

## USING “VC4C GAME” TO IMPROVE VOCABULARY LEARNING AMONG YEAR TWO PUPILS

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### Abstract

This action research was conducted during my third phase of practicum in an urban national primary school in Kuching. The research aimed to improve vocabulary learning among Year Two pupils and my teaching of vocabulary. My participants were six Year Two pupils with average and below average English proficiency. The “VC4C Game” that I designed was a combination of card game and Connect Four game which required pupils to repeat the action of reading, spelling, and telling the vocabulary meaning. I collected the data through observation, interview and document analysis. The data collected were analysed, interpreted and triangulated to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. The findings showed that the pupils’ vocabulary learning has improved in terms of the vocabulary understanding and spelling, vocabulary retention and positive performances. I have also improved my teaching of vocabulary as my vocabulary lessons become more interesting. For further research, I would like to modify the game to improve pupils’ vocabulary spelling and understanding simultaneously and integrate the application of vocabulary.

**Keywords:** VC4C Game, reading, spelling, telling the meaning, vocabulary

### Abstrak

Kajian ini dilaksanakan di sebuah sekolah rendah kebangsaan di Kuching semasa praktikum tiga dijalankan. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran perbendaharaan kata murid Tahun Dua dan mempertingkatkan amalan pengajaran saya mengenai perbendaharaan kata. Peserta kajian terdiri daripada enam murid Tahun Dua yang mempunyai tahap penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris yang sederhana dan bawah sederhana. “VC4C Game” yang saya buat ialah gabungan permainan kad dan permainan “Connect Four” yang memerlukan murid untuk membaca, mengeja dan memberitahu makna perbendaharaan kata berulang kali. Data kajian dikumpul melalui pemerhatian, temu bual dan analisis dokumen. Data yang dikumpul telah dianalisis, ditafsir dan dibuat triangulasi untuk memastikan kesahan dan kebolehpercayaan data. Hasil kajian telah menunjukkan pembelajaran perbendaharaan kata murid telah meningkat dari segi pemahaman dan ejaan, pengekal kosa kata dan tingkah laku positif. Pengajaran kosa kata saya juga dipertingkatkan kerana pengajaran perbendaharaan kata saya telah menjadi lebih menarik. Untuk kajian lanjutan, saya ingin mengubahsuai permainan untuk meningkatkan ejaan dan pemahaman perbendaharaan kata murid secara bersamaan dan mengintegrasikan penggunaan perbendaharaan kata.

**Kata kunci:** *VC4C Game*, membaca, mengeja, memberitahu makna, perbendaharaan kata

## INTRODUCTION

### Context

I am a student teacher from the Bachelor of Teaching with Honours Degree program (PISMP), majoring in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). I had gone through three phases of teaching practices in Kuching and experienced lots of challenges regarding my teaching and learning in order to equip myself to be a better teacher in the teaching profession. In order to protect the rights of all parties, all the names of the schools, teachers and pupils used are pseudonyms. In my third teaching practice at SK Batu Aman, I was assigned to teach 29 Year Two pupils. Due to the fact that my pupils were mostly weak in vocabulary learning, I decided to do an action research to improve the pupils’ vocabulary learning and my vocabulary teaching.

### Research Focus

Before experiencing the teaching practices, I believed that substitution drill technique worked best to make pupils learn vocabulary by focusing on a sentence structure while learning related to vocabulary (Mukoroli, 2011). However, I found that my belief was wrong after I experienced two phases of teaching practices because my pupils lost interest and did not have fun in learning vocabulary. They started to get bored, lost attention and talk to their friends after I drilled them many times. Besides, I found that they could not remember the vocabulary learned after a week. This was because they did not acquire the vocabulary subconsciously through drilling (Kellogg, 2011).

In my third teaching practice with Year Two pupils, I found that their English proficiency level was much lower than the pupils in my past two phases of teaching practice. This information was obtained through the pupils’ English final examination results in 2016 given by their English language teacher (Figure 1) as 68 percent (%) of them scored Grade D and Grade E.

