

USING POKEMON PUNCTUATION STICKER TO IMPROVE YEAR TWO PUPILS' BASIC PUNCTUATION SKILL

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Abstract

An action research on punctuation was carried out during my third practicum in an urban national primary school located in Kuching, Sarawak. The objectives of the research were to improve my professional practice in the teaching of basic punctuation "full stop" and "capitalization" for Year Two Pupils and to help Year Two pupils to improve in punctuation by using Pokémon Punctuation Sticker. Five Year Two pupils with average English proficiency other than the researcher were involved in the research. The idea of Pokémon Punctuation Sticker was inspired by Krapp (1999) who stated that interest plays an important role in learning. The data were collected using observation (field notes), document analysis, and interview with the pupils, teacher mentor and critical friend. The data were analysed using mix method (quantitative and qualitative) and triangulated throughout the research. I have improved my teaching practice in the teaching of basic punctuation by using Pokémon Punctuation Sticker and the pupils could use basic punctuation correctly in their writing. The Pokémon Punctuation Sticker could be modified to teach other punctuations and other language skills like spelling.

Keywords: Punctuation, writing, sticker, Pokémon, Year Two

Abstrak

Satu kajian tindakan berkaitan dengan tanda baca telah dijalankan semasa Praktikum Tiga di sebuah sekolah rendah kebangsaan di Kuching, Sarawak. Objektif kajian adalah untuk memperbaiki pengajaran dan pembelajaran berkaitan dengan asas tanda baca "noktah" dan "huruf besar dan kecil" dalam kalangan murid Tahun Dua yang mempunyai masalah berkenaan melalui penggunaan Pelekat Tanda Baca Pokémon. Peserta kajian terdiri daripada penyelidik beserta lima orang murid Tahun Dua yang mempunyai kecekapan yang sederhana dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Idea ini diilhamkan oleh Krapp (1999) yang menyatakan minat memainkan peranan penting dalam pembelajaran. Data kajian dikumpul melalui pemerhatian (catatan), analisis dokumen serta temu bual dengan murid-murid, guru pembimbing dan rakan kritis. Data kajian dianalisis menggunakan kaedah kuantitatif dan kualitatif serta ditriangulasi sepanjang kajian dijalankan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa Pelekat Tanda Baca Pokémon membantu meningkatkan pengajaran saya mengenai asas tanda baca dan murid-murid boleh menggunakan asas tanda baca dengan betul. Pelekat Tanda Baca ini juga boleh dimodifikasi untuk mengajar tanda baca yang lain serta mengajar aspek bahasa yang lain seperti ejaan.

Kata kunci: Tanda baca, penulisan, pelekat, Pokémon, Tahun Dua

INTRODUCTION

Context

I am currently a final year student at the Institute of Teacher Education Batu Lintang Campus, Kuching, majoring in Bachelor of Education with Honours (PISMP) in Teaching English as Secondary Language (TESL). I had undergone all teaching practices as required in the programme. I was placed in two suburb schools during my first two phases of teaching practices: SK Durian and SK Gerhana respectively. For my final teaching practice, I was placed in an urban school, SK Cempaka. Majority of the pupils are categorized from good to proficient for their English proficiency. For the purpose of this article, all names used are pseudonyms.

This research was conducted during the third teaching practice starting from 6th February until 5th May 2017. There are 17 teachers and four staff members in the school. Majority of the teachers are Bidayuh, three of them are Malay and two of them are Chinese. The school has a large number of pupils in a class ranging from 40 to 55 pupils. The school does not have enough classrooms to cater to the increasing number of pupils. According to the teachers, parents preferred to enrol their kids in this school because it is located near their workplace and this school has a good reputation in terms of academic especially in the English Language subject. I taught English subject to Level One pupils, a Year Two class to be specific. It was totally a whole new experience of teaching English for me because it was my first time teaching Level One pupils. The Year Two class consisted of 44 pupils with mixed-ability and has intermediate level of proficiency.

