a positive response towards the colours and arrangement of them colours (Figure 17). My Critical Friend also noticed the same quality (Figure 18).

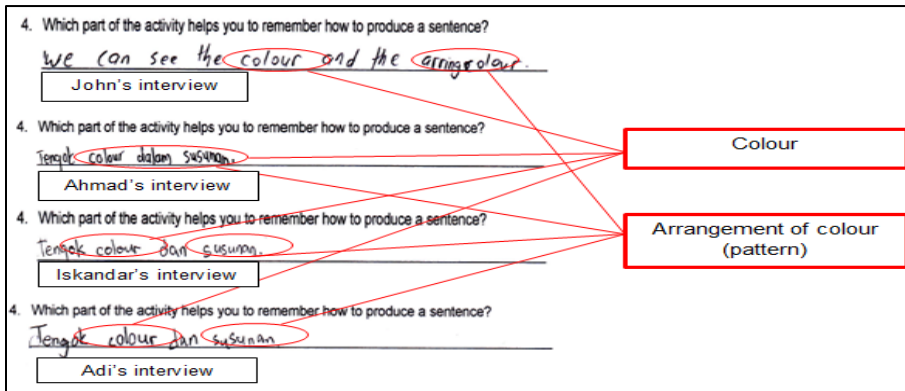


Figure 17. Pupil's interview

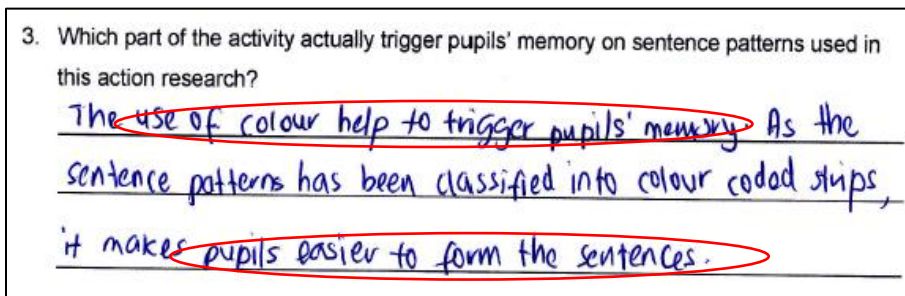


Figure 18. Critical Friend's response on pupil's memory

The action also helped pupils to form correct sentences. All pupils showed improvement in Exercise 1 as compared to their sentences in the Diagnostic Test. However, only John and Ahmad managed to construct correct sentences in Exercise 2 as it was quite difficult than the first exercise. Exercise 2 did not come with guidance. As for Siti, she managed to form four out of five correct sentences in her last Exercise. Table 1 shows the scores obtained by all the research participants.

Table 1

Pupil's Score Taken From Different Time

Pupils	Diagnostic test (6/2/2015)	Exercise (28/7/2015)	Exercise 1 (30/7/2015)	Exercise 2 (31/7/2015)
John	0/3		7/7	4/5
Ahmad	0/3		6/7	4/5
Iskandar	0/3		4/7	0/5
Adi	0/3		5/7	0/5
Siti	0/3	4/5	-	-

I was excited to see that there was improvement among all participants in Exercise 1. Most managed to form four and above correct sentences. In Exercise 2, John and Ahmad formed four out of five correct sentences. Their ability to form these sentences reflected that the pupils were able to grasp the grammar knowledge (sentence pattern) taught. For instance, in Figure 19 Ahmad showed the biggest improvement as compared to his Diagnostic test.

<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">listening</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">headphones</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">looking</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">playing</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">tablet</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">discs</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">books</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">tablet</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">headphone-</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">charger</td> </tr> </table> <p>1) The headphone will charger at table.</p> <p>2) ^{is} John playing Computer and listening the discs ^{will} headphones.</p> <p>3) ^{is} Harris reading a books and Muzad looking at the tablet.</p>	listening	headphones	looking	playing	tablet	discs	books	tablet	headphone-	charger	<p>1. She - teacher She have a teacher.</p> <p>2. Ahmad - violin Ahmad plays the violin.</p> <p>3. cat - eats - fish The cat eats a fish.</p> <p>4. They - watching - movie They are watching the movie.</p> <p>5. buys - umbrella The boy buys an umbrella.</p>
listening	headphones	looking	playing	tablet							
discs	books	tablet	headphone-	charger							
Diagnostic Test	Exercise 1										

sweeping	floor	wiping	windows	tie
tables	walking	classroom	decorating	noticeboard

1. They are decorating a classroom.

2. Ahmad use the tie.

3. We are wiping the windows.

4. The girls are decorating the noticeboard.

5. Syed pushes the tables.

Exercise 2

Figure 19. Ahmad's exercises

The table was turned when I checked Iskandar sentences in Exercise 2 (Refer to Figure 20). The same goes to Adi. They were not able to produce correct sentences as compared to Exercise 1. I was quite frustrated and wonder why the problem occurred. So, I came to both participants to ask for clarifications. Iskandar mentioned that it was difficult for him to answer the question as he did not understand some of the words used in Exercise 2 (Figure 21). Adi on the other hand gave a passive response. He shook his head and answered that it was difficult.

