

Durian Quest and ESL Spelling: A Quantitative Investigation Journey on Indigenous Primary Pupils' Views

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Abstract

English is the world's most-studied foreign language. Indigenous Malaysian primary school students, especially low-proficient ones, find learning challenging. They have trouble spelling English words after class. They forget words easily. Due to irregular English spelling, students don't participate in English lessons and make spelling mistakes. Gamified learning with instructional components can help students to learn. The researcher merged Snakes and Ladders with English Spelling Bee to create 'The Durian Quest Game'. This quantitative study aimed to investigate indigenous primary pupils' views on using the Durian Quest game (modified Snakes and Ladders game) in learning English spelling, as there was little research done on using Snakes and Ladders game-based learning as gamified learning in the Malaysian context, let alone its implementation among indigenous primary school learners and to tackle their interest in English language acquisition. 70 indigenous students from Tapah, Perak, answered a 20-item Likert scale survey. Students' perspectives on playing board games to learn English spelling were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency analysis). The findings revealed that the Durian Quest board game increased students' interest in learning English spelling. It also implied that children loved playing games, like Durian Quest, to learn English spelling. Based on the results, further research is recommended; The Durian Quest can be modified for lessons and levels. Future researchers can use this to design culture and background-based language games. A similar study could provide interesting comparison results.

Keywords: Indigenous, Primary, Pupils, Durian Quest, Board Game, English, Spelling

Introduction

According to Shah et al (2015), the Orang Asli have historically resided in remote villages where they had limited access to modern conveniences such as schools and medical facilities. The vast majority of indigenous peoples held the belief that sending their children to school was a waste of time because of their geographically isolated locations. According to the statistics, almost eighty percent of indigenous children and adolescents did not complete their education and dropped out of school. In the same way, the Malaysian Ministry of Education pays extra attention to the education of Orang Asli students because the participation and mastery rates of Orang Asli students in the 3M are still quite low, while the absenteeism and dropout rates are quite high. As a result, the Ministry of Education is tasked

with reducing the percentage of the population that is illiterate and eradicating extreme poverty through the implementation of an education agenda. This will be accomplished by assisting children in enhancing their accomplishments and encouraging children to attend school in order to reduce the number of children who drop out of school or do not attend school at all. This will be accomplished through the implementation of programmes such as the Integrated Curriculum Program of Orang Asli and Penan School (KAP) (Aini et al., 2019). However, because of this issue, indigenous students can acquire a higher level of mastery, despite the fact that they become disinterested and bored with the material they are studying, which is especially problematic when it comes to the study of a complex language like English.

According to Evans (2017), in terms of the specifics, the English language has a mixed vocabulary which is comprised of 26 percent of English vocabulary that is of Germanic origin, nearly 30 percent of English vocabulary that is of French origin, and nearly 30 percent of English vocabulary that is of Latin origin. Despite this, English continues to be a difficult language to master because of its confusing spelling and grammar system, which even native English speakers find difficult to navigate at times. It is difficult for people who are not native English speakers to understand the English spelling system because many words share the same spelling but have different pronunciations. Phrasal verbs are a phenomenon that are exclusive to the English language and fluctuate in the opposite direction. The English language, like other languages, has norms that govern its grammar as well as its spelling. These norms can be broken down into two categories: grammatical and spelling. Anyone who is trying to become fluent in the language may experience a great deal of frustration as they attempt to acclimate themselves to the numerous complexities and exceptions to the rules. Rules do not always work, particularly when applying previously acquired knowledge to a brand-new concept. The process of studying English has never been simpler or more readily available than it is right now. Indigenous students have a much more difficult time mastering the English language than their non-indigenous counterparts due to the fact that English is only rarely heard or spoken in indigenous communities. Indigenous people are members of a marginalised minority group in rural Malaysia. There seems to be no necessity for English language within the indigenous residents for their everyday social routines. She also pointed that in her case study that English teachers found it challenging to adjust their teaching to the environment and circumstance of their indigenous pupils. Her findings also indicated that to improve English teaching and learning in indigenous people-based schools, educators must be trained in innumerable approaches and practices that will support the learning process the indigenous students who come from an individual's culture and whose cultural background differs from what the teacher is accustomed with, (Renganathan, 2013).

