USING V-CARD GAME TO ENGAGE
YEAR FOUR PUPILS IN VOCABULARY LEARNING

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Abstract

An action research on vocabulary learning was carried out during my third teaching practice in an urban national primary school located in Kuching, Sarawak. The objectives of the research were to engage my pupils in vocabulary learning and to improve my teaching of vocabulary. My participants were six Year Four pupils with average English proficiency other than the researcher. The idea of using "V-card Game" was a game-based learning and it was initiated from the concept of a popular board game known as "Scrabble Board Game" and "Chinese Play Card Game". I collected the data using observation, document analysis, and interview with the pupils and teacher mentor. The data collected were analysed, interpreted and triangulated based on the discussions with my critical friend. The findings showed that my pupils were more engaged in vocabulary learning and I have improved my teaching practice by using "V-card Game" in the teaching of vocabulary. This "V-card Game" could be further enhanced to achieve more self-regulated learning.

Keywords: V-card game, vocabulary, game-based learning

Abstrak

Penyelidikan tindakan berkaitan dengan pembelajaran perbendaharaan kata telah dijalankan semasa praktikum tiga di sebuah sekolah rendah kebangsaan di Kuching, Sarawak. Objektif penyelidikan kajian ini dijalankan adalah untuk melibatkan murid-murid dalam pembelajaran perbendaharaan kata yang menyeronokkan dan untuk meningkatkan pengajaran perbendaharaan kata saya di dalam kelas. Peserta kajian saya terdiri daripada penyelidik sendiri serta enam orang murid Tahun Empat yang mempunyai tahap penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris yang sederhana. Idea "Permainan V-kad" ini adalah berasaskan pembelajaran berdasarkan permainan dan direka berdasarkan konsep permainan papan terkenal iaitu "Scrabble Board Game" dan "Chinese Play Card Game". Data kajian ini dikumpulkan melalui pemerhatian, analisis dokumen serta temu bual dengan murid-murid dan guru pembimbing. Data kajian dianalisis, diinterpretasikan serta ditriangulasi berasaskan perbincangan dengan rakan kritis. Hasil kajian menunjukkan murid-murid telah melibatkan diri secara aktif dalam pembelajaran perbendaharaan kata dan penggunaan "Permainan V-kad" membantu pengajaran saya. "Permainan V-kad" ini dapat dipertingkatkan lagi untuk mencapai pembelajaran yang lebih kendiri dalam kalangan murid-murid.

Kata kunci: permainan V-kad, perbendaharaan kata, pembelajaran berdasarkan permainan

INTRODUCTION

Context

I am a student teacher in my final year of Degree with Honours, Bachelor of Teaching (PISMP) January 2014 intake at Institute of Teacher Education, Batu Lintang Campus, majoring in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). For research ethic purpose, all names in this article are given pseudonyms. This research was conducted during the third phase of my teaching practice from 6th February 2017 until 5th May 2017 in an urban primary school, Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) Aman.

During my third teaching practice at this school, I was assigned to teach Year Four English. I have chosen six Year Four pupils with intermediate English Language proficiency in this action research. My action research aimed to engage my pupils in vocabulary learning using V-card game and at the same time aimed to improve my teaching practices.

Research Focus

In my previous teaching practices, I noticed that vocabulary learning was a major concern for those who want to learn the second language. English, as Nunan (1991) stated that the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary was essential for successful second language use because without an extensive vocabulary, we were unable to use the structures and functions for comprehensible communication. I also realised that the pupils had problems in learning and retaining new vocabulary. They found that learning vocabulary boring since they had to memorise and spell the unfamiliar words. In fact, the drilling method that I used had also demotivated the pupils to learn the vocabulary.

However, I realised that game played an imperative role in arousing interest among the pupils in vocabulary learning. According to Louise (2012), games were highly motivating since they were amusing and challenging. This was more so as I had tried to use game to teach vocabulary to the pupils and I discovered that the pupils enjoyed the game. I believed that vocabulary games employed meaningful and useful language in real contexts and they also encouraged cooperation among the pupils. Hence, I have come up with this V-card game to engage Year Four pupils in vocabulary learning.

