*Trends and Concerns of Teacher Trainees in using Language Game Strategy to Improve Speaking in a Rural/Remote Primary School*

Hamzah Md.Omar, Nurul Nazira Hamzah

Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia

0005

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2013

Official Conference Proceedings 2013

## Abstract

This study reports on the trends and concerns of ESL teacher trainees in using game strategy to improve speaking skill in a rural and remote primary school. This study was conducted over three weeks with five remote areas primary schools pupils, age ranges from 9 -11 years old, located in Malubang, Pitas in Sabah. It was under Malubang Outreach Program organized by Rural Education Research Unit from 4 – 7 April, 2012. This study involved 22 TESL (Teaching of English as A Second Language) education undergraduates in the School of Education and Social Development at University of Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia. Teacher trainees used game strategy throughout to effect pupils' oral skills. The teacher trainees engaged children in meaningful games involving task based teaching. Data were collected through observation, questionnaires, and reflective essay. In sum, this study revealed the trends of teacher trainees using game strategy comprised of restructuring teacher trainees' instructional techniques based on the following: The internal and external environment conditions that influenced the effectiveness of various language games used, for example, instructional setting; group dynamics; communication patterns and modes; organization, cultural factors and distance/time factors and management of the learning environment and technology. Pupils were able to use the games to enhance their oral production albeit some classroom management difficulties and language barriers as they participated in games. The result also showed teacher trainees becoming better, free and confident when they conducted game strategy.

**Key words**: speaking skills, games, motivation, strategy, teacher trainee, pupils

## Introduction

*"English has become the medium of all relevant social interactions and the ability to use English effectively is considered an absolute essential for honorable existence."* Anon.

Many teachers in Malaysia are faced with the challenge of teaching students to be proficient in English when the students have a few mother tongues that are not English and they are not yet proficient in them, too. There is a gap in effective strategies used to date that could address the gap as teachers are only exposed to training rather than developing the students in English. In Malaysia, we have been using and practicing English language since before we achieved our independent. English is a compulsory subject in all primary and secondary schools curriculum in line with its status as a second language in Malaysia. The Cabinet Committee Report on the Review of the Implementation of the Education Policy 1979 states that the teaching of English is to enable all school-leavers to use English in certain everyday situations and work situations. It is also to allow pupils to pursue higher education in the medium of English. In Malaysia, learners in rural areas achieved a lower score in the English subject, and oral proficiency in English is still at its lowest especially among pupils in the remote or interior schools. The educational system under MOE (Ministry of Education), requires that from the age of 6, the pupils are engaged in English from pre-school level encompassing learning vocabulary and simple sentence structure. Then at the age of 7 to 11, they start their primary 1 until primary 6 and teacher will teach the formal structure, vocabulary, making sentences and short essay at varying levels using various delivery systems. Then they will sit for a test named UPSR (Primary School Achievement Test). However, MOE reported that "the effectiveness of the program and the quality of teachers teaching the language in rural schools is still a big question" (Anon, 2008: 19). A high percentage of school - leavers leave the precincts of the school as ignorant of English usage as they were when they entered the school first. Many years of learning English leads most of our school goers nowhere. Teaching of English in our schools is in a chaotic state today. Pupils are taught English for about six periods per week for six years. But it has been estimated that they hardly know few words by the time they join a University. This means that they have hardly been able to learn English words at the rate of one word per period. They do not know how to use the commonest structures of English.

The mistake is in our Educational system itself.

This is because the command of English language in rural schools, namely oral proficiency, is still poor. In addition, a teacher's target to "prepare" his students for the examination and not to make his pupils competent in the use of the language they are learning (Bala Subramanian, 1985, P. 56). In reality neither the student nor the teacher is anxious to learn or to teach English. For such an examination, students require no thinking, no originality, no imagination and no skill, though the vital aspect of language learning is integrated skill. Hence an average teacher tends to teach nothing more than what the examiner is likely to require. So the student is nervous only about his success in the examination and the teacher's sole problem is to see that the pass percentage does not go down. Therefore, ESL teacher's roles should be given the emancipated role in developing the learners, both intellectually and emotionally via language games. As we know, English plays a very important role in Malaysia.

However, there seems to be problems when it comes to teaching and learning English. Pupils tend to lack interest in learning the language which effect proficiency. In order to counter this issue, many English scholars have tried to come out with different ideas on how to promote interest in learning the language. One of the alternatives that are suggested and that will be the focus of this study is learning the language through games.

**Background of Study**

Thompson (2004), reviewed the current research related to quality literacy instruction for English learners, concludes that classroom teachers urgently need to know more about effective strategies for teaching English learners. In this study, as part of the effort to learn more about quality instruction for English learners, we have looked at the gap in current instructional practices in term of learners' belief and socio-cultural by using language game for learning English especially in the remote/rural areas. We focused as suggested by (Clarke, 2001; Alexander, 2000), on the way, the way knowledge is communicated to students, and the way teachers interacted verbally with their learners. Commonly, every language has two kinds of skills. The first one is the receptive skill which involves two aspects: understanding and reading; and the second one are the productive skill, which involves writing and speaking. Teaching speaking to second language learner is not an easy task as most non-native learners face difficulties in coping with it. According to Bygate (1987), the problem in teaching a foreign language or a second language is to prepare the pupils to use the language. Indeed, it is a demanding task for language teachers to provide sufficient inputs for pupils to be competent speakers of English. Usually, pupils feel insecure about their level of English and they face problems communicating as well as expressing themselves in the target language. As a result, they rather remain silent as they are in fear of making mistakes and do not show active participation in speaking lessons.