RESEARCH FOCUS

Reflection of Teaching and Learning Experiences

I found the issue related to basic punctuation existed in Year Four and Year Five classes during my first and second teaching practices upon analysing my previous practicum files. Previously in my first two teaching practices, I did not emphasize on the basic punctuation issue because I thought that Level Two pupils had mastered the skill. Nevertheless, my Year Two class during my third teaching practice also had basic punctuation skills issue. The errors in using full stop and capitalization could be found everywhere in their exercise books. In terms of my practice, I used the traditional way of teaching punctuation which is using editing and loud reading with proper punctuation awareness to fix their basic punctuation skills. I discovered that this approach is a total failure to some of my Year Two pupils. They showed lack of understanding in applying capitalization and full stop correctly as they still made numerous errors in their exercises.

Initial data collection

The cause for the errors related to basic punctuation could be traced to the inadequate knowledge of the English rule in that the first letter of specific nouns and the first letter of a sentence must be capitalized; and incompetent in the English language (Stella, 2015). Upon reflection, I was not expose to the pedagogy regarding the teaching of punctuation except having my own experiences of being taught punctuation when I was a student. Based on my experiences during my teaching practice, teaching punctuation was rather difficult because the pupils couldn't comprehend the significance of punctuation in writing. Jairos, Rugare, Washington and Jabulani (2012) stated that pupils need to be exposed to the fact that the sense of writing is supported by correct punctuation mark. Figure 1 shows some samples related to the issues of full stop and capitalization in different

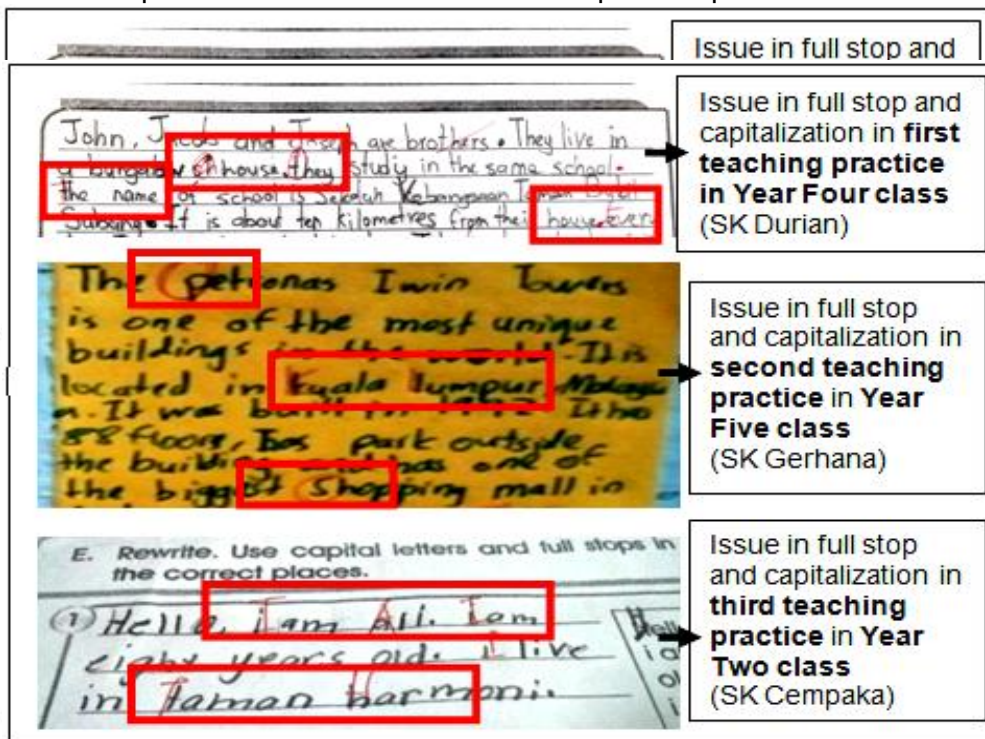


Figure 1. Issues of full stop and capitalization in the different exercises from three different teaching practice phases

ACTIONS

Three different Pokémon Punctuation Stickers with different colours were used throughout the implementation of this research. Three different colours representing different set of punctuation, for instance, pink sticker represents capital letter, green sticker represents small letter, and orange sticker represents full stop. Different Pokémon characters were included to motivate the pupils in leaning. Examples and rules were provided as guide

in using the punctuation. Figure 2 shows the sample of one of the punctuation stickers.