The selection of my research participants was through purposive sampling. To obtain their information, I have referred to the teacher mentor for the Year Four examination results. From the examination result, my teacher mentor suggested me six pupils with intermediate English proficiency to participate in my research, namely Alia, Erika, Farid, Ismail, Putri and Siti. Figure 1 shows the Year Four examination result.

Figure 1. Year Four examination result

To triangulate and confirm the selection of these six pupils, I have conducted a diagnostic test on 20th February 2017. I gave them spelling test for the 20 vocabularies that I have chosen from Unit One to Unit Three in Year Four KSSR English textbook in relation to the high frequency word list provided in the Level Two Standard Document for Primary School Curriculum (DSKP) (Ministry of Education, 2012). I tabulated my pupils' results as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Results of the Diagnostic Test

No.	Name	Part A (Spelling Test)	Part B (Matching)	Total Marks (%)
1.	Alia	10/20	10/20	50
2.	Erika	11/20	10/20	53
3.	Farid	10/20	8/20	45
4.	Ismail	7/20	7/20	35
5.	Putri	8/20	8/20	40
6.	Siti	9/20	9/20	45

The results obtained showed that although the vocabularies were all chosen from the textbook that they had learned before, they were unable to spell the vocabularies correctly. Thus, it was clear that pupils faced problems in learning the vocabularies.

Research Objectives
The objectives of this research were to engage Year Four pupils in vocabulary learning using the V-card game as well as to explore how V-card game improves my teaching practices related to teaching vocabulary among the Year Four pupils.

Research Questions
The research was implemented to answer the following research questions:
- To what extent does V-card game help to engage Year Four pupils in vocabulary learning?
- How does V-card game help to improve my teaching practices related to teaching vocabulary among the Year Four pupils?

ACTIONS

Planning and Implementation of Actions

I used Lewin's (1946) and Laidlaw's (1992) (in Kitchen & Stevens, 2007) action research model in my action research to engage the Year Four pupils in vocabulary learning using V-card game. During the process of teaching and learning, my pupils showed low level of motivation in learning new vocabularies, thus my main purpose was to instill fun elements in learning vocabularies so as to arouse and to boost their interest in learning. Therefore, I came up with this V-card game to help my pupils in learning and practising vocabularies.

V-card Game

This "V-card Game" was designed based on "Scrabble Board Game" and "Chinese Play Card Game". In this V-card game, there were 330 pieces of cards in which 260 pieces of the cards were from letter A to letter Z, 50 pieces of the cards were the vowel letters; "a", "e", "i", "o", "u" and 20 pieces of the cards were the yellow blank cards as shown in Figure 2.
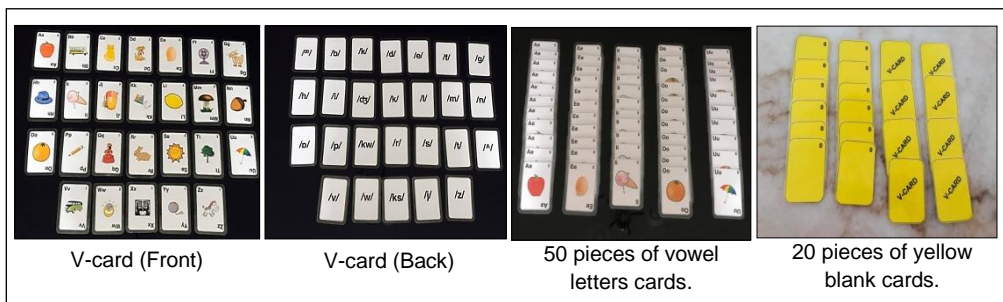

| V-card (Front) | V-card (Back) | 50 pieces of vowel letters cards. | 20 pieces of yellow blank cards. |

Figure 2. Sample of V-card

Gardner (2011) claimed that there are eight multiple intelligences in the pupils. In fact, this V-card game helped to promote linguistic intelligence where pupils were required to read and spell the vocabulary formed; logical-mathematical intelligence where pupils were required to add up the marks that they obtained and interpersonal intelligences where the pupils were encouraged to help their friends during the V-card game.