Bygate (1987) stressed that "speaking is a skill which deserves attention as much as the literary skills in both native and foreign languages". When pupils speak in a confident and comfortable way, they can interact better in real daily situations. Being in a classroom learning a language is essentially a social experience and should be memorable. In part, this is because of the relationship forged during a time of being and learning together. In fluency work, our aim was to make learners less conscious of their vulnerability in the target language by challenging them to become interested in participating.

Kayi (2006) emphasised that speaking is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching. Despite its importance, for many years, teaching speaking has been undervalued and English language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues (Kayi, 2006). Teacher tends to place the pupils in a drilling class where speaking is learned by memorization of certain sentences where they use it in certain condition or situation. This has cause pupils unable to speak the language or understand the message in English beside what they have been exposed. Along this line, Byrne stated that "The main goal in teaching the productive skill of speaking will be oral fluency: the ability to express oneself intelligibly, reasonably, accurately and without undue hesitation (1984, p. 9)". Because of this, the purpose of this project was to encourage teacher trainees to develop their pupils' fluency in spoken English. Developing fluency implies taking

risks by using language in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere –an atmosphere of trust and support. Speaking fluently, of course, involves speaking easily and appropriately with others.

This project will focus on particular aspects on teaching namely, the environment, learning process, teacher, learner, and content to fit the remote local context using language games. A 'language game' is 'considered to be an activity designed to stimulate and to sustain interest while affording the learner practice in listening and/or speaking for purposes of language acquisition' (Cortez, 1978:204). In game-playing, stressful situations and the pressure of expectations are removed: the child can experiment without having to dread the consequences of its actions. Choices can be made which would not be acceptable under the functional pressure to achieve. Play serves "as a preparation for the technical-social life that constitutes human culture" (Bruner 1983, 45). It is within these games that more complex procedures are first tried and tested, and later become accepted practice.The use of games in class is frequently advocated and defended by writers on such grounds as their provision of conditions for authentic language use, and their ability to motivate learners and permit them a degree of independence.

According to Ersoz (2000), games are highly motivating because they are amusing and interesting. They can be used to give practice in all language skills and be used to practice many types of communication. The justification for using games in the classroom has been well demonstrated as benefiting pupils in a variety of ways. The use of games in class is frequently advocated and defended by writers on such grounds as their provision of conditions for authentic language use, and their ability to motivate learners and permit them a degree of independence (Hunter, 2009).These benefits range from cognitive aspects of language learning to more co-operative group dynamics. Lee (1993) stated that, "There is a common perception that all learning should be serious and solemn in nature and that if one is having fun and there is hilarity and laughter, then it is not really learning. This is a misconception. It is possible to learn a language as well as enjoy oneself at the same time. One of the best ways of doing this is through games (p.13)." Games are already well known in educational field as one of the techniques in teaching language.

However, not all the teachers take games seriously and often games are only seen and treated as a side activities and used to fill up any empty slots. Teachers need to consider games as one of the essential technique applicable to pupils with different language ability. Saricoban and Metin (2000) found that games which are task-based and have a purpose beyond the production of correct speech, serves as excellent communicative activities.

**Research Questions**

In this study, questions were constructed to reveal not only the instructional practices but also to learn teachers' beliefs and gain insight into which principles guided their decision making. The following questions provide a more precise statement of the research problem:

1. What is the impact of language game strategy on pupils' oral production in remote/rural schools?

2. What is the trend of teacher trainees' language game strategy on pupils' oral skills in remote/rural school?

**Theoretical Framework**

Teachers must never stop learning if teacher education is to be a dynamic process. The learning process for teachers must be about their practice, must be built on experiences derived from their practice and, therefore, the learning cycle of experience followed by reflection, learning and experimentation (Kolb, 1984) is applicable as much to a teacher, as learner, as to a pupil. Generally, the aim of language game in this study is to provide teacher trainees with challenges related to the main task so that experiential learning is possible. The theoretical framework adopted for this study considered Littlewood (1992) Natural learning Model's that insisted the three basic conditions of natural learning are exposure to the language, interaction with other people and the need to communicate. The effect of these conditions is facilitated or hindered by the learner's attitudes towards English and to the learning experiences. Internal mechanisms process the language input in order to find regularities and build up a mental representation of the language.



**Figure 1. Theoretical framework for Natural Learning language game teaching strategy**.

**Methodology**

This qualitative case study is exploratory and its research design includes the above focusing questions which guided data collection and analysis. Decisions concerning purposive sampling; using observation, questionnaires (students') and reflective essays were related to the purpose of the study (Burns, 2000).