So, it is believed that these issues of difficulties in learning English can be countered with implementation of gamification or gamified learning in language acquisition. Gamification is the use of well-designed digital and non-digital games to enhance learners' language, which incorporates aspects of games or play into the learning environment to increase engagement and involvement. Perfect atmosphere of learning is provided through game-based learning. Games can actively engage learners, allowing them to enjoy the pleasure of exploring and comprehending a new system. Well-designed games that can be played in several ways and on a range of media and platforms may cut through distractions and engage learners in ways that several other approaches can. Word play, language play, narrative, and role play, as well as digital platforms are forms of those games that can be utilised, (Maloney, 2019). The characteristic of gamification is anticipated to improve

students' desire and dedication, as well as to inculcate positive and productive behaviours in them. In Malaysian context, gamification is widely used and recommended for teaching and learning from primary to tertiary level rather than depending solely on conventional method. Learning should be fun and engaging therefore, this study aimed to investigate indigenous pupils' views in learning English spelling using Durian Quest (modified Snakes and Ladders) board game.

Literature Review

To learn more about this study, the review will explore on the use of board games to learn English language and theoretical framework. It may be tedious to recall spelling terms, and students frequently forget how to spell the words since conventional spelling is not exciting enough that even a skilled speller might fear it, and non-visual learners may struggle. Likewise, to teach kids spelling, teachers could use board games to motivate and interest students in learning. Classroom activities that incorporate spelling, such as board games, provide pupils with an entertaining way to learn vocabulary. As a result, when students are directly involved in the activity, employing board games in classroom activities might benefit in terms of information gained and capitalize on the learning outcomes. For an example, snakes and ladders board game are commonly used in teaching and learning process in Malaysian context.

According to Musa et al (2016), they conducted a study on using the snakes and ladders game in teaching about nouns to enhance students' understanding on differences between singular and plural nouns and countable and uncountable nouns and evaluate whether the students can grasp the knowledge regarding Nouns that was taught to them using the board game. From their discussion, it was found that students' understanding on the grammar lessons taught by the teacher improved with the exposure and integration of the grammar board game. It also showed that the students understand nouns better with the help of the introduction and integration of the board based on the result from the paired samples correlation thus, enabled them to answer the questions in the post-test. They concluded that Noun-It-Right board game caused an increase in students' results and aided the students in improving their learning nouns well thus, created a fun learning environment which provided an alternative method of teaching assisting the teachers.

Board games can also draw students' attention and encourage them to study in a pleasant way since they like learning English via games instead of traditional chalk and talk method as students will be actively interested and participate in their studies on their own. They will attempt harder with classmates and teachers' supports to complete the 'mission' given effectively due to the competitive nature of the game. Yaacob et al (2019) had proved the effectiveness of board games to enhance low-proficiency students' vocabulary learning. They conducted a study on teachers' perspectives on the use of Bugs' Life board game in enhancing LINUS pupils' vocabulary board. LINUS is a remedial program for students who are weak in literacy and numeracy skills. Yaacob et al (2019) led the study to examine the effectiveness of Bug's Life Board Game in enhancing Year Four LINUS pupils' vocabulary and assess the teachers' perceptions on the use of board game in enhancing LINUS pupils' vocabulary. The results of pre-test and post-test were tabulated based on the differences of the marks between the tests. The pupils' improvements were shown in their vocabulary score before and after intervention. The results provided evidence that the use of board game helped pupils to learn and acquire the L2 vocabulary. The results of pre-test and post-test showed improvement of pupils' vocabulary scores after intervention by up to 58%. It

indicated that these LINUS students could be helped with appropriate approaches in teaching by the teachers. Pupils' perceptions of the board game were gathered through interviews resulted that they enjoyed the board game-based instruction. The pupils had given positive comments towards the Bug's Life board game. After series of cycles, students managed to learn names of the insects in English. Pupils' interviews had also indicated that the pupils responded positively towards the board game as it provided fun learning environment and motivation to learn.