I carried out seven sessions and each session took about 50 minutes to an hour. Before the game started, each pupil was given 13 cards at random. They were required to form a word that they have learned from the card given to them. Then, they had to read, spell and tell the meaning of the word in order to obtain marks. This helped the pupils to remember both the spelling and the meanings of the vocabularies. In addition, meaning cards were given to the pupils to help them. During the V-card game, the pupils had to jot down all the vocabularies formed in the "Vocabulary Booklet". This helped the pupils to remember the vocabularies learned better. Table 2 shows my working schedule for this research.

Table 2

Working Schedule

Date	Activities	
27/03/2017	Introducing the V-card game	
29/03/2017	Session 1 – Playing with V-card game	**Cycle One**
05/04/2017	Session 2 – Playing with V-card game	
12/04/2017	Session 3 – Assessment and gathering feedback	
19/04/2017	Session 4 – Playing with V-card game	
26/04/2017	Session 5 – Playing with V-card game	**Cycle Two**
02/05/2017	Session 6 – Assessment and gathering feedback	
09/08/2017	Session 7 – Revision Exercise	
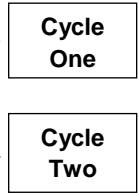
Details of the Sessions

- **CYCLE ONE**

Introducing V-card game. For the first-meet with the identified pupils, I introduced the 20 vocabularies that I wanted them to learn using flash cards (Figure 3). Piaget (2000) stated that pupils at the age of seven to eleven were classified into concrete operational stage and showing flash cards will help to aid the pupils' understanding. According to Patmasari, Sutarsyah and Ginting (2014), this was an important procedure in order to stimulate the pupils' background of knowledge about the vocabulary. I also explained the purpose of playing V-card game and what were to be expected from them. Moreover, I showed them the meaning cards that they could refer to when they could not tell the meaning of the word formed. Before the session ended, I taught them how to make their own vocabulary booklet (Figure 3) where they could jot down the vocabularies.
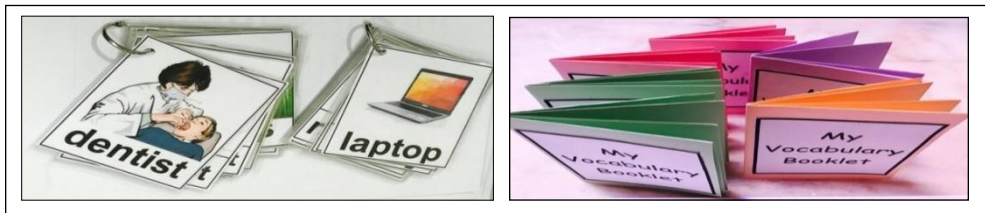

Figure 3. Flash cards and vocabulary booklet

Session One (29th March 2017). Pupils were given the opportunities to play V-card game. I guided the pupils throughout the whole session as this was the first time they played the game. The pupils took a long time to pick and draw a card to form a word that they learned. The whole session took about 60 minutes. Figure 4 shows the first session of the V-card game.

Figure 4. First session of V-card game (29th March 2017)

Session Two (5ᵗʰ April 2017). This was the second time the pupils played V-card game. They were more familiar with the rules and regulations. I gave them less guidance throughout the game. The pupils started to play more independently.

Session Three (12ᵗʰ April 2017). After the two sessions of playing the V-card game, the first assessment was carried out during the third session. It was carried out in few stages which were the revision, assessment and correction stages. I allocated 20 minutes for the pupils to do revision before they were asked to do the assessment which was similar to the diagnostic test. Through this assessment, I wanted to know whether the pupils could remember the spelling and the meanings of the vocabularies learned. Besides, I also wanted to find out what could I improve on my V-card game through the feedback from the pupils.