**Qualitative**

A qualitative research design was adopted to identify the perceptions, feelings and attitudes of participants and to interpret their meanings and intentions (Crotty, 1998). This design "accepts, from the beginning, the perspectival nature of human experience" (Pollio & Thompson, 1997, p. 28). The views expressed by each individual represent their perceptions of reality. This was an innovative and action research project because, as Markee (1997, p. 46) concluded, curricular innovation is "a managed process of development whose principal products are teaching(and/or) testing materials, methodological skills ,and pedagogical values that are perceived as new by potential adopters". From this point of view, the project we described here was an action research project because it consisted of the implementation of activities

focused on game strategy for promoting the development of methodological as well as pupils' speaking skills. We can also say that this kind of project that never been carried out in this remote school, and in that way it was an innovation.

## Participants

This research focused on the perspectives of a small group of TESL (Teaching of English as A Second Language) education undergraduates in the School of Education and Social Development at University of Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia. These 22 teacher trainees who participated in the study were in their final year TESL Education course. They were 20 females, and only two of the participants were male. The age of participants ranged from 22 to 26. Prior to the project, they attended five weeks of lecture. They were inducted into teaching using games as well as on issues in teaching English in the rural and remote teaching. They will be termed as teacher trainees throughout this report. While, five primary schools' pupils (75), ages ranging from 9 -11 years old from a remote school located in Malubang, Pitas in Sabah were the participants in the program. The majority of the children entered school lacking the basic home literacy experiences that parents provide to their children.

## Context

This methodological journey into the remote school in Pitas, Sabah, Malaysia for the project leads us towards a coastal village called Kampung Malubang. It took us almost three hours from Pitas town junction to reach the village using four-wheel vehicle travelling on a mud track for about 20 kilometres. There are 20 families in this village, they are basically fishermen. The basic amenities are lacking, no clean water source, no electricity except those generated by generator from 6pm till 10pm. Upon reaching there, we met with its village committee and the head teacher who then brought us to visit the school, which is near to the sea. It's a single story wooden building. The school compound is full of holes of varying sizes. It is how the village got its name 'Malubang – many holes'. Kg Malubang is very scenic and there are a number of natural monuments and landmarks located around this serene village. One of the landmarks in this area is Sipirik Island, a giant rock formation that is said to resemble a large ship. The trip by boat to the island is graced with the clean, clear, crisp seawater, its divine.

### Steps to Conduct the Project
Some procedures mentioned by Byrne, which were taken into account in planning and followed in implementation when using games strategy are outlined below:

- o *First, choose games on the basis of pupils' language level.*
- o *Second, prepare the games carefully beforehand.*
- o *Third, explain to the pupils the purpose of and rules for the games.*
- o *Fourth, give pupils one or more opportunities to practice before the games are played.*
- o *Fifth, involve as many pupils as possible, dividing the class into teams.*
- o *Sixth, if games are played in teams, points should be awarded for each correct answer and the scores written up on the board. (1984, p. 100)*

**Procedures: Data collection**

Data were collected through participants and non-participants observation notes, students' questionnaires, and reflective essays to do what Fetterman (1998) and Shank (2002) both describe as qualitative method that provides sufficient detail for thick description. The researchers spent all day at the school site for this one week project, starting at 9:00am and ending at 1:00pm when the day program ended. Each day was carefully planned so that lessons are conducted as scheduled in the daylight as night time is reserved for activities that don't require good lighting (The area is without direct electricity supply). Each day had a minimum of four game sessions. Field notes of observations provided descriptive data and recording of the teacher trainees' exact words, as well as dialogue between teacher and pupils.

**Observation**
One of the teacher trainees acts as a non-participant observer to increase the reliability of the observation. The pupils were not intimidated by the presence of the teacher trainees, as they have conducted ice breaking sessions before starting the games. A diary and a video/audio tape were used to record the games strategy in session between students and teacher trainees. The focus was on the first day on responses provided by students. During the first day of the study, the teacher trainees were not observed in order to allow them to get used to the new environment. Starting from the second day, each teacher trainee was observed for two to three times by their pairs.

**Teacher trainees' reflections**
The second instrument for collecting data was the analysis of teacher trainees' writings that took the form of response journals. About journals, Wallace (1998, p. 62) argues that "they have been written to be read as public documents". Journals must have a process of composition and can be written during or after the teaching activity is over. The trainee teacher's journal shows impressions, descriptions and processes in pupils' work while the research activities are being carried out. Thus, we used the trainee teacher's journals in order to register the details related to our research questions.

**Pupils' Questionnaires**
The third instrument was a short questionnaire. We used questionnaires so that we could learn in a written way how pupils felt before and after the game strategy, and in which games they felt more confident and free to speak with fluency.

**Data Analysis**
The analysis was guided by the initial research objective, questions and design. Data Analysis/Reduction is as follows:

   a. Narrate: Meaning units
   b. Analyse: code and categorise
   c. Thematise: Linking concepts

Pattern matching showed consistency in the data obtained by the different instruments. Coding is "an integral part of the analysis, involving sifting through the data, making sense of it, and categorizing it in various ways" (Darlington & Scott, 2002, p.145).