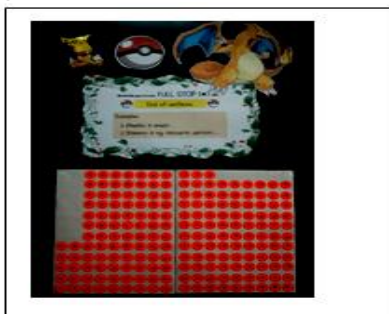


Figure 2. Sample of Pokemon Punctuation Sticker

Interests play a very important role in learning and academic achievement (Krapp,1999). The pupils involved in this research love Pokémon characters. Thus, the use of Pokémon characters met the pupils' interests in learning as it acted as visual aids and motivating factor for participants to be actively involved in the activity. This aims to provide a joyful environment (Girija,2016) in order to motivate the research participants to learn. I believe that they could learn and remember better when they experience personal enjoyment in learning. Colourful stickers could also capture the pupils' interest in learning and they blended well with the Pokémon characters that further enhanced their motivation in learning. The colourful punctuation stickers proposed the idea that pupils will grasp the item taught easily through recognition of segments with similar colours. Based on Boyatzis and Varghese (1994), "colours are a salient presence in children's lives. In their clothes, their toys, their books and lunch boxes, children's environments convey many psychological messages through colours" (p.77). In other words, colour is relatively closed to pupils' life and it ought to be manipulated for the betterment of their learning.

Besides, stickers had been used widely by teachers as a tangible reward to be given to their pupils for positive reinforcement (Muehl, 2015). For my action research, I have exploited the usage of stickers by using them in my teaching and learning of punctuation activity. Pupils got excited as they pasted the stickers on the worksheet to the point where they do not even realise that they are unconsciously learning. They "think they are merely playing, but they are simultaneously learning". This situation gives them a sense of satisfaction and a boost to their confidence, which consequently makes them feel happy. Krashen (1981) in his discussion of the "affective filter," highlights the importance of emotion in the language learning process and the fact that children are known to resist learning when learning is unpleasant. Krashen furthermore added that language input can

come through, when motivation is high, when a student is self-confident, and when the learning takes place in a relatively anxiety-free environment.

The capitalization game was conducted as additional and extended activity after the presentation and demonstration stage. The basic principle is that “games are a natural part of young learners’ lives” (Yolageldili & Arikan, 2011, p. 219). Lepper and Cordova (1992) stated that learning that is fun appears to be more effective. Pupils at this age prefer to learn in a fun environment. Therefore, games methodically provide pupils with new and varied learning environments that meet his and her learning style. The game introduced is competition based. Each pupil is required to do editing of the given sentences using stickers and rewrite them in the space provided. Pupils who complete the task in the shortest time and obtained full marks for their work are rewarded.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research were to improve my professional practice in teaching punctuation for Year Two Pupils and to help pupils improve in using punctuation in their writing through Pokémon Punctuation Sticker.

Research Questions

This research was carried out to answer the following questions.

- How does Pokémon Punctuation Sticker help me to improve my professional practice in teaching punctuation for Year Two pupils?
- How does Pokémon Punctuation Sticker help Year Two pupils improve in using punctuation in writing?

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

As a part of an effort to grow and develop continually in this profession, I took part in this research with the aim of improving my teaching practice. This was in line with Corey (1953) who first spoke of action research as being a mean for improving practice in school. He urged teachers to research their own practice in order to improve it. Besides that, I selected five pupils from Year Two class as potential participants in this research through “purposive selection”. This technique allowed me to choose participants who share the same concern and qualities (Ilker, Sulaiman & Rukkayya, 2015). Three boys and two girls were chosen as research participants in this research. The boys are named Alex, Charlie and Eminem respectively. The girls; Barbie and Dolly are both passionate in learning English. During my interaction with these pupils, I notice that they had one common interest: adoration for Pokémon. They adored Pokémon so much that they own several collection of Pokémon erasers and rulers. Nevertheless, they all showed lack of understanding in basic punctuation and scored below the passing mark of basic punctuation quiz.

RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION

Steps in Implementing Action

I conducted pre-session and two cycles (Cycle 1 and Cycle 2) of action during the implementation phase. These were implemented during my third teaching practice and internship. Cycle 1 consisted of three sessions and Cycle 2 comprised two sessions. Each session took place approximately between thirty minutes and one hour and the sessions were executed after school hours or during “teach-at-English Hut”. The sessions at times were carried out in the classroom.

Pre-Session (10th April 2017). The pre-session was carried out by returning the pupils' test paper and homework. It was conducted to help the pupils identify their weaknesses in applying basic punctuation skill especially capitalization and full stop.

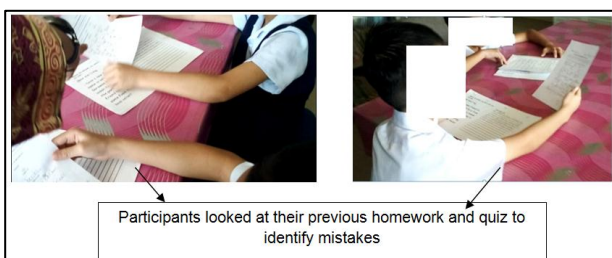


Figure 3. Pupils identified errors in pre-session

Cycle 1. Session One (11th April 2017). I introduced the Pokémon Punctuation Sticker to teach full stop related activity and conduct briefing session to ensure that they understand the use of the punctuation sticker. I demonstrated the use of the stickers to familiarise pupils with the use of it. The example was provided to enable them to refer to it when they have doubts while completing the worksheet.

Cycle 1. Session Two (12th April 2017). During this session, I further assisted them in getting use to the Pokémon Punctuation Sticker by introducing another two Pokémon Punctuation stickers that were used to teach capitalization. This time, I integrated the normal practice of teaching punctuation which is through editing because it is one of the ways to develop their punctuation awareness.

Cycle 1. Session Three (14th April 2017). Assessment was done at this session to explore the effect of the action in helping the pupils improve their punctuation skill. They were given a worksheet to be completed individually without using the Pokémon Punctuation Sticker.

Reflective Session (18th April 2017). This session only involved my practicum partner and I in analysing the data gathered (interview transcript, our field notes and pupils' worksheets) during the implementation of Cycle 1. I decided to make adjustment to the sticker and activity based on the suggestions made by my critical friend and teacher mentor. Figure 4 shows the activities carried out during the implementation of Cycle 1.



Figure 4. Activities carried out during Cycle 1

Cycle 2. Session One (24th April 2017). I taught the capitalization skill using the examples in the modified punctuation stickers because the examples were more comprehensive. After that, I discussed the related worksheets together with pupils and conducted “True or False” session verbally to check their understanding. Then, they worked independently using different worksheets to further practice on their capitalization skill.

Cycle 2. Session Two (25th April 2017). In this session, I gave out assessment papers to be completed individually by the pupils to see the after effect of action in Cycle 2. Figure 5 shows the activities for Cycle 2.



Figure 5. Activities carried out during Cycle 2

Quiz (28th April 2017). The quiz was conducted during the “teach-in class” session. The participants answered the quiz paper that was previously used to gather initial data to enable comparison of results.

Data Collecting Methods

Data collecting is a process of documenting the results of action implemented by collecting evidence of the implemented action (Nugent, Malik & Hollingsworth, 2012). The data were collected through observation, interview, and document analysis of pupils' worksheets and assessment papers, my critical friend's and my own field notes, as well as interview transcripts.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively throughout this research. I used mix-method of analysis because the quantitative data would be more meaningful when compared with the data from content analysis or interview data. The quantitative data were also used to supplement or support the qualitative data (Jick, 1979). Content analysis and thematic analysis were utilized for qualitative data and test scores were analysed as part of quantitative data analysis. Qualitative content analysis is commonly used for analyzing qualitative data (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen & Kyngäs, 2014). In line with this, I analysed the content of the field notes gathered during the sessions for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 by finding the theme for my analysis. Figure 6 shows a sample of content analysis carried out in this study.