- **CYCLE TWO**

Session Four (19ᵗʰ April 2017). After looking at the results and getting feedbacks from the pupils, I decided to carry out another cycle to evaluate the consistency of the results. For the second cycle, the pupils participated actively in playing the V-card game. They also practised peer couching that they helped their friends who faced problems in explaining the meaning of the word formed. This V-card game was in line with the pedagogical principle where learning is fun, meaningful and purposeful. According to Perveen, Asif and Mehmood (2016), vocabulary game brings real world context into the classroom and improves the pupils' use of language in an adaptable and appropriate communicative way. Moreover, the amount of guidance given to the pupils was less as compared to the previous session. They managed to carry out the session independently and they also spent less time thinking of the spelling of the words that they wanted to form. Figure 5 shows the pupils participated actively during the session.

| Putri managed to draw and pick the V-card that she wanted independently. | The pupils helped each other during the V-card game. |

Figure 5. Active participation of the pupils

Session Five (26ᵗʰ April 2017). In this session, the pupils participated actively and they managed to form vocabularies that consisted

of more than four letters. They were able to tell the meanings of the vocabularies that they have formed verbally without referring to the meaning cards provided. In fact, they were also able to form simple vocabularies beyond the 20 vocabularies that they have learned. Figure 6 shows the other vocabularies that they have formed.
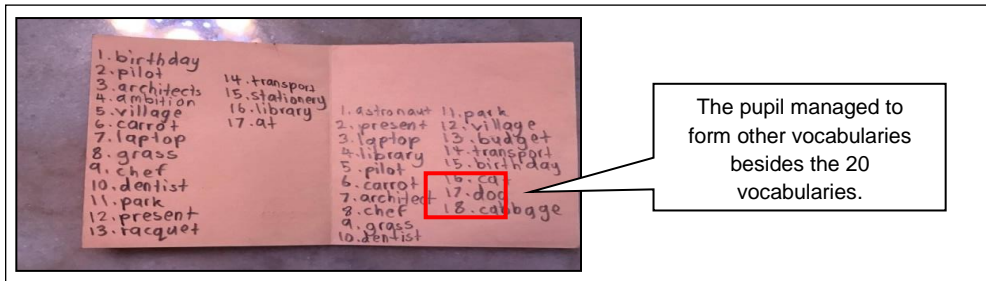

The pupil managed to form other vocabularies besides the 20 vocabularies.

Figure 6. Other vocabularies formed by the pupils.

Session Six (2nd May 2017). I carried out the second assessment which was similar to the first assessment for this session. Session Six was important for me to know the improvements made by my pupils.

Session Seven (9th August 2017). This session was done during my internship at the same school with the same group of pupils. This revision exercise was done to validate the reliability of my data and to find out the practicality of V-card game.

METHODOLOGY

Research Participants

This action research involved six participants and I, the practitioner cum action researcher who identified issue, plan, implement, reflect and evaluate as well as amend the plan in order to carry out the research. According to McNiff's (2002), action research was a strategy to help you live out the things you believe in and it enables you to give good reasons every step of the way. Besides, I also identified six Year Four pupils, namely Alia, Erika, Farid, Ismail, Putri and Siti to be participants in my research. They were chosen because they have intermediate level of English proficiency and they faced problems in learning vocabularies.

Research Ethics

In line with the research code of ethics, I took the necessary measures to ensure and protect the rights and interest of the participants involved in this action research. Lambert (2012) stated that research should avoid causing harm, distress and anxiety to participants. Hence, parental consent form was issued to each participant to grant permission for their children to be involved in my research. Moreover, I used pseudonyms and I blurred my participants' faces in the photos to protect their privacy.