Therefore, in this study, the analysis involved searching for basic themes for meaning-making in the collected data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The research questions guided the selection of games techniques that are discussed, but did not limit the reporting of what was observed and what teacher trainees reported. In most cases the game strategy that is reported is told as it was delivered by one teacher trainee. In a few instances the strategy reported is a combination of what two or more teacher trainees did. When this occurs, it is noted. Explanation is given about variation or adaptations. Because the purpose of the investigation was descriptive, the report is on the trend of using game strategy in enhancing ESL oral skills, it does not make comparisons between levels or groups of pupils related to effectiveness or perceived effectiveness.

**Legitimation**
Legitimation refers to the trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and/or transferability of the inferences made (Guba, 1981; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007b). Using multiple qualitative data analysis tools can help researchers to address what Denzin and Lincoln (2005b) refer to as the crisis of legitimation, namely, the difficulty in assessing qualitative findings. As has been illustrated in this article, by using multiple types of
analyses, the qualitative data analysis process will become more rigorous.

**Ethical issues**

We asked for permission from the three schools headmasters' with a consent form; the pupils and too, were informed about the nature and the purpose of the study. The name of the school was not disclosed, and the names of the pupils were changed for anonymity. In this way, the evidences from these pupils could be collected and analysed.

**Results**

***The impact of game strategy on pupils' oral production in remote/rural schools?***
First part of the survey results administered to the pupils showed the main obstacles impeding the development of oral skills of the target pupils in Malubang school project are as follows: lack of L2 use in the school as well as the environment, and secondly, the linguistics problem in vocabulary content, thirdly, the attitudinal factor i.e. shyness and fear of English.

In the second part of the survey, pupils were asked about their feelings and to give suggestions to improve the activities. Pupils said that they like all the games, although some of the games were difficult. They liked the games which required them to communicate and cooperate with their friends (100% said "Yes, because it is fun"). Some things the pupils did not like about playing games were the high noise level, pupils' quarrelling with each other and uncooperative teammates.

Most of all, they did not like the feeling of losing at the games. Pupils suggested that they could play more games so that the teacher could help them to communicate better with one another (100% said "while playing games") and the chance to speak during the English class.

On the other hand, pupils liked the concrete examples, like bottles, sweets, etc., which were used in the game. However, they found it difficult to come up with vocabulary words associated with the topics, which they needed to use for communication purposes. The pupils actually agreed to the question that, 'Games encourage participation during the class?' They felt playing games help them communicate better to which they gave a 100% "Yes" especially in term of cooperation.

Table 1 to 4 present the survey results administered to the pupils before they embarked on using games activities conducted by the teacher trainees to help them improve their oral English communication skills.

**Table 1.**Pupils' responses to the question "Which language skills do you consider difficult to put into practice?

| Skill | Pupils | Percentage |
|-------|--------|------------|
| Listening | 26 | 27.96 |
| Speaking | 23 | 24.73 |
| Reading | 24 | 25.8 |
| Writing | 20 | 21.5 |
| No answer | 0 | 0 |

Taking into account pupils' opinions about difficulties with regard to the English as A Second language skills, we asked them which English language skills they considered difficult to put into practice and why. The results are shown in Table 1. As the results show, the majority of the pupils considered that listening, speaking, reading and writing as the four most difficult skills to develop. In essence, oral skill (52.7%) is considered the most difficult skill to develop.

**Table 2.** Pupils' responses to the question, "How often do you speak English during the class?"

| Item | Pupils | Percentage |
|------|--------|------------|
| Always | 1 | 1.67 |
| Almost always | 2 | 3.33 |
| Sometimes | 39 | 65 |
| Never | 18 | 30 |

From the results shown in Table 2 we could infer that the majority of the pupils normally sometimes spoke English, and an important number of pupils never participated or spoke English during the class. This is the usual ESL phenomenon faced by teachers in remote/rural schools.

**Table 3.** Pupils' responses to the question, "What interfered in your oral skills and made it difficult to speak during the English class?"

| Item | Pupils | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Fear of humiliation | 14 | 22.95 |
| Lack of vocabulary | 27 | 44.26 |
| Shyness | 18 | 29.5 |
| Put it in practice | 2 | 3.28 |
| Didn't answer | 0 | 0 |

According to the table above, we could see that there were three important causes which interfered or hampered pupils' oral participation. These were the lack of vocabulary, shyness, and fear of being humiliated. Then, we administered a questionnaire in which we asked pupils about the activities they preferred to carry out in the English class.

**Table 4. Strategies Preferred by Pupils in the English Class**

| Item | Pupils | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| a. Classes in which teacher is the person who speaks most | 1 | 2.77 |
| b. Individual workshops | 4 | 11.11 |
| c. Work in groups | 21 | 58.33 |
| d. Games | 10 | 27.77 |

It should be noted that in the diagnostic questionnaire, when we asked pupils about their preferred strategies when learning English in the classroom, 58% of the pupils expressed that they preferred to work in groups and highlighted advantages of playing games.