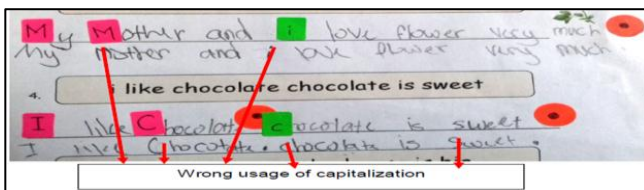


Figure 6. Sample of content analysis

Qualitative thematic analysis involves the analysis of themes that emerge from the data that has been collected (Blodgett, 2010). In line with this, I compared and contrasted the collected data from different individuals or methods to identify several themes during data analysis. Figure 7 shows a sample of thematic analysis done.

Charlie	Yes. Because it is a my I can understand how to use capital letter and small letter.	Dolly	Yes. I can stick it on my book. Help me to read.
Charlie	Can you use capital letter correctly in the sentence? Show me. Yes. For name, title of books, name of place, road name.	Help to learn	Can you use capital letter correctly in the sentence? Show me. Yes. Name, front of sentence, place name, title.
Charlie	When do you use full stop? End of sentence.	Dolly	When do you use full stop? Last part of sentence.
Charlie	Can you use small letter in the sentence? Show me. Yes. (He wrote "I like eating.")	Dolly	Can you use small letter in the sentence? Show me. Yes. (She wrote "Amelie is my friend.")
Able to use capitalization correctly			

Figure 7. Sample of thematic analysis

Data Checking Techniques

Triangulation is important to verify the validity of a research by incorporating several viewpoints and methods (Sabina & Khan, 2012). Therefore, I used person triangulation and method triangulation as my data checking techniques to increase the credibility and validity of my research. Time triangulation was conducted as well to validate the congruence of the same phenomenon at different points in time as stated by Kimchi, Polivka and Stevenson (1991).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

- **How does Pokemon Punctuation Sticker help me to improve my professional practice in teaching punctuation for Year Two pupils?**

The use of Pokemon Punctuation Sticker helped me to improve my practice in the teaching of punctuation in terms of teaching aids that were used to teach basic punctuation. From my lesson plan for the teaching of basic punctuation for my Year Two class in early February 2017, I revised the teaching aids from flashcards as stated in the excerpt of my lesson plan dated 24th February 2017 to another teaching aid called “Pokémon Punctuation Sticker”. Figure 8 shows the improvement of the teaching aids.

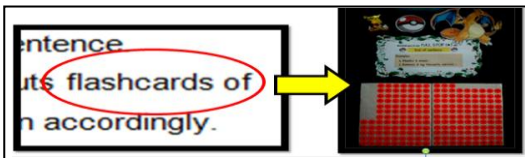


Figure 8. Improvement of teaching aids

After the “Pokémon Punctuation Sticker” was introduced to the related pupils who became the participants in the research, I received feedback saying that they like “Pokémon Punctuation Sticker” to learn basic punctuation and it helped them to understand the basic punctuation rules. Figure 9 shows the extract of interview transcripts to support this claim.

Participants	Interview transcript: Do you like to learn punctuation using Pokémon Punctuation Sticker?
Alex	<u>Yes. It is colourful and easy to understand.</u>
Barbie	<u>Yes. I know how to use big and small letter using the sticker</u>
Charlie	<u>Yes. Because it is a toy. I can understand how to use capital letter and small letter.</u>
Dolly	<u>Yes. I can stick it on my book. Help me to learn.</u>
Eminem	<u>Yes. Easy to understand. The sticker is colourful so help me to learn.</u>

Figure 9. Extract of interview transcripts

Based on the interview transcript as shown in Figure 9, all of the participants said “Yes” when they were asked a question “Do you like to learn punctuation using Pokémon Punctuation Sticker?”. They also said that the stickers helped them to learn basic punctuation.