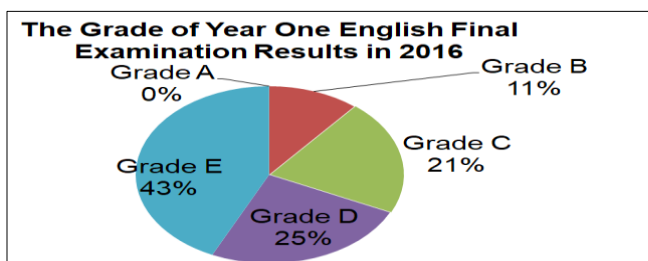


Figure 1. Pupils’ final examination results in 2016

Apart from that, I had also given them a diagnostic test to test them on 20 vocabularies that they had learned two weeks ago. 48% of them

scored Grade D and Grade E as shown in Figure 2. This showed that they had short vocabulary retention.

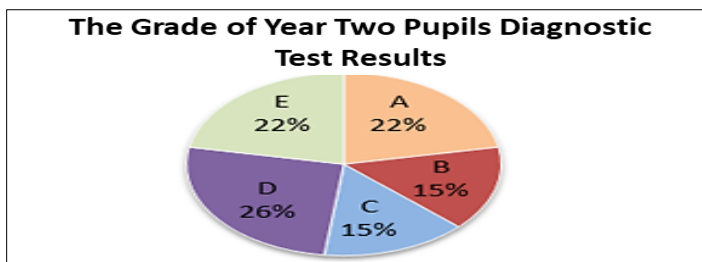


Figure 2. The pupils’ diagnostic test results

Lastly, I found that the pupils had similar vocabulary learning issues during my vocabulary teaching using substitution drill technique. They showed some negative performances as shown in Figure 3. It had shown that using this technique to teach vocabulary was not suitable for the pupils.

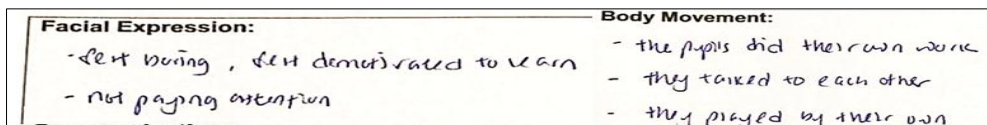


Figure 3. My field notes

As a result, I decided to integrate fun elements in my vocabulary teaching and learning. Therefore, I came up with the VC4C Game to help my pupils in vocabulary learning.

### Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to describe to what extent the “VC4C Game” help in improving vocabulary learning among Year Two pupils as well as to explore how the “VC4C Game” improve my teaching of vocabulary among Year Two pupils.

### Research Questions

This research was carried out to answer the following questions.

- How does the use of the “VC4C Game” help in improving vocabulary learning among Year Two pupils?
- How does the use of the “VC4C Game” improve my teaching of vocabulary among Year Two pupils?

## ACTION

### Planning of Action

The VC4C Game was a combination of card game and Connect Four Game. Vocabularies selected (Figure 4) were similar to the vocabularies tested in the diagnostic test.

1. pail	5. queen	9. litter	13. classroom	17. late
2. weed	6. queue	10. push	14. library	18. sleep
3. train	7. canteen	11. office	15. school hall	19. answer
4. maid	8. disturb	12. field	16. scratch	20. raise

Figure 4. Vocabularies used in the game

The VC4C Game requires two teams of player to choose and write down 10 vocabularies on the cards given (Figure 5). After writing, they have to place the deck of cards face down. Then, each time, a player from each team has to draw a card from the opponent team, read and spell the word aloud. Another player from another team has to tell the meaning of the word. The player could choose to match the word with the correct picture (Figure 6) if he could not tell the meaning orally. “Read”, “spell” and “meaning” are integrated into the game because Min (2013) stated that one must learn these three things to learn a new vocabulary.