<p>1. She - teacher She is a teacher.</p> <p>2. Ahmad - violin Ahmad buys the violin.</p> <p>3. cat - eats - fish The cat is eats a fish.</p> <p>4. They - watching - movie They is watching the movie.</p> <p>5. buys - umbrella Ahmad buys an umbrella.</p>	<p>1. She - teacher She have a teacher.</p> <p>2. Ahmad - violin Ahmad plays the violin.</p> <p>3. cat - eats - fish The cat is eats a fish.</p> <p>4. They - watching - movie They is watching the movie.</p> <p>5. buys - umbrella Ahmad buys an umbrella.</p>
Exercise 1	Exercise 1

sweeping	floor	wiping	windows	tie
tables	walking	classroom	decorating	noticeboard

1. The boy walking ^{inter} is the classroom.

2. The girl is ^{sweeping} the classroom floor.

3. The girl noticeboard ^{at} in the class.

4. The boy is ^{arranging} the tables ^{at} in class.

5. The girl is the sweeping.

Exercise 2

Figure 20. Iskandar's Exercise 1 and Exercise 2

5. Which part of the activity is difficult for you to understand or do? Please explain.
 difficult tidak faham bahasa 'inglish

Figure 21. Iskandar's interview

I went through my previous observation as well as my Critical Friend's observation to study this matter more. In our observation, we both reflected that the two pupils were having difficulty in transferring their knowledge into action. This may have resulted from their limited vocabulary (refer to Figure 22). In Exercise 1, I used vocabulary that pupils are familiar with. In Exercise 2, I had forgotten that Iskandar and Adi were of low proficiency. I never expected that this limitation could hinder their grammar knowledge (on sentence patterns) this severe.

Iskandar made a comment as the neurotic was writing to an end. He said "when Miss teaches us, I understand but, when I do it, it's difficult". He agreed to the remark made by Iskandar. He shook his head.

Iskandar comment reflects that he is having difficulty to transfer the knowledge he learned into action.

Field Notes – Myself

Two pupils rather slow or very weak in writing their own sentences. They took a very long time to write the sentences.

Field Notes – Critical Friend

The pupils can understand the sentence patterns when the teacher ~~taught~~ explained it but they could not transfer their understanding when they did it on their own.

Pupils having difficulty in transferring knowledge into action without guidance.

Figure 22. Field Notes session 5

Despite the problem, the colour-coded strip activity had allowed pupils to learn in a fun way. They get to experiment with colours. It is "easy to remember" and "understand" as the pupils mentioned in Figure 23. The comments implied that pupils had gained knowledge from the action. They also indicated that it was a "best" and "happy" experience.

1. Did you enjoy the activity? Why?
 I enjoy the activity because it is easy to remember.
 John's interview

1. Did you enjoy the activity? Why?
 Ya kerana senang di faham dan best.
 Ahmad's interview

1. Did you enjoy the activity? Why?
 Ya kerana best.
 Iskandar's interview

1. Did you enjoy the activity? Why?
 sebab aktiviti itu gembira.
 Adi's interview

Enjoy

Figure 23. Pupils' interview

The idea of implementing the action was to make pupils aware of a grammar structure instead of making them “scared”. No punishment was exerted when pupils made mistakes. In this research, pupils learn in a less threatening environment as they observed their friends and improve as indicated in Figure 24. This may be the reason why they feel more “confident” in constructing sentences.