**The post observation of the game sessions**
The classroom observations revealed that students when given the opportunity to use the target language were able to use it when engaged in the game session:

> **Extract 1**...*giving the pupils opportunity to use the language...different level of proficiency so for those who are good with the language tend to be more active than the others are...using bilingual; Malay and English while conducting the activity because these pupils do not have the same level of proficiency...write down their sentences, thus we have to prompt them and give them clues...-we have helped the weaker pupils to make their own sentences, we asked them to read aloud and they were more motivated to participate after that...controlled practice where we guide and help the pupils throughout the activity ...The pupils are actually good with this language but they are just too passive and afraid to open their mouth...We make it as a competition and the group with high points will be given 'rewards'. Surprisingly, the pupils get almost all correct...pupils are able to act out and guess the words from the cards and pupils will be able to spell the words with at least 80% accuracy...modified lesson plan to adjust with the pupils' proficiency level and to increase the pupils' participations in the*

*game…pupils' participations in both sessions were a quite low and some pupils were not participating at all… (RE 1, 5, 7, 12, 14, 16, 22)*

### *The trend of teacher trainees' game strategy on pupils' oral skills in remote/rural schools?*

The trend of teacher trainees' game strategy on pupils' oral skills in remote/rural schools employed various means such rewards, using bilingualism, background information and re-organising games.

> *a. Employing bilingualism*
> *b. Element of rewards*
> c. *Use background or previously known information.*
> *d. Use of music to attract attention*
> *f. Lesson re-organization*
> *Using pair work*
> *Interactive type*

Firstly, restructuring game to fit the learners' proficiency involved employing bilingualism in the game instruction, giving rewards, use of music and students' background. Slavin and Cheung's (2004) review of the research found that literacy instructional programs that use the ELL child's native language or paired bilingual strategies for early reading instruction were deemed more effective in the majority of the studies examined.

> **Extract 2.** *However, for session 3, the pupils (from Kumpulan Limau) actively participated in the games and they were also brave enough to come out in front and speak English. We found that it was very heart-warming to watch the pupils enjoyed themselves while playing the game in English…success - involved the participations of all the pupils and also because of the willingness of the pupils to participate…a part of the game and they were not left out…the right method and interesting games…by using games in English, the pupils feel more relaxed and they are able to work together in groups – in which, it helps to reduce their anxiety and shyness in speaking English. Besides, by using games, it makes the class atmosphere livelier as the pupils learn to enjoy while they are learning…song 'If you happy and you know it'. Most of the pupils participated in the session…majority of the pupils said that they feel shy to speak in English and also said that they did not dare to ask their English teacher when it comes to difficult words. Therefore, they say they have limited vocabulary and most of the time they do not know the meanings of the words. They did admit that they like to learn English…quite smart and willing to learn especially the girls. There were two groups of boys whom find it hard to participate because they were not familiar with the names of body parts and they just kept staring at the picture…We explained twice but it was not understood. We demonstrated the task to make it easier for them…we found it hard for the groups to compete since they are lack of confidence and they seem to panic when the other groups are done with their spelling. We found that they were shy to speak English in front of their group members, so we*

*said word by word with them…We started the game the animal game. They also could not understand the instructions given and we had to demonstrate to them the procedure of the game. We wanted to mix the boys and girls in their groups because the boys are very noisy when they were with their friends. Unfortunately, it was hard because the girls and boys despised each other. They were very noisy during the game and started to mix with the other groups. The game took quite some time to be completed as they were noisy and they were not serious…We also demonstrated the game to them. They were excited in playing the game. Most of them could spell well. A minority of boys were unable to complete the spelling. (RE 3,5,6,8,9,18,19,21)*

*a. Employing bilingualism*

**Extract 3.** *… student on the team does not use English during the games session with us. We talked to some of the pupils and they do not use English during their English class…passive but they still respond… using bilingual (TT 1, line 5).*

**Extract 4.** *…the proficiency level of the pupils were very low (they were not able to understand our instructions in English, so we had to use Bahasa Malaysia to help them to understand) (TT2, line 6).*

*b. Element of rewards*

**Extract 5.** *… competition and the group with high points will be given 'rewards'. Surprisingly, the pupils get almost all correct…Some of them are very hyperactive*

c. *Use background or previously known information.*

**Extract 6.** *… we changed the game into an activity of making sentences…Pupils seemed to enjoy it…really shy to speak out…more relaxing…a relaxed environment of games…more challenging…game was still effective…very effective practice…game was as interesting…learners enjoyed…they were really cooperative*

*d. Use of music to attract attention*

**Extract 7.** *… we used this game because music attracts the learners' attention…effective to get the learners' attention to listening to the questions posed, as there was only one learner posing a question at one time…the learners really were excited to move around the classroom and work with other group members…familiarise themselves…learners enjoyed the game and they were really cooperative with each other…did feedback by checking the lists with the learners…this game was as interesting to this group of learners.*

*f. Lesson re-organization*

*Using pair work*

**Extract 8.** *...to encourage the learners' participation and attention...paired up during the activity... this game was replaced with the "Cat and Mouse" game. This is because there were not enough sweets to be circulated around.*

*Interactive type*
**Extract 9.** *... lessons were selected because of the interactive features and the opportunities both lessons provide in maximizing the use of the language among the learners...problem: lack of resources as we had only prepared enough material for one time use of each lessons.*