Hence, this paper highlighted the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and social constructivism theory by (Vygotsky, 1978). Lev Vygotsky disregarded Piaget's idea that learning could be separated from its social environment. According to Vygotsky, every component in a child's cultural development emerges twice: once on the social level and once on the individual level; once between individuals (inter-psychological) and once within the child (intra-psychological). This is valid for voluntary attention, logical memory, and idea creation. All the higher functions emerge from genuine interpersonal connections. Vygotsky (1934) highlighted language and culture's importance in cognitive development and how we see the world, claiming that they offer frameworks through which we experience, communicate, and interpret reality. He established the importance of language in learning by proving that communication is a prerequisite for the child's acquisition of concepts and language in infants, (David et al., 2013). Vygotsky (1978) defined ZPD as the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or more knowledgeable others (MKO), (Yaacob, et al., 2019). According to McLeod (2019), Vygotsky believed that when a student is in the zone of proximal development for a task, providing the appropriate assistance will give the student enough of a "boost" to achieve the task. As students learn using Snakes and Ladders board game, they will work collaboratively with MKO to reach their potential development as in spelling ability which would lead to vocabulary acquisition due to active learning. Constructivist theories were used to build active learning approaches. Active learning is characterized as any instructional approach that involves students in the learning process whereby student assumes the role of the constructor of information and participates actively. In an active learning process, students must engage in meaningful learning activities and reflect on what they are doing, (Gokce, 2020)

Henceforth, the researcher made a stand that the Durian Quest board game is the right platform of teaching strategy to spelling acquisition as children can learn individually or cooperatively since the game can be modified for lesson suitability, time frame and participants based on the Vygotsky theories of social constructivism and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Through proper modification of the board game, teachers can implement the ideal lessons to cater the students' needs, motivation, and interest towards the subject matter. For instance, Setiawan and Zuana (2018) developed the computer facilities in the researched school to implement the modified Snakes and Ladders board game in digital form to teach vocabulary. They were determined that the research and development had produced an electronic board game that was developed specifically for the needs of the school's second graders as a learning medium for teaching vocabulary.

Methodology

The researcher has devised a board game to tackle the spelling problem encountered by the indigenous primary pupils in Tapah, Perak. As one of the popular board games, the board game that the researcher mean is the "snake and ladder" invention game. Board games

are effective platforms for gamification strategies which embed elements of chance (dice rolling), challenges and consequences. Snakes and Ladders is one of the oldest games to represent these elements which mirror what we all encounter in everyday life. The game was a fusion of the snakes and ladders game with spelling bee. The game was designed using Microsoft Word and printed as a banner which is in 5 feet length and 4 feet width. The intervention and implementation of Durian Quest Game with a face-to-face classroom is believed to be helpful in providing pupils with an opportunity for them to learn spelling in English language. The research design used is a survey research design. The researcher thus, used cross-sectional survey design as it is widely used in education and the researcher also collected data at one point only in time. The students' data were recorded based on their present views. The advantage of this approach is that it can measure current attitudes or practises. It also offers information in a short period of time, such as the time necessary to deliver the survey and gather the data. Cross-sectional designs consist of several types; examine current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practises, compares two or more educational groups, measure community needs, evaluate a programme and large-scale assessment such as state-wide or national survey study. However, the researcher decided to use this survey design to investigate students' perceptions towards the Durian Quest board game. In survey research, it is critical to choose as substantial a sample as feasible for the sample to display characteristics comparable to the target population. In addition, obtaining a reliable list of the target population in survey research might be challenging at times.