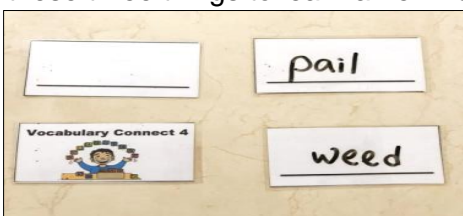


Figure 5. Samples of the cards

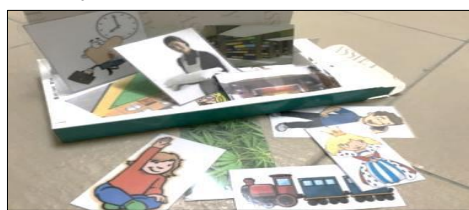


Figure 6. Pictures used

Besides, four Power Cards (Figure 7) are given to each team as guidance to help the pupils along the way so as to motivate them to continue playing the game (Vygotsky, 1987). When the player gives correctly the meaning, he has the chance to colour in a circle on the Connect Four Game sheet (Figure 8) and obtain five points. If the pupils choose to colour in the red circle, extra five points will be given.



Figure 7. Power cards

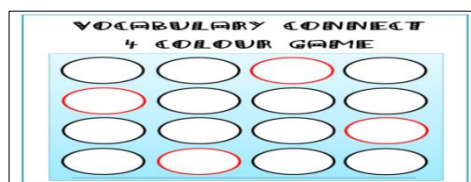


Figure 8. Connect Four Game Sheet

In order to win, the team must be the first team to get four coloured circles in a row horizontally, vertically or diagonally. 15 minutes are given for each round of play. If a team wins the game earlier than the time set, they could continue playing the next round. If the time is up and there is no winning team, the team with the higher marks will the winner team.

### Implementation of Action

I used Lewin (1946) and Laidlaw’s (1992) model for this action research. I had carried out two cycles of ‘identifying an educational issue to

improve’, ‘planning action’, ‘implementing action’, ‘collecting data’, and ‘reflecting on action’ to improve and ensure the reliability of the action. I had conducted six sessions which consisted of four sessions of play and two sessions of assessment.

### **First Meeting: Introducing the VC4C Game**

I introduced the VC4C Game by explaining the purposes of the game and my expectations (Figure 9). I also explained how to play the game and the rules of the game. I also went through the 20 words that they were going to learn. Then, I gave them opportunities to play the Connect Four game sheets once so that they would familiarize with the way to play.

### **Session One and Two: Playing with the VC4C Game**

The pupils played the VC4C game. I guided them throughout the whole session at first (Figure 9) because they were still not familiar with the game. Less guidance was provided after that first session as they were already familiar with the game. Figure 10 shows the pupils started to play more independently in their own group. Guidance was only provided when needed.



Figure 9. Guidance was provided



Figure 10. Independent engagement

### **Session Three and Six: Assessment One and Two**

I assessed them on the spelling and meaning of the words that they learned during the play to examine whether or not they could learn vocabulary better after learning with fun elements (Figure 11) in the first and second cycle of action. After they completed the assessments, I discussed and corrected their paper on the spot so that they would know their mistakes immediately. Before closing the session, I collected feedback on their experience on the VC4C game through written feedback and feedback form.



Figure 11. Pupils were doing the assessments

### **Session Four and Five: Playing with the VC4C Game**

Before implementing the second cycle of action in these two sessions, I reflected on my first cycle of action through the data collected from assessments, written feedback form, field notes and interview. After finding my first action did not improve the pupils’ spelling and positive performance during vocabulary learning, I decided to modify the VC4C Game. This time, they played in a group of three. They were still required to choose and write 10 vocabularies on the cards given first. Then, they had to pick a card from the opponent and read the word aloud. The opponent had to spell the word correctly in order to get a chance to colour in the Connect Four Game sheet. Power Cards were used if they needed help.

Before playing, I introduced them the new way to play the game and told them the reasons why I modified this game (Figure 12). I asked them to choose their partner that they want to play with and gave them five minutes to revise the same 20 words that they were going to play for readiness before playing. Then, they began to play (Figure 13).