Secondly, there were other factors that caused anxiety for the teacher trainees in the first encounter such as game constraints, lesson planning and managing students, tasks and time.
To elaborate more, the teacher trainees felt anxious when they had to select and design activities to serve all aspects of the students. For example, when the teachers designed a game activity for high proficient students but the activity was ineffective for the low proficient ones. The present findings seem to be consistent with other research which found that the teachers sometimes designed activities beyond the ability of students (Huimin, 2008). Moreover, the teacher trainees were concerned about managing the tasks for the students in the class. This finding is in agreement with Merç's (2011) findings which show the teacher trainees had anxiety when they had to manage the tasks for pair work and group work as revealed in the categories below:

*a. Voice loudness in interaction*

**Extract 11.** *...voice of the learners. Hence, the facilitator had to go around each learner to help them construct questions. However, this made the process time consuming, making the rest of the learners to get restless. To counter this problem, two facilitators went around the circle while the other facilitator controls the class*

*b. Getting attention through music*
**Extract 12.** *...very soft...limited with authentic.. sing the action song (What Can You Do?) to get their attentions as they were starting to become restless...*

*c. Group arrangement during games*

**Extract 13.** *... smaller circles for these reasons:*
> *1. Classroom control*
> *2. Better attention in smaller groups*
> *3. Higher chances for everyone to use the language*

*d. Game constraint - Lack of English Language exposure*

**Extract 14.** - *Since most of the pupils live in remote area, they are not using English that much...modify the lesson...environment of the classroom was not suitable...*

*e. Shyness leading to passivity*

**Extract 15.** *... the pupils were passive and some of them were really shy to come out in front when it was time to play the game. Due to these factors, we made a drastic decision to change our game plans...From the game "Pass the Ball!", we decided to change it to "Pass the Bottle!" as using bottle was the easiest material to be found at Malubang, Pitas.*

**Extract 16.** *...very shy to use the language...more challenging...group was harder to be controlled...game was still effective...very effective practice...game was as interesting...learners enjoyed...they were really cooperative...to encourage the learners' participation and attention...*

*f. Supplying the words*

**Extract 17.** *...change it to teaching nouns to the pupils...able to understand it and they were also able to orally give us many examples of nouns when we asked them.*

*g. Naughty students*

**Extract 18.** *... game was not suitable...many naughty learners...difficult to be controlled and refused to obey instruction...play around...group was harder to be controlled*

*h. Lack of materials*

**Extract 19.** *...not enough tic tac toe forms*

Finally, the games strategy portrayed in this study revealed that the discovery by teacher trainees of the ways that could be used effectively if students were prepared and given the opportunity to figure out the meaning of words on their own by relying on picture clues. Such opportunities help children build strategies that they can use when they engage in games.

**Extract 10.**
- *preparing the pupils with a song with actions is a very good choice. Pupils will be more motivated and encouraged to participate in the lesson.*
- *taught the pupils about different kinds of animals. We asked the pupils to identify the pictures of the animals on the manila cards. Then, we asked the pupils to read aloud the spellings of the animals together and also asked them the characteristics of the animals.*
- *"Felix Says". This game required the pupils to move around, rearrange the spellings of the animals and they will be asked to speak after that.*

- *taught the English language to the pupils through the basic routines that we do every day.*
- *We showed the pictures to the pupils and asked them to read aloud and spell the verb phrases together.*

**Discussion**

Firstly, the results show that the language games did help more than half of the pupils improve their speaking skills in the Second Language. The pupils cited in their perception that they enjoyed their activities more. This is in contrast to the result of the questionnaire administered before the program which showed that 53% of the pupils felt that they were not able to communicate better before the program. This could be due to various reasons, one of which was the lack of appropriate vocabularies which was remedied through the pre-task activities conducted before the game activities. The observations revealed the concerns much about the type of interactions occurring in the game activities conducted.

Secondly, the current study found that the teacher trainees had anxiety when confronted with the complexity in implementing the lesson plan for the first class. A possible explanation for this might be that when the teacher trainees could not follow lesson plan procedures, they totally went off track. Besides, the anxiety of teacher trainees increased when they had to change the plan immediately to survive in the first class. This finding is in agreement with Merç's (2011) findings which showed that teaching procedures were a significant category of EFL pre-service teachers' anxiety, since there were various factors that the teachers would take into account before teaching. For example, the reason for the teachers to change their original lesson plan was to adapt such a plan to fit into unexpected situations in the classroom. Moreover, the teacher trainees felt anxious about teacher-student interactions, especially in the first class. These results are consistent with other studies and suggest that the teacher trainees were concerned a great deal about teacher student interactions in the class (Kim & Kim, 2004). Due to the importance of teacher-student interactions, the interactions played a very important role in classroom teaching and such interactions were a reliable indicator of the victorious class as well. Next important concern of these teacher trainees is in lesson organization namely, the effect of using games on student performance, accommodation of the learning process at the various levels of Bloom's taxonomy, learner assessment, attention/motivational factors; learning activities; interaction among learners and teacher trainees, and guidance and structuring activities.