Data Collecting Methods

Observation. I recorded what I have observed my pupils in terms of their attention span, frequency of student-initiated responses and interest in learning the vocabulary during the V-card game in the anecdotal notes. Alberta Education (2008) stated that anecdotal notes are used to record specific observations of individual student behaviours, skills and attitudes as they provide cumulative information on student learning. I also designed an observation checklist to keep track of the pupils' progress and I captured photographs as evidences of action for my research.

Document analysis. I gave assessment which was similar to the diagnostic test that I have used for my initial data collection to the participants after the action. Brown (2007) stated that validity of an assessment depends on the degree to which it measures what it intended to measure. This assessment helped to find out what they know and understand over a period of time. Besides, I created a simple feedback form to ask pupils about their views on learning vocabulary.

Interview. I conducted semi-structured interview with my pupils in order to know their responses towards the V-card game. This is because semi-structured interview was more flexible with open-ended and closed-ended questions in obtaining my pupils' responses.

Data Analysis Techniques

I applied a mixed method research design which involves both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques to provide a better understanding of the research problems. It is supported by Creswell (2012) who suggested that the uses of both quantitative and qualitative methods provided a better understanding of the research problem and question.

- **Quantitative Data Analysis**

Observation checklist. I used observation checklist to record the engagement and involvement of pupils during the V-card game. I tabulated the results in a table form. Table 3 shows the presentation of result in frequency count.

Table 3

The Result of Observation Checklist in Frequency Count

Statements	Frequency			
	Cycle One (12th April 2017)		Cycle Two (2nd May 2017)	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
The participant has fun while playing the V-card game.	5/6	1/6	6/6	0/6
The participant helps his/ her friends who cannot give the meaning of the vocabulary that they have formed.	2/6	4/6	5/6	1/6
The participant knows how to spell the vocabulary that they have learned.	2/6	4/6	4/6	2/6
The participant can remember the meaning of the vocabulary learned.	3/6	3/6	4/6	2/6
The participant is interested to play the V-card game.	5/6	1/6	6/6	0/6

Assessment. A comparison of the number of correct vocabularies spelled in the diagnostic test, first assessment, second assessment and revision exercise were recorded in a table form. According to Burns (2010), this will help to show how numbers disperse or vary around a central point. A bar chart was also created based on the percentage scores. Figure 7 shows a sample of comparison of the scores of Farid.
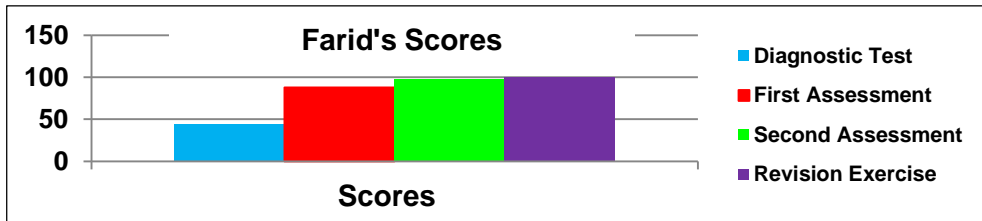

Figure 7. Comparison of Farid's scores

- **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Interview. I used content analysis to analyse the interview. After carrying out interview with the pupils, I transcribed the conversation. I used coding in analysing the interview transcription. The process of coding allowed me to form categories of my findings to aid me in writing out the results. Table 4 shows the coding of keywords in my interview transcript.

Table 4

Coding of Keywords

Codes	Keywords
What V-card game can do	[1] REMEMBERING
	[5] LEARNING
	[7] HELPING EACH OTHER
Feedback of V-card game	[2] INTERESTING
	[3] ENJOYABLE
	[4] FUN
	[6] CHALLENGING

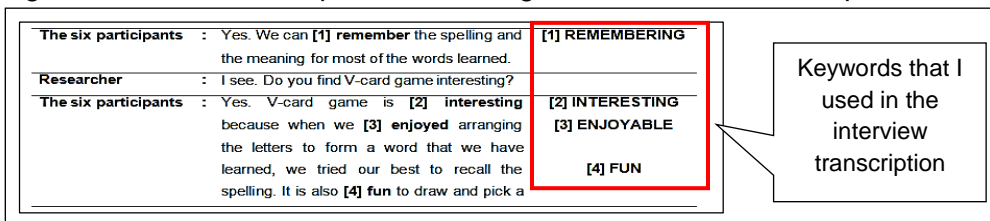Figure 8 shows an example of the coding of the interview transcription.