Figure 12. Introduce the game



Figure 13. Pupils’ participation

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Participants**

Carr and Kemmis (1986) stated that action research was about the improvement of practice, the understanding of practice and the situation in which the practice takes place. Hence, I took part in this research to improve my teaching of vocabulary. My action research also involved six participants (three males and three females). All pupils were chosen through purposive sampling. Most of them are natives and had below average English language proficiency. They were also second language learners of the English language and used mother tongue to converse at home.

### **Research ethics**

According to the British Educational Research Association (2011), any individuals participating in research either directly or indirectly should be respected. To adhere to this ethic, I gave letter of consent to the parents to obtain permission to have their child involve in my research. Besides, I kept confidential the pupils’ identity by not giving their personal information to third parties and using pseudonyms in this research.

### Data Collection Methods

I used observation, interview and document analysis to collect data.

#### Observation

I wrote field notes when observing the pupils’ performance during every session of the game. I observed their facial expressions, body movement and communication. I also captured photos as evidences and references to assist me in analysing the data.

#### Interview

I invited the pupils’ English language teacher to attend the first and the last session of the game to observe the pupils’ learning and my action. I also told the teacher about the pupils’ progress after every session. To know her views about my action, I interviewed her by using semi-structured questions and the transcribed the conversation.

#### Document Analysis

I gave the pupils two assessments to assess whether or not they had improved in vocabularies after playing the game. They were assessed on the spelling and meaning of the vocabularies. I also asked them to write feedback on their feelings and thoughts towards the game. Besides, I had also prepared a feedback form to ask them to rate the VC4C Game to show their satisfaction towards the game. These were done to help me keep track of their progress and to improve my action.

### Data Analysing Techniques

To analyse the data, I used data, content and pattern analysis.

#### Observation

To analyse the field notes, I categorised the pupils’ performance into four types by using the symbols as shown in Figure 14.





Types of performance	Symbol
Feeling interested	
Active participation	
Engrossing	
Autonomous in learning	

Figure 14. Types of positive performance and symbols used

Besides, I also rated their positive performances. The rates were then tabulated into a chart to enable me analysing their performance clearly by comparing each session.

#### Interview

I also analysed the interview transcripts between the English language teacher and I. I analysed and categorised the responses into three themes by using the codes as shown in Figure 15.

Code	Themes
1	Workable to improve pupils' vocabulary
2	Workable to improve pupils' performance
3	Workable to improve pupils' interest to learn vocabulary

Figure 15. Codes used to analyse interview transcript

### Document Analysis

I analysed the number of correct vocabularies based on the results of the assessments given by using a table as shown in Figure 16. This was done to enable me to see which component (spelling or meaning) that is not mastered by the pupils. After that, I compared the overall scores acquired by the pupils for each assessment and tabulated the data into a chart so that I could check the progress of the pupils easily.

Participants	Number of correct vocabularies in assessment					
	Diagnostic test (13 February 2017)		Assessment One (2 April 2017)		Assessment Two (11 August 2017)	
	Spelling	Meaning	Spelling	Meaning	Spelling	Meaning
Alvin	2/10	2/10	1/6	14/14	12/14	6/6

Figure 16. Sample of the table

Besides, I categorised the written feedback into three categories which were positive, neutral and negative and compared the number of positive feedback obtained from the pupils in the first and second cycle of the action. Moreover, I also looked into the feedback forms and compared the number of the sticker received between the first and second cycle.

### Data Checking Techniques

In order to establish trustworthiness of the data, I discussed all my data with my critical friend. She observed the pupils, made field notes and gave marks to the pupils' positive performance together with me in every session of the game. Then, we crossed check the data.

To check the consistency of the data, I used different data collection methods such as observation, interview and document analysis. Figure 17 shows a sample on how I triangulated the data.