- **How does Pokemon Punctuation Sticker help Year Two pupils improve in using punctuation in writing?**

In answering the second research question, the analysed data of basic punctuation quiz show the Pokémon Punctuation Sticker helped my participants learn basic punctuation skill. They showed improvement in terms of their basic punctuation quiz result. Figure 10 shows the comparison of quiz score that each participant obtained during the preliminary stage and after the action stage.

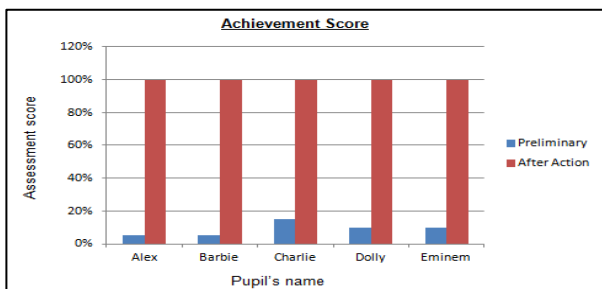


Figure 10. Comparison of quiz score of each participant during the preliminary stage and after action stage

Based on the graph, there is an abrupt increase of quiz scores for all participants after the action plan was carried out. During the preliminary stage, all the participants scored below 20 percent (%) whereas after implementing the stickers, all the participants obtained maximum quiz score of 100%.

Two cycles were conducted in this research. Based on the scores obtained, all the participants did not manage to achieve the highest mark during Cycle 1 because of capitalization error. Nevertheless, in Cycle 2, they were able to use capitalization and full stop correctly as shown in Figure 11.

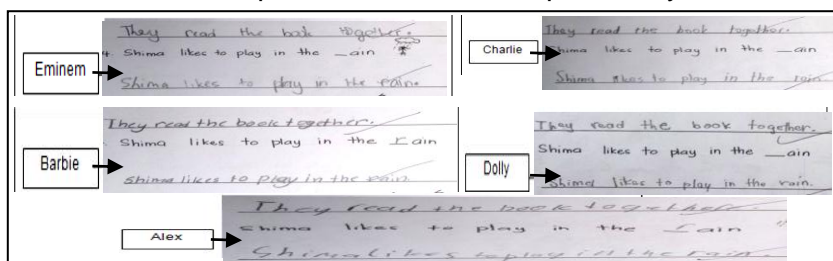


Figure 11. Pupils able to use capitalization and full stop correctly

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The pupils also improved gradually in their basic punctuation skill throughout this action research as evidenced in Figure 12.

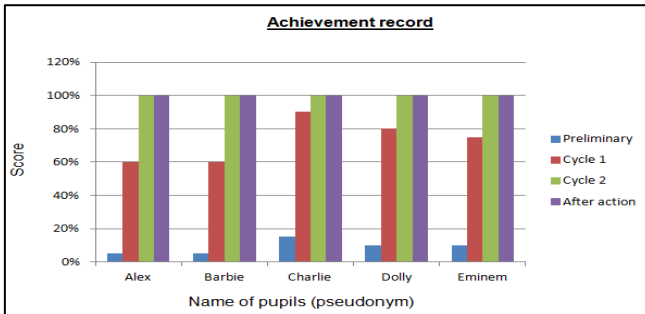


Figure 12. Overall performance of the participants throughout the research

The participants also showed great improvement in applying capitalization and full stop skills compared to their previous writing during the initial data collection phase as evidenced in Figure 13.

Pupil	Before (25 th February 2017)	After (5 th May 2017)
Alex		
Barbie		
Charlie		
Dolly		
Eminem		

Figure 13. Comparisons of pupils' writing during the initial data collecting phase and after the action stage

REFLECTION

The result of this research suggested that the use of the Pokémon Punctuation Sticker has brought many benefit both to me and my pupils. For instance, this approach has improved my teaching practice where the basic punctuation was concerned. In addition to this, this approach too has brought about positive results and improvements in my pupils' ability to use capitalization and place full stop correctly in a sentence.

My teaching practice related to basic punctuation improved through the introduction of Pokémon Punctuation Stickers in assisting pupils' learn basic punctuation skills. Before this, I used traditional way of teaching punctuation which was using flashcards and for my action research, I exploited the usage of stickers by using them during the teaching and learning of punctuation activity. Working with stickers gave participants a sense of satisfaction and a boost their confidence, which consequently made them feel happy. Therefore, I believe that in this research, the pupils were able to have meaningful learning when their motivation is high, are self-confident, and there is a relatively anxiety-free environment (Krashen, 1981).