Nevertheless, the researcher uses non-probability sampling which is convenience sampling for this research because non-probability samples can produce results which are just as precise as probability samples, given that the factors affecting a demographic participant's prevalence in the sample are non-linear with the variables in the study, or can be properly accounted for by implementing changes before or after information collection. Convenience sampling is suitable for this research because non-probability sampling methods are notable for their minimalism of use and lower costs associated with their utilization. The key factor is the easiness with which potential respondents can be found or recruited. The participants are chosen primarily on their convenience based on the researchers and availability rather than any rigorous sample design, as the term indicates as merely population elements that are simply and readily accessible are chosen, (Sarstedt et al., 2018)

Fortunately for the researcher, the primary school selected consist of 96 students in Year 4. Hence, the researcher used convenience sampling to involve 70 indigenous primary students from three classes of Year 4 consist of different levels of English proficiency in one of the primary schools in Tapah, Perak, Malaysia based on their availability as there were 26 students who could not participate in the survey due to their geographical and transportation factors. The students were homogenous in aspects of ethnicity (Semai) and age (10 years old). All three classes were familiar of the Durian Quest board game as they had experience of learning English using the board game during their lessons. To conclude, the respondents were selected using convenience sampling to answer the research questions and gather their views towards Durian Quest game based on their availability and survey participation readiness. Table 1 showed the breakdown of students according to the gender. There were 38 male students and 32 female students that were selected for this survey.

Table 1

Total of Year 4 students in gender classification

GENDER	TOTAL
MALE	38
FEMALE	32
TOTAL	70

The instrument that the students used to answer the research question was a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and was an adaptation from various research, (Mokhtar et al., 2019; Sari, 2017; Ibrahim et al., 2011; Shah, et al., 2009). Instead of open-ended and written questions, the researcher used close-ended questions and tick (✓) options to ease the respondents to answer the relevant questions too by providing the essential options for each question thus, cooperating with the survey research. The survey questionnaire consisted of five pages including the instructions and the items are orderly regulated that it will not cost a lot of time to complete as it is tuned with respondents' reality and their experience towards the board game.

Results

The results of this study were stated in positions of responding the one research question. All 20 items were utilized to investigate the students' perceptions level towards the Durian Quest board game. The students' responses were shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Students' perceptions on the Durian Quest game (%)

No.	Question Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The Durian Quest game is enjoyable.	60.0 % (42)	0 %	1.4 % (1)	18.6 % (13)	20.0 % (14)
2	The length of time for playing the Durian Quest game is very suitable.	57.1 % (40)	1.4 % (1)	0 %	25.7 % (18)	15.7 % (11)
3	The rules of the game are very clear.	57.1 % (40)	1.4 % (1)	1.4 % (1)	20.0 % (14)	20.0 % (14)
4	The use of colours and design layouts in the game are very interesting.	60.0 % (42)	0 %	1.4 % (1)	20.0 % (14)	18.6 % (13)
5	The contents of the game match my subject syllabus.	54.3 % (38)	5.7 % (4)	12.9 % (9)	12.9 % (9)	14.3 % (10)
6	The spellings given are challenging.	61.4 % (43)	4.3 % (3)	11.4 % (8)	15.7 % (11)	7.1 % (5)
7	The Durian Quest game requires the use of strategies to win.	50.0 % (35)	8.6 % (6)	4.3 % (3)	11.4 % (8)	25.7 % (18)
8	I take a long time to understand how to play the Durian Quest game.	11.4 % (8)	10.0 % (7)	0 %	12.9 % (9)	65.7 % (46)
9	I like the interaction among the players during the Durian Quest game.	58.6 % (41)	0 %	1.4 % (1)	12.9 % (9)	27.1 % (19)
10	I am active playing and spelling words during the Durian Quest game.	58.6 % (41)	0 %	1.4 % (1)	15.7 % (11)	24.3 % (17)
11	The Durian Quest game keeps me alert.	58.6 % (41)	0 %	1.4 % (1)	15.7 % (11)	24.3 % (17)
12	I enjoy moving around during the Durian Quest game.	58.6 % (41)	0 %	4.3 % (3)	10.0 % (7)	27.1 % (19)
13	The game motivates me to learn English.	58.6 % (41)	0 %	1.4 % (1)	17.1 % (12)	22.9 % (16)
14	The game motivates me to use English.	58.6 % (41)	0 %	2.9 % (2)	11.4 % (8)	27.1 % (19)
15	I get to know new spelling words.	54.3 % (38)	4.3 % (3)	0 %	14.3 % (10)	27.1 % (19)
16	I can improve my spelling ability by using Durian Quest game.	57.1 % (40)	1.4 % (1)	1.4 % (1)	12.9 % (9)	27.1 % (19)
17	I feel Durian Quest game is easy to be understood.	58.6 % (41)	0 %	1.4 % (1)	12.9 % (9)	27.1 % (19)
18	I feel Durian Quest game is not difficult to be practiced during English lessons.	55.7 % (39)	2.9 % (2)	1.4 % (1)	11.4 % (8)	28.6 % (20)
19	I prefer using board games to learn spellings compared to traditional methods in the class.	55.7 % (39)	2.9 % (2)	1.4 % (1)	14.3 % (10)	25.7 % (18)