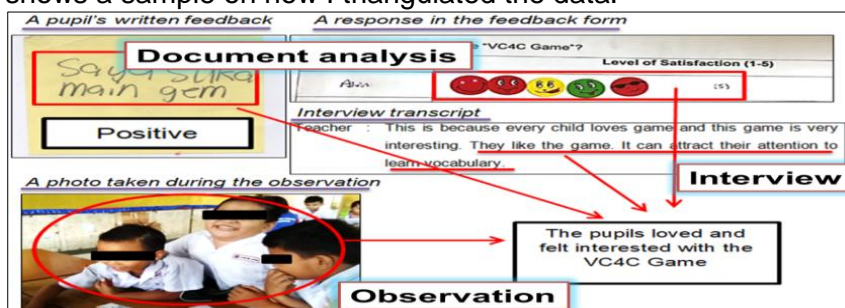


Figure 17. Sample of method triangulation



## RESEARCH FINDINGS

- **How does the use of “VC4C Game” help in improving vocabulary learning among Year Two pupils?**

The VC4C Game has improved the pupils’ vocabulary understanding and spelling. Based on Figure 18, all six pupils scored less than half number of correct vocabularies for both spelling and meaning matching components in their diagnostic test before I conducted the action research. After I implemented the first cycle of action, all six pupils could match more than half the number of vocabularies with the meaning correctly. However, for the spelling component, only Myra scored more than half. This showed that my first cycle of action had only improved pupils’ understanding of the vocabularies.

Participants	Diagnostic test (13 February 2017)		Assessment One (2 April 2017)	
	Spelling	Meaning	Spelling	Meaning
Alvin	2/10	2/10	1/6	14/14
Cyrez	3/10	4/10	2/6	12/14
Terry	4/10	3/10	1/6	12/14
Myra	3/10	4/10	5/6	14/14
Ameera	2/10	6/10	3/6	12/14
Jolanda	3/10	3/10	2/6	14/14

Six pupils scored more than half

Only one pupil scored more than half

Figure 18. Assessment results after the first cycle

As a result, I decided to modify my action and implement the second cycle of action by focusing only on the spelling in order to improve the pupils’ spelling. After the second cycle of action, all six pupils could spell more than half the number of vocabularies correctly as shown in Figure 19. This also showed that the VC4C Game helped to improve the pupils’ spelling.

Participants	Assessment One (2 April 2017)		Assessment Two (11 August 2017)	
	Spelling	Meaning	Spelling	Meaning
Alvin	1/6	14/14	12/14	6/6
Cyrez	2/6	12/14	10/14	6/6
Terry	1/6	12/14	13/14	6/6
Myra	5/6	14/14	14/14	6/6
Ameera	3/6	12/14	14/14	6/6
Jolanda	2/6	14/14	12/14	6/6

Six pupils scored more than half

Figure 19. Assessment results after the second cycle

As compared to their scores in diagnostic test, they had shown great improvement in their vocabulary. Figure 20 shows the progress of the pupils’ assessments. All of them scored 80% and above in Assessment Two and this showed that the pupils have shown great improvement in vocabulary after learning vocabularies through the VC4C Game.

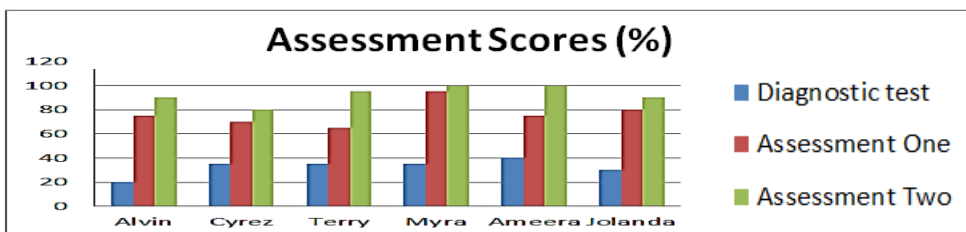


Figure 20. The progress of the pupils’ assessments

Besides, the VC4C Game has also improved the pupils’ vocabulary retention. Figure 21 shows the pupils’ assessment results in relation to their vocabulary retention.