All the five participants had shown improvement in using capitalization and placing full stop correctly in the sentence due to the incorporation of different coloured stickers and Pokémon cartoon that created personal enjoyment in learning. Interests play a very important role in learning and academic achievement (Sciefe, Krapp & Winteler, 1992). The use of Pokémon characters met pupils' interests in learning as the character is their favourite cartoon which acted as visual aid and motivating factor for participants to be actively involved in the activity implemented. Therefore, this study has supported that pupils' needs and interest need to be taken into account for learning to take place.

Throughout the process of implementing this action research, there are many aspects that I could have worked on in order to improve the research as a whole. Firstly, I have learnt the importance of being well-equipped with action research knowledge. Upon realising the importance of the knowledge of action research in order to begin a research, I diligently read many high credible and current literature and journals related to action research methodology. Spending extra time on understanding the nature of action research is worthwhile because I could work on the right direction to conduct my first action research. Besides, I also encountered the dilemma in dealing with my data especially during data analysis. I was being too ambitious in collecting as many data as I could without referring to my research questions and as a result, I was mentally exhausted because there was too much data to analyse. Lesson learnt and in Cycle 2, I kept real

close to my research questions this time and only gathered the necessary data that answer my research questions.

In relation to my action research, I have improved my own practice in the teaching of punctuation to Level One pupils through my deep understanding of the pedagogy of teaching of punctuation to young learners. I believe that pupils need to experience personal enjoyment in learning. Through the use of Pokémon Punctuation Sticker which incorporated the elements of visual as stimulus and colourful stickers that created personal enjoyment in learning, it helped them to learn punctuation better.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE NEXT CYCLE

During the entire action research, I kept on thinking if this approach could be used to teach punctuation among Level Two pupils. Previously during the initial data part, I mentioned that this issue existed during my first two teaching practices. I taught Level Two classes which were Year Four and Year Five respectively. The pupils are with low proficiency level in English. I wonder if this approach could be applied to this group of pupils to help them improve their basic punctuation skills. Besides, I could use this punctuation sticker to encourage the Level Two pupils to use other punctuation such as semicolon (;), apostrophe (') and question marks (?) correctly in their writing as required in the curriculum.

Also in the next cycle, I would like to explore the effect of using board game in the teaching of punctuation to both Level One and Level Two pupils. I would develop my own punctuation board game to improve pupils' punctuation skills and share my findings with other educators through seminar of conferences. Figure 14 illustrates the idea of Punctuation Board Game that I will produce for the next cycle.

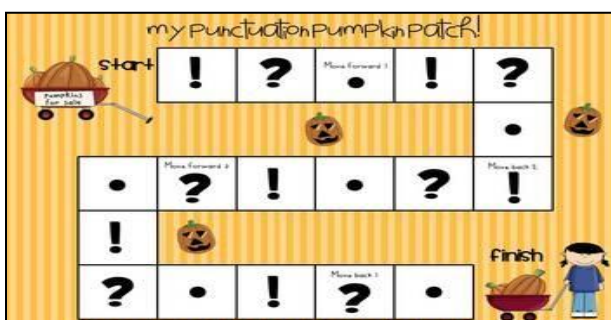


Figure 14. Sample of Punctuation Board Game

Apart from dealing with punctuation issue, I also would like to focus on other aspect of language, for instance, spelling by using the idea of Pokémon Sticker. Throughout this research, I also discovered that the participants have issues in their spelling. I would use other cartoon

characters and different colours for this activity in order to create more enjoyment in learning to address their issue related to spelling.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, this action research has allowed me to improve my pupils' basic punctuation skills as well as my own teaching practice, especially in the teaching of basic punctuation skills among Level One pupils. All in all, I hope that educators would benefit from my action research regarding the teaching and learning of punctuation. I will continue to try new teaching practices and reflect on the changes in my classrooms and students through action research.

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