20	I am very interested in using board games for learning English language spellings in the future.	54.3 % (38)	4.3 % (3)	1.4 % (1)	12.9 % (9)	27.1 % (19)
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Table 2 showed the students' responses about the Durian Quest game. More than half of the participants (60 %) revealed strongly that Durian Quest game was enjoyable (Item 1). Participants also strongly agreed that the length of time for playing the Durian Quest game was very suitable (Item 2) with 57.1 % strongly agreed and similar response was obtained for the next item (Item 3) who answered the rules of the game are very clear. 60 % (strongly agree) of the respondents also decided that the use of colours and design in the game are very interesting (Item 4). The contents of the game also matched their subject syllabus (Item 5) which recorded 54.3 % strongly agree and 5.7 % agree. Although the spellings given were based on their syllabus content, most of the respondents strongly agreed that the spellings given are challenging (Item 6) which noted 61.4 % strongly agree and 4.3 % agree. Hence, the Durian Quest game required the use of strategies to win (Item 7) and overcome the obstacles of spellings and traps in the game which there were 58.6 % of the subjects who presented 50 % strongly agree and 8.6 % agree choices. From the findings, more than half of the students shown that the Durian Quest game was interesting in aspects of design, rules, content, and time for the students. The researcher also provided spellings which were seemed to be easy from their English syllabus however the respondents responded that the spellings were tough because of the 3-syllable words were given such as 'cheeseburger', 'chocolate' and more yet managed to spell and countered with strategies through collaboration work in groups during the game sessions which resulted in positive feedbacks from the students based on Table 2 about the modified board game.

Moreover, the data revealed that 78.6 % did not take a long time to understand how to play the board (Item 8) because the rules were clear and simple to be understood with 65.7 % strongly disagree and 12.9 % disagree with the statement. 58.6 % of the respondents also liked interaction among themselves during the Durian Quest game (Item 9) as they were able to discuss and communicate cooperatively as they were active playing and spelling the words given as teammates (Item 10). The Durian Quest game also kept them alert (Item 11) as they enjoyed moving around and tossing the dice during the game (Item 12) which recorded 58.6 % positive responses too. The modified board game also motivated students to learn (Item 13) and use English (Item 14) while playing the Durian Quest game. Both items shown 58.6% responses because the researcher guided and made the spelling acquisition interesting resulted in students' full engagement towards the learning process. 58.6 % of the respondents got to know new spelling (Item 15) as they mentioned in Table 2 that the spellings were challenging, and they learnt to spell in correct manner while enjoying the competitive game. They also responded that they could improve their spelling ability through Durian Quest game (Item 16) which the responses were 57.1 % strongly agree and 1.4 % agree.