Participants	Number of correct vocabularies in assessment					
	Diagnostic test (13 February 2017)		Assessment One (2 April 2017)		Assessment Two (11 August 2017)	
	Spelling	Meaning	Spelling	Meaning	Spelling	Meaning
Alvin	2/10	2/10	1/6	14/14	12/14	6/6
Cyrez	3/10	4/10	2/6	12/14	10/14	6/6
Terry	4/10	3/10	1/6	12/14	13/14	6/6
Myra	3/10	4/10	5/6	14/14	14/14	6/6
Ameera	2/10	6/10	3/6	12/14	14/14	6/6
Jolanda	3/10	3/10	2/6	14/14	12/14	6/6

**Before Action Research**

Only Ameera could remember more than half of the vocabulary meaning that she learned two weeks ago

**After Action Research**

All six pupils still could remember the vocabulary meaning that they learned four months ago

Figure 21. Assessment results in relation to the vocabulary retention

Before the action research, I gave the pupils diagnostic test to test them on 20 vocabularies that they had learned two weeks ago. However, five pupils scored less than half for the meaning matching component. This showed that the pupils’ vocabulary retention was low before the action research. In my second cycle of action in August, the VC4C Game focused only on vocabulary spelling and not on vocabulary meaning. However, all six pupils could still match all the vocabularies with the meaning correctly in Assessment Two. This showed that the VC4C Game has increased the pupils’ vocabulary retention as they could still remember the meaning of the words after four months.

Moreover, the VC4C Game has also improved the positive performances of the pupils during vocabulary learning. Based on my initial field notes made (Figure 3) during my vocabulary teaching, the pupils showed lots of negative performances when learning vocabulary. However, after I introduced them the VC4C Game, their performances during

vocabulary learning improved. Figure 22 shows some positive performances of the pupils during vocabulary learning through the VC4C Game.

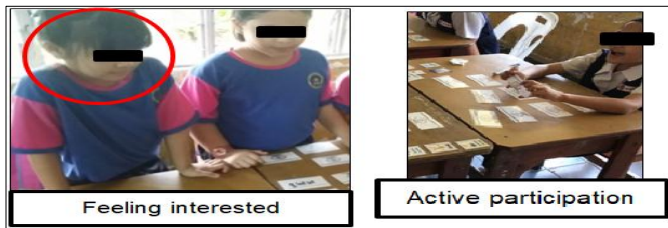


Figure 22. Positive performances of the pupils

Figure 23 shows the improvement of the pupils’ positive performance rating. Every pupil got higher rate for their positive performance in Session Four and Five compared to the rate received in Session One and Two.

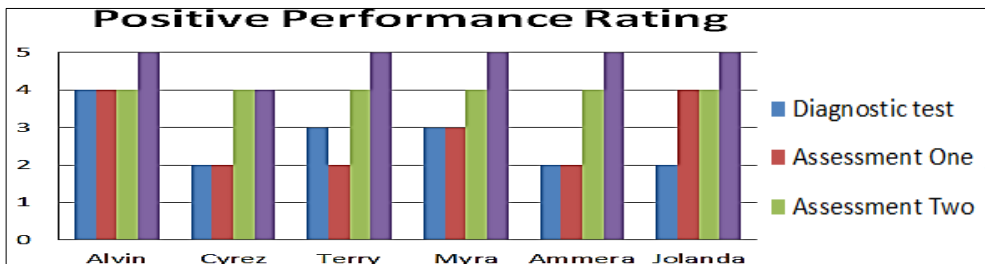


Figure 23. Pupils’ positive performance rating

However, only Terry did not show improvement or constant in positive performance rating in every session of play. Figure 24 shows my analysis on my field notes about Terry in Session One and Session Two.