Figure 8. Keywords in the interview transcription

Data Checking Techniques

Person triangulation. In order to determine the consistency and validity of my data, I discussed the engagement of the pupils during the V-card game with my critical friend. She and I crossed check what we had observed while I conducted the action research.

Method triangulation. I also used method triangulation as a way of checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods. According to Heale and Forbes (2013), method triangulation used different data collection methods as with qualitative and quantitative. Table 5 shows the triangulation of data from different data collection methods.

Table 5

Triangulation of Data from Different Data Collection Methods

Result	Data collected from different methods	
Improvement in spelling and understanding of the meanings of the vocabularies	Interview	"…can remember the spelling and the meanings for most of the vocabularies learned."
	Document analysis	All participants showed an increase of number of correct vocabularies spelled in the assessment.

Time triangulation. I had conducted diagnostic test on 20th February 2017 and first assessment on 12th April 2017 to validate my finding. The questions for both assessments were the same to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected. The approximate seven weeks interval was to identify the effectiveness of using V-card game to engage the pupils in fun learning of vocabulary.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

- **To what extent does V-card game help to engage pupils in vocabulary learning?**

Pupils were motivated to learn vocabulary. According to Krashen (1982) in his affective filter hypothesis, learners with high motivation generally do better. This V-card game did not overwhelm pupils with too many vocabularies initially. This is because the pupils were only required to form a vocabulary of at least four-letter at the start. According to Vossoughi and Zargar (2009), vocabulary game gave learners a feeling of competition to participate in the process of learning vocabulary and motivated them to repeat the vocabulary learned with enthusiasm. This indirectly helped the participants in remembering the spelling of the words. Figure 9 shows that the pupils wanted to play V-card game again with different vocabularies.
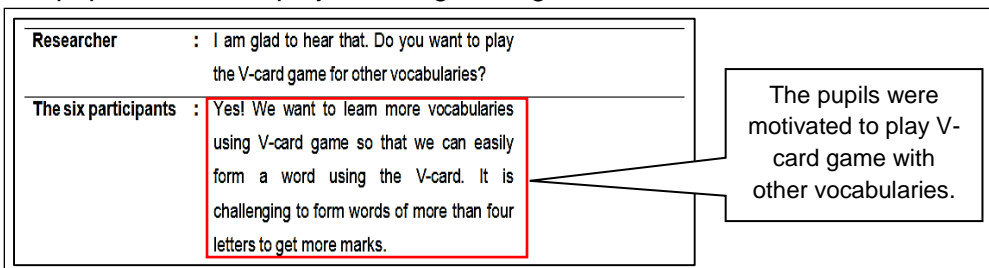
Researcher	:	I am glad to hear that. Do you want to play the V-card game for other vocabularies?
The six participants	:	Yes! We want to learn more vocabularies using V-card game so that we can easily form a word using the V-card. It is challenging to form words of more than four letters to get more marks.

The pupils were motivated to play V-card game with other vocabularies.