Next, what the teacher trainees and pupils described when they spoke of *"bilingual"* would seem to fit more logically with what teacher educators in Malaysia refer to as an "eclectic approach." The term *eclectic* reflects the changes in instructional delivery from an earlier time when teaching of English was primarily grammar translation, stressing of pronunciation and the teaching of receptive skills of listening and reading. The merging of the task based approach and game strategy form an eclectic approach. This approach, while not ignoring formal instruction in grammar and language structure, 1) provides immersion in oral language, 2) is contextualized in true to life situations, and 3) attends to appropriate interactions in social context (Thirumalai, 2002). The modification of the games led to active participation and they seemed to enjoy the lesson more.

### Emergent game pedagogy

Finally, the trend in using games strategy revealed that the discovery emergent game pedagogy by teacher trainees of the ways that could be used effectively if students were prepared and given the opportunity to figure out the meaning of words on their own by relying on picture clues. Such opportunities help children build strategies that they can use when they engage in games. Although games can lead to informal learning as well, we consider games a form of intentional learning, because they are designed with a specific educational purpose. Intentional learning, according to Anderson et al. (2001) is structured around four organizing questions:

1. *The learning question.* What should the learner learn?
2. *The instruction question.* How should instruction be delivered in order to provide high levels of learning?
3. *The assessment question.* How should accurate assessment instruments be designed or selected?
4. *The alignment question.* How should learning, instruction, and assessment be balanced with one another?

In this study, these four organizing questions act as the lens through which we synthesized the emergent game pedagogy as revealed by the teacher trainees in their game teaching design. The emergent game pedagogy that addressed the four questions above is as follows:

- Prepare pupils with a song with actions to motivate and encourage them to participate in the lesson.
- Activate pupils' knowledge using pictures, read aloud the spellings of the words and describe the characteristics of the target topic/thing - show the pictures to the pupils and asked them to read aloud and spell the verb phrases together.
- Get the pupils to move around.
- Coach the pupils the daily basic routines using English language to the pupils.

**Figure 2.** The trend of teacher trainees' game strategy on pupils' oral skills in remote/rural schools
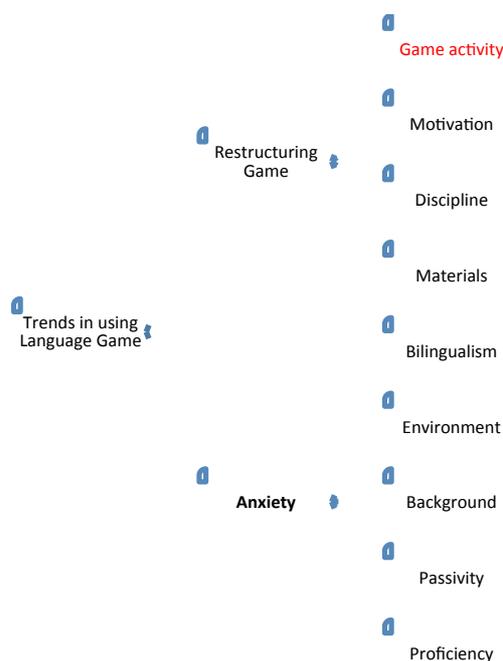


In sum, this study revealed the trends of teacher trainees using game strategy that teacher trainees instructional techniques were based on the following: The internal and external environment conditions that influenced the effectiveness of various language games used, for example, instructional setting; group dynamics; communication patterns and modes; organization, cultural factors and distance/time factors and management of the learning environment and technology. These are then related to the pupils' performance and/or achievement level are affected by the delivery system. Other relevant variables included their cognitive style, attitude, personality profile, and other various learner demographic variables.

**Conclusions**

Games have been and will always be an important part of learning a second or foreign language. We have pointed out the importance of using games in the English learning process. Games are motivating and exciting experiences for pupils to develop the speaking skills in a fun and comfortable way. Besides, we noticed that games helped pupils to believe in themselves, thanks to the creation of a good atmosphere inside the classroom.

Through this innovative and research project, games incorporating caring-sharing, guessing and speculative games and a story were implemented successfully. These encouraged pupils to communicate orally and to gain confidence in speaking. In addition, during the process of implementation, pupils overcame their fear of making mistakes and perceived speaking as a natural process when they were playing. The majority of pupils could express and communicate orally without the pressure of time or constant evaluation. In our research questions, we aimed at describing what happened with pupils' oral production when engaged in games. We discovered that pupils took part in the activities in a free, comfortable and motivating way.

Consequently as postulated by Littlewood (1994), the language exposure in term of more vocabulary, short sentences, and pronunciation, increase interaction, and the need to communicate bore its fruit. They managed to get the messages across while playing, though in some cases pupils mixed Malay and English expressions to communicate their ideas or feelings. Furthermore, the teacher trainees witnessed in reality, how their pupils learned language, interact and develop communicative skills simultaneously in remote area school setting.

*Recommendations*
This study has several implications for educators of second language learners especially those
learning a second language aside a few other languages. Thus, it is recommended that game strategy be conducted on daily basis to become a main activity in a ESL curriculum. Furthermore, teachers need to be aware of the appropriate ways to implement such a strategy, plan for each game session, decide on the vocabulary to be introduced, and think about ways to engage learners in the game. In fact, games have multiple rewards, so teachers need to carefully select the games to be used, explain difficult words or scaffold learners to figure out the meanings of words by themselves. Teachers must also ask challenging questions to trigger learners' thinking and lead them to construct meaning through analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating ideas with the teacher's support.