Majority of the respondents also agreed that they felt the Durian Quest game was easy to be understood (Item 17) which recorded 58.6 % as the rules were unambiguous and simple to be applied. The respondents felt that Durian Quest game was not difficult to be practiced during the English lessons (Item 18) and they preferred to use board games to learn spellings (Item 19) compared to chalk and talk methods during English lessons which the responses shown were similar in both items as in 58.6 %. This is because the Durian Quest game engaged students' full participation and attention were focused solely on winning the game which lifted their motivation and lesson learning mood rather than sitting in the class and learning

the traditional way. Lastly, the respondents responded 58.6 % with 54.3 % strongly agree and 4.3 % agree that they were interested in using board games such as the Durian Quest game for learning English language spellings in the future (Item 20). It is believed that based on the frequency analysis obtained, it was clearly shown that Durian Quest game had positive impact and influenced students' perceptions in learning spellings in English language.

Discussion

There were several learners' replies and a variation of students' perceptions about Durian Quest board game. Among the crucial findings indicated that almost three quarter of the pupils wanted to learn English spellings using Durian Quest game. Quite a majority felt that they enjoyed the game while learning English spellings as it was interactive and enjoyable even though some believed that it was redundant to learn using the board game as the findings shown. According to Setiawan and Zuana (2018), their findings revealed that students' responses towards their game were positive due to implementation of game elements and graphics which were invlined with their taste. If they were delighted by the game, it will be much simpler for them to think about and comprehend what is presented in the game. Similarly, the modification of the Durian Quest board game such as use of colours and graphics attracted pupils' attention to attempt and learn in a different norm as the elements used were acording to their environmental background. The results can be seen with majority provided positive feedback from Item 1 till Item 5 related to the game elements.

Moreover, with respect towards students' perceptions, the findings also proved that majority of the pupils were optimistic by strongly agreeing that the board game helped them to learn English spellings. They felt that using the board game was the right choice to learn as it was communicating, motivating and provided the need exposure for them to learn second language spellings in unique way. Musa et al (2016); Yaacob, et al (2019) in their findings established that board game did increase students' results which resulted in fun learning enviroment as the variation of marks from their tests after the use of board game. It was proven that the use of board game for teaching have postive outcome from the pupils as it provided encouraging and motivation to learn new languages and its spellings which similar results were also obtained in this study as majority of the pupils responded with positive feedback (strongly agree).

From Table 2, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents have definite opinion towards the Durian Quest board game. Hence, the Durian Quest board game may be an effective teaching aid for a teacher to utilise in teaching English spellings as it has been proven to aid students in enhancing their understanding of spellings learnt during formal lessons. This investigation is notable because it gave teachers and educators with another option for teaching spellings in addition to the standard approach of teaching second language.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has shown the responses from the students of the board game Durian Quest. Largely, the positive retorts showed that the Durian Quest game was well accepted by the respondents. Indeed relevantly, this study showed the integration of board game in learning and the potential that it must be applied and used in the English lessons. It is essential to integrate excitement in learning to gain students' attention and enthusiasm to learn English especially spelling because it is an important aspect in English language learning that relates the four language skills which are reading, writing, speaking, and listening skill. The limitation

of this study is that it was conducted in one setting only. During the limitation, the study was conducted in one school while it can be conducted in other schools as well to provide more accurate findings in terms of effectiveness of using the Durian Quest game to learn English spellings. Hence, it is advisable for other researchers to have wider group of respondents to have accurate results and comprehensive findings if this study was to be replicated.

The following recommendations are given for further research based on the results. The Durian Quest game can be modified its usage according to lessons and different proficiency levels. This research contributes to the ideas to innovate language games according to learners' culture and background for future researchers. The Durian Quest game can be adapted according to the convenience for the special needs learners to support their individual needs and abilities. This game can also be commercialized as teaching aids which can be used by both primary and secondary school teachers in their fun teaching and learning methods. Also, more study should be done to determine the usefulness of this board game in many elements of English teaching and learning. A comparable study can be done, and the results could provide an intriguing perspective to compare with the present study's outcomes.

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