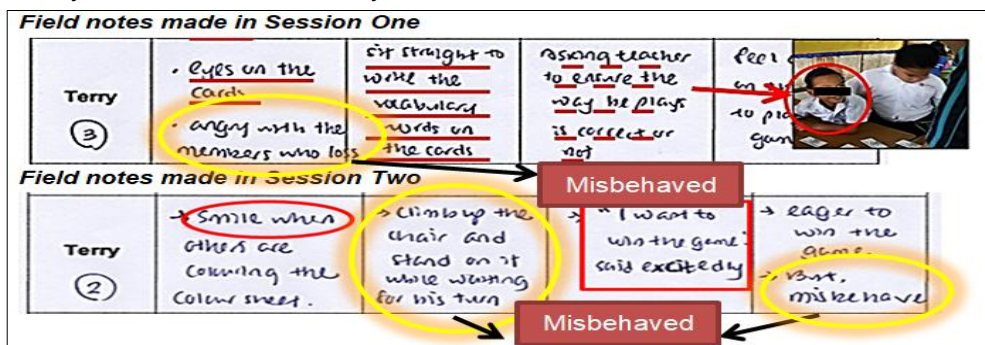


Figure 24. Analysis on my field notes about Terry in the first cycle

Based the field notes, I found my game could not improve his positive performance in vocabulary learning. The causes were “playing in groups” and “waiting for the turn to play”. So, I decided to ask the pupils to play in pairs in the second cycle of action. Figure 25 shows the improvement of Terry after the second cycle of action. He scored more than three in

Session Four and Five. He did not misbehave but showed positive performances which showed that the game has improved his positive performances during vocabulary learning.

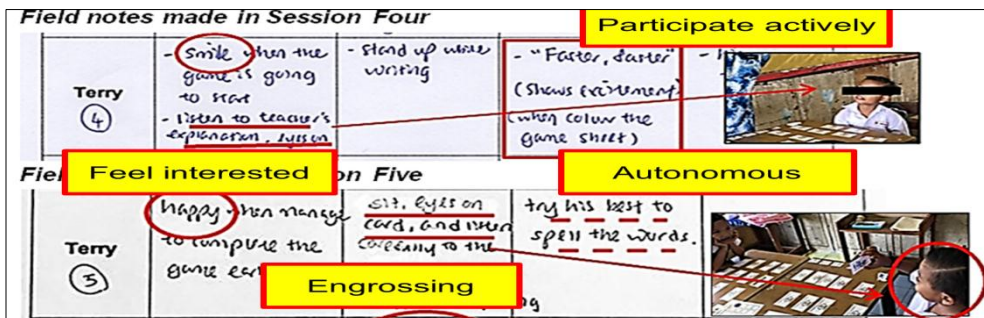


Figure 25. Analysis on my field notes about Terry in the second cycle

- How does the use of “VC4C Game” improve my teaching of vocabulary among Year Two pupils?

The VC4C Game has changed my vocabulary lesson from a dull substitution drilling lesson into a fun and interesting lesson. Figure 26 shows my reflective journal related to me using substitution drilling technique to teach them vocabulary during my first teaching practice in 2016. The pupils did not pay attention, felt tired and boring with my lesson. These showed that substitution drilling technique was not fun and interesting.

**1. Isu / Masalah yang difokuskan**

The issue that I want to focus during my third week of my second practicum is my pupils tired and boring with my drilling technique to teach them new vocabulary. Most of them do not pay attention to me after I drill them much.

Figure 26. My reflective journal during Practicum One

After I used the VC4C Game, the pupils showed interest and had lots of fun in my vocabulary lesson as shown in Figure 27.



Figure 27. Pupils' participation in the vocabulary lesson

Not only that, the pupils’ English language teacher also mentioned that the game help to attract the pupils’ attention to learn vocabulary (Figure 28).