*Limitations*
The study addressed the two research questions, but some limitations could be detected. The duration of the study should have been longer than 10 weeks in order to observe more classroom interactions and collect more data about the types of responses. Furthermore, this study does not check the long term effects of the game strategy in the primary schools; its results are confined to a limited period of time. Another limitation is the lack of comparison data against which to judge whether it is the game strategy which is resulting in the observed processes of teaching and learning. Furthermore, the researchers are aware that although they believe that the findings are the characteristic of using the game strategy in the classroom, further research is yet needed to make sure that using more 'traditional' methods will not lead to the same results. Similar studies have used multiple-choice tests to collect data, while this research employed questionnaires, observations, and teacher trainees' written responses.

Implications
Special attention must be given to using games in teaching and learning English as A Second/Foreign Language classroom. Learners enjoying and understanding of language are not inborn skills. Learners build such strategies through skillful interactions. Games must be a main component of ESL curricula along with other reading and writing strategies. This strategy must also be carried out in the primary grades to ensure constant gains in vocabulary and constant learners' engagement in critical and logical thinking.

## References

Alexander, R. (2000*) Culture and pedagogy: International comparisons in primary education*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Anderson, L. W., Krathwohl, D. R., et al. (Eds.).(2001) *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives.* New York: Longman.

Balasubramanian, T.(1985) *Teaching of English Made Easy.* Macmillan India Limited: Madras, p.56.

Bruner, J. (1983) *Child's Talk: Learning to Use Language*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Burns, A. (1999) *Collaborative action research for English language teachers*. NY: Cambridge University Press.

Burns, S. (2000) *Introduction to research methods.*London: Sage Publications.

Bygate, M. (1987) *Speaking*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Byrne, D. (1984) *Language learning in the classroom: Teaching oral English*. Hong Kong: Longman.

Clarke, P. (2001) *Teaching and learning: the culture of pedagogy*. New Delhi, India: Sage Publications.

Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the*
*Research Process*, Allen and Unwin.

Cortez, E.G. (1978) Language-Teaching Games: What about them?' (32/3 204—207)

Darlington, Y. and Scott, D. (2002) *Qualitative research in practice stories from the field.*
Buckingham: Open University Press.

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.).(2005a) *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ersoz, A. (2000) Six games for EFL/ESL classroom. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 6(6), retrieved February 11, 2005 from http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Ersoz-Games.html

Fetterman, D.M. (1998). *Ethnography: Step by step*. (2nd Ed.).Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Guba, E.G. (1981) ERIC/ECTJ annual review paper: Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Development, 29,* 75–91.

Huimin, Z. (2008) "Speaking Anxiety in the Classroom", Modern English Teacher, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp.38.

Hunter, D. (2007) 'W.R. Lee and the IATEFL Newsletter (1967-1984)' *IATEFL Voices, (2007).*

Kayi, H. (2006) *Teaching Speaking: Activities to Promote Speaking in a Second Language.* The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. XII, No. 11, November 2006.

Kim, S. Y. &and Kim, J. H. (2004) "When the Learner Becomes a Teacher: Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety as an Occupational Hazard", English Teaching, Vol. 59, No. 1, pp. 165.

Lee, P. K. (1993) A case study: students' perceptions of caring manners of educational leaders and its relation to their learning outcomes. (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1993). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 54,* 377A

Littlewood, W. (1992) *Teaching Oral Communication: A methodological framework.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers

Markee, N. (1997) *Managing Curricular Innovation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Merç, A. (2004) *Reflections of pre-service EFL teachers throughout their teaching practicum: What had been good? What has gone wrong? What has changed?,* Master's degree, ELT, Graduate School of Education, Anadolu University

Ministry of Education Malaysia.(2001) Education in Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur.

Miles, M. and Huberman, A. M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis.* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. National Curriculum Framework for School Education. (2002).

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., and Leech, N. L. (2007b) Validity and qualitative research: An oxymoron? *Quality & Quantity: International Journal of Methodology, 41,* 233–249.

Pollio, H.R., Henley, T.B. and Thompson, C. (1997) *The Phenomenology of Everyday Life. CUP:* Cambridge.

Saricoban, A. and Metin, E. (2000) Songs, verse and games for teaching grammar. *The Internet TESL Journal* 6 (10). http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Saricoban-Songs.html (accessed September 27, 2004)

Shank, G. D. (2002) *Qualitative research: A personal skills approach.* Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Thirumalai, M.S. (2002). Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. *Language in India*.2(4). [online]. Available: http://www.languageinindia.com/april2002/tesolbook.html#chapter2

Thompson, L.W. (2004) *Literacy Development for English language learners: Classroom Challenges in the NCLB Age*. Monterey, CA: CTB/McGraw Hill. [online]. Available: http://www.ctb.com/media/articles/pdfs/LanguageProficienc /English_Language_Learners

Wallace, M. (1998) *Action research for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.