Figure 9. Interview transcription with the pupils

Pupils became independent learners. According to Meyer (2010), independent learners were autonomous leaners who were willing to take on responsibility of their own learning. This was seen clearly when my role as the facilitator was gradually changed to an observer. The pupils began to take up the role as facilitators themselves. During the first session of the implementation of the V-card game, I would need to guide and prompt them throughout the session. However, after three sessions of playing the V-card game, they started to take charge of the game and they played the game independently. They would wait for their turn to draw and pick the card without further guidance from me. Figure 10 shows the pupils could play the V-card game independently.
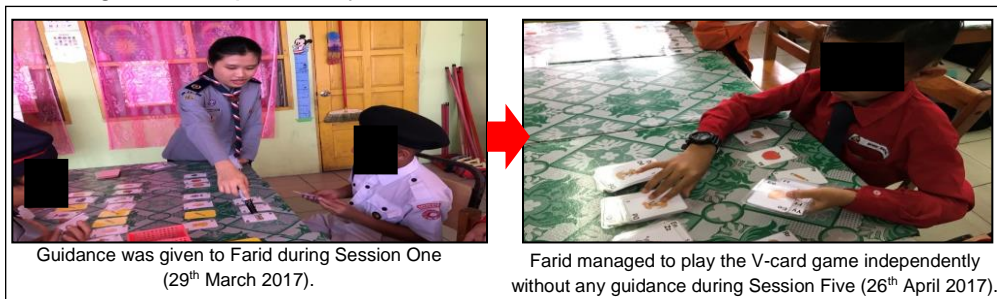

Guidance was given to Farid during Session One (29th March 2017).

Farid managed to play the V-card game independently without any guidance during Session Five (26th April 2017).

Figure 10. Farid changed from dependent learner to independent learner

Collaborative and cooperative learning environment. V-card game had provided the pupils a platform to develop 4C's in this 21st century learning such as collaboration, communication, creative and critical thinking skills. The pupils learned to interact with each other, to take turn, to follow instructions and rules and to help each other during the V-card game. Pupils also developed peer couching through the implementation of V-card game. It is indeed encouraging to see the pupils helping and guiding one another during the session. In fact, they would share vocabularies that they knew with each other. Figure 11 shows the pupils cooperated during the playing of V-card game.
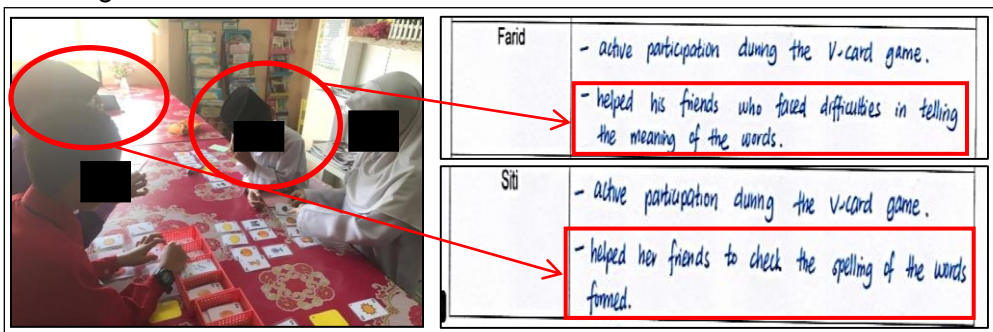

Figure 11. Cooperation between the pupils

Pupils scored better in the assessment. Every pupil showed positive improvement in the assessment given to them. This indicated that

the pupils were engaged in learning vocabularies that they made effort to remember the spelling and the meanings of the vocabularies. Figure 12 shows the positive improvements made by the pupils.
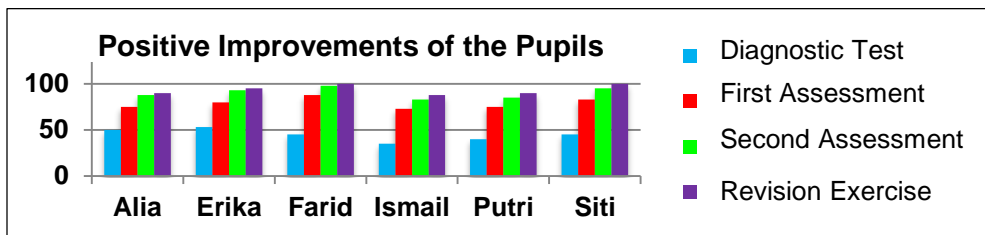

Figure 12. Positive improvements of the pupils

- **How does the use of the V-card game improve my teaching practices?**

    Fun, meaningful and purposeful learning. V-card game was a fun and meaningful game as it required the pupils to arrange the letters of the words using the V-card given *(fun element)* as well as read, spell and tell the meaning verbally after forming the word *(meaningful and purposeful).* When V-card game was implemented, the pupils were interested in learning the vocabularies. Thus, it provided me an alternative way to teach vocabulary, especially in a fun, meaningful and purposeful way. Figure 13 shows the interview transcription between the six pupils and I.