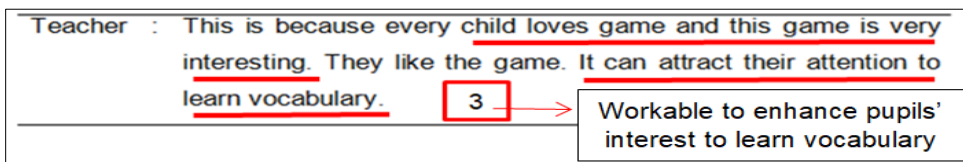


Figure 28. Interview transcript with the English language teacher

Moreover, I had also received all positive written feedbacks (Figure 29) from the pupils. They also rated high for the level of satisfaction towards the game in their feedback form (Figure 30) after the action research. These showed that the game has made their vocabulary learning become more fun and interesting.

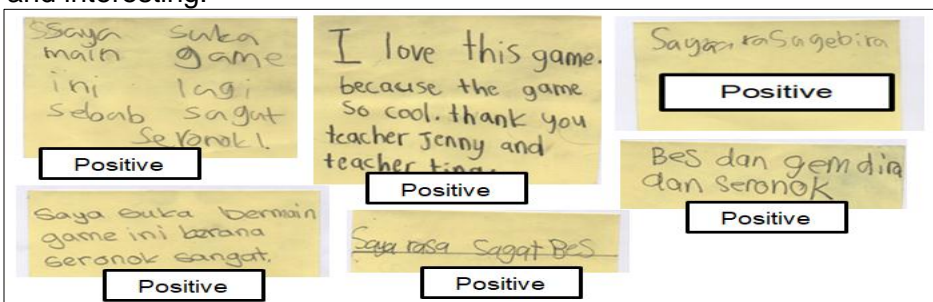


Figure 29. Pupils’ written feedbacks

After assessment 2.

How much do you love the “VC4C Game”?

Name	Level of Satisfaction (1-5)
Alan	(5)
Cyrez	(5)
Terry	(5)
Myra	(5)
Rameza	(5)
Jolanda	(5)

Figure 30. Feedback form filled by the pupils

## REFLECTION

Through this action research, I found the VC4C Game has improved my pupils’ vocabulary understanding and spelling. According to Wang, Shang and Briody (2011), games are useful for pupils with lower level proficiency in vocabulary acquisition because game is one of the factors which can make the pupils feel interested, motivated and learned effectively. Besides, the process of repetition integrated with fun elements in the game has also helped to improve the pupils’ vocabulary retention. This

is supported by Rohani and Pourgharib (2013) as they stated that games can be used to increase the retention of learned vocabularies.

Apart from that, the VC4C Game has also improved the pupils' positive performances during vocabulary learning. They were interested, joined actively and became more autonomous and independent in learning. The game has helped to maximise the classroom atmosphere, minimise the pupils' anxiety, motivate and sustain the pupils' interest to learn (Jorge, Eder, Jhonny, Gustavo, & Luis, 2017).

Moreover, I have improved my teaching of vocabulary among the pupils as it changes my vocabulary lessons into a fun and interesting lesson. This is because the game has provided fun and meaningful context that integrated a number of intelligences such as kinaesthetic, interpersonal and visual (Gardner, 1983).

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION**

In my next cycle, I would like to modify the way to play the VC4C Game in order to improve pupils' vocabulary spelling and understanding at the same time. In my first cycle of action, I improved the pupils' vocabulary understanding. In my second cycle of action, I improved the pupils' vocabulary spelling. So, in my next cycle, I would like to modify it again so that it could help to improve pupils' vocabulary spelling and understanding simultaneously.

Moreover, I would like to integrate the application of vocabulary in the game. In my action research, the pupils learned to spell and understand the meaning of the words through the game, but they did not learn how to apply the vocabulary in appropriate context. To improve, I would like to give them worksheets such as filling in the blanks or sentences building after playing so that they could practise applying the vocabulary in correct context.

### **CONCLUSION**

Before implementing this action research, I believed that substitution drills work best to make pupils learn vocabulary. Now, I believe I should take pupils' learning needs into consideration when teaching in order to make them learn effectively. All in all, I hope my effort in this action research can equip me to be a better teacher in future.

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