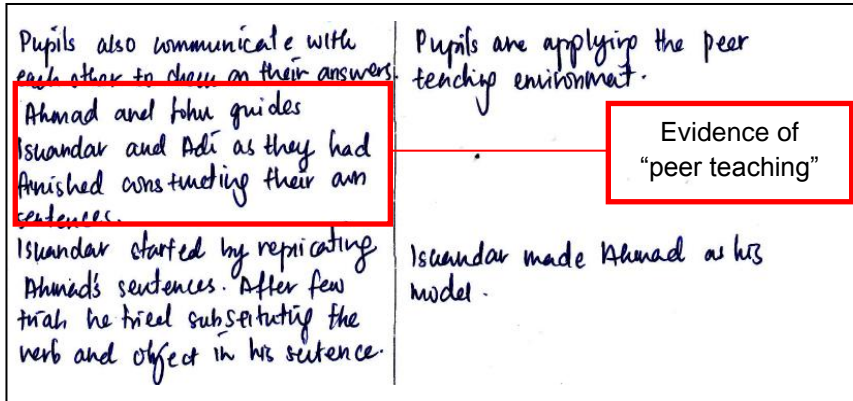


Figure 24. Field notes (Session 3)

The pupils also agreed that the activity helped them in boosting their level of confidence in writing (refer to Figure 25).

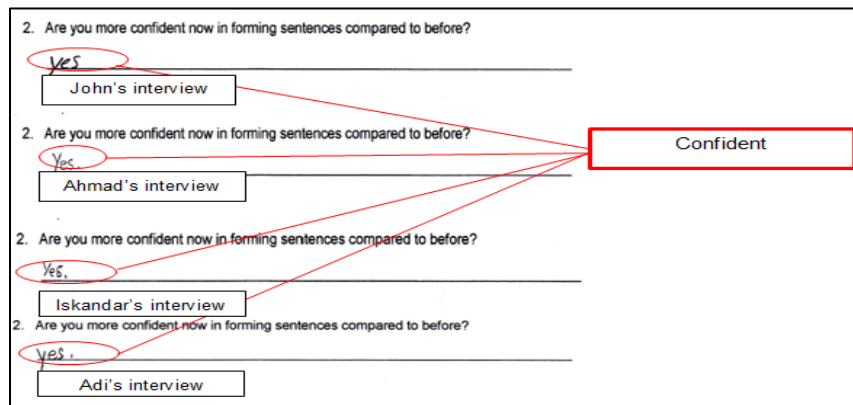


Figure 25. Pupils' interview

DISCUSSION

The result of this study suggests that colour-coded strip technique improve my personal teaching practice and learning of grammar (sentence pattern, SVO) among Year Five pupils. As a teacher, I managed to come up with other alternative to teach grammar. I integrated writing skill as pupils used the colour-coded strips. According to Gordon (2007), teaching grammar in relation to writing allows pupils to review the text that they produced and edit it for grammatical accuracy. My pupils did erase few words that they wrote down on the colour-coded strip before finalising their answer. They learn to be accurate throughout the activity.

I also developed a new teaching tool. I learned to analyse and assess the tool critically before using it with my pupils. Nesamalar, Saratha and Teh (2005) state that teacher must know how best to “exploit” instructional materials for effective learning to take place. I had the experience to exploit the Cuisenaire rods and change it to the colour-coded strip thus determining the way to use it based on my research context.

As for the pupils, they managed to remember and form different variations of SVO sentence pattern. Even though I only introduced three patterns, one of the participants managed to use other pattern (Pronoun, Verb, Pronoun). Other than that, worksheets analysed during this research revealed that students progressed from having high frequency of mistake in sentence production (omission of word classes) to low frequency of mistake. Three out of five participants managed to perform without guidance by the end of the last session. The other two participants were not able to produce correct sentences in the last exercise due to limitations in proficiency and individual cognition. Hedge (2000) explains that the amount of time taken to learn new structures varies among learners as they link forms to functions and to their stylistic use. Hedge further elaborates that as the inter-language system develop and restructuring occurs, learners may suddenly start to make errors in an item the teacher thought they had learned to produce accurately.

Other than that, pupils enjoy doing the colour-coded strip activity. They responded that it was “easy to remember and understand”. Pupils also feel more confident in constructing sentences. The action allowed pupils to learn by mistakes and observing others. It is one of the key criteria in the Social Learning Theory. One of the participants actually modelled the sentence produced by other participant. After few sessions, the participant started to take autonomy in producing his own sentence.

Throughout this research, I fortified my educational value as a teacher. I learned to be realistic. I was struck to realise that there will always be challenges in dealing with human beings. I just need to keep trying and integrate various strategies to suit learners of different proficiency and learning styles. Jarolimek, Foster and Kellough (2005) point out that a competent teacher is in a perpetual learning mode, striving to further develop repertoire of teaching strategies. I will always be a learner of my own practice.

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Wan Shafika Omar/ Colour coded strip in sentence construction among Year Five pupils

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