Figure 13. Interview transcription between the six pupils and I

    Learner-centered learning environment. Initially, I had to facilitate and guide the pupils while they were playing the V-card game. After a few sessions, they started to become independent learners and active participators. I let them to take full control of their own learning and I would scaffold them when they really need help. This is in line with one of the underlying pedagogical principles in KSSR which emphasised that teaching is learner-centered.

    Reinforcement of vocabulary. V-card game was designed to help pupils of intermediate proficiency level to continue to increase their mastery of vocabulary. In a class of 29 pupils, I could not approach each and every

one of them personally to give remedial reinforcement but through the implementation of the V-card game, this was achieved. It served as a remedial activity for the intermediate pupils to continuingly revise the vocabulary learned in a fun learning approach.

REFLECTION

In relation to my action research, I found that this V-card game had successfully attracted the pupils' interest to learn the vocabularies because it was fun, interesting and the vocabularies were easier to be remembered. According to Wang, Shang and Briody (2011), game was useful for teachers to decrease the stress-levels experienced by the pupils and to naturally keep the pupils' attention. In fact, V-card game had helped them to stay focused and they were able to remember most of the spelling and the meaning of the vocabularies learned.

Despite learning vocabularies, I found that the pupils had developed their 4C's. Sharp (2012) proposed that games allowed an interactive structure that provided pupils rewards for problem solving, collaboration and cooperative learning. In fact, the pupils practised peer couching when playing this game. They learned to cooperate and collaborate with each other in forming the vocabularies.

V-card game also helped me to create a fun, meaningful and purposeful learning environment. Based on the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012), the Ministry is aspired to create different pathways to provide pupils with meaningful learning opportunities tailored to developing specific skills and knowledge required. By working in parallel to this roadmap stated by the Ministry, I had created and implemented the V-card game to provide meaningful learning opportunities for pupils to be engaged in vocabulary learning. Learner-centered learning environment was promoted when I only had to supervise and scaffold them when necessary during the V-card game.

I also gained knowledge in creating an effective vocabulary game. In coming up with V-card game, I learned many important elements such as relevancy, creativity, versatility and efficiency that I needed to put into a game in order to achieve the optimal outcome. It was indeed a good experience for me to design a teaching aid that helped the pupils in fun and meaningful learning of vocabularies.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION

V-card game could be redesigned to be implemented in a large scale or in the classroom by increasing the number of cards and adding in time limit. For instance, each pupil was given five minutes to form his word and tell the meaning of the word formed. After five minutes, if the pupil could not

form a word, the second pupil will have the chance to form a word. As a result, conducting this card game for a larger setting or in the classroom would be made possible and it could benefit more pupils.

V-card game could be modified to achieve self-regulated learning by teaching dictionary skills to the pupils. Dictionary skills would help the pupils in checking spelling and the meaning of the vocabulary. This will train the pupils to be independent in vocabulary learning and they had the chance to explore and discover for more vocabularies.

The learning content of the V-card game could be further explored. V-card game could be further exploited for other subjects such as Science, Geography or even History. The teachers could use the V-card game and integrate the learning content by asking pupils to form terms or vocabularies which were needed in learning the subject. By doing so, the pupils would be able to remember the terms or vocabularies needed to answer questions for that particular subject.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this action research has improved my pupils as well as my own teaching practice, especially in teaching vocabularies. I believed through action research, I can consistently monitor the effect of my teaching practices which will drive me towards professional development in my teaching profession. I hope that my effort in this action research may transform the way learning takes place, leading to better educational service.

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