

Exploring Match Plate's Potential in Aiding Pupils' Writing Skills

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Abstract. Teaching of writing skills has become a growing concern for teachers with the implementation of CEFR aligned curriculum in recent years. Lack of relevant materials and resources is one of the contributing factors to this concern. Furthermore, writing skill acquisition could pose a challenge in the primary ESL classroom. Therefore, this study was conducted in a suburban primary school with the aim to discover Match Plate's potential in aiding pupils' writing skills. This research employed action research as the research design, and utilised three data collection methods, namely a pre-test and post-test, questionnaire and observation checklist. A total of ten participants were involved in this study. The findings revealed that there is a positive increment in the post-test results as compared to the pre-test results. Based on the survey questionnaire, most participants showed positive perceptions towards the use of Match Plate. Additionally, the data gathered from the observation checklist showed that participants were able to build sentences using Match Plate. Hence, the findings suggest that Match Plate shows potential to support pupils' mastering of writing skills. Apart from that, pupils' positive learning attitude could be observed throughout the treatment period. Thus, it is highly recommended for teachers to resort to alternative teaching aids for language teaching.

Keywords: Match Plate; potential; writing skill; perceptions; positive learning attitude

1. Introduction

The English language was used as the medium of instruction in primary schools and secondary schools when Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia were ruled by the British from the late eighteenth until mid-twentieth centuries. After independence, Bahasa Malaysia [Malay Language] was decreed as the national language and as the medium of instruction in public schools. Even so, the importance of English is very much evident due to globalisation and the advancement of science and technology. Hence, the English language is institutionalised as an important second language in the Education ordinance.

A great number of local public university graduates were found to be unemployed due to their inability to speak English (Selvaratnam, 2018). Krishnan et al. (2017) noted that most fresh graduates could not comprehend the basic questions asked in interviews. In fact, the interviewees' answers often were misinterpreted by the interviewers due to interviewees' inappropriate choice of words. Thus, realising the importance of English language competency in creating better career pathways for the local graduates, the English Language Standards and Quality Council was established in 2013 to improve the standard of English in the country. A road map for English Language Education Reform in Malaysia spanning 2015 to 2025 was developed. One of the key aims of the plan is to align Malaysia's English Language Education System with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This framework represents the global standard for the teaching and learning of languages. CEFR provides six proficiency levels with detailed descriptions of what foreign or second-language learners should be able to do using four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. CEFR thus provides a frame of reference for English language learning, teaching and assessment. The cascaded training programme was presented in tiers. However, the content delivery mostly happened through mere transmission during the cascaded training due to time constraints, and this left many teachers frustrated. Learning materials such as textbooks and workbooks are CEFR aligned and sourced directly from overseas. This explains the irrelevancy of textbook content considering the students' background.

Consequently, students' learning processes could be hindered as they are dealing with unfamiliar content. A systematic review conducted by Akhtar et al. (2019) revealed that students in English as a Second Language (ESL) often faced challenges such as teaching methods, students' attitude towards English, and poor academic language writing ability in. Similarly, a study conducted by Ngu and Aziz (2019) has revealed a number of challenges faced during CEFR implementation, namely lack of training, non-local based textbooks, inadequate ICT support, and limited teaching and learning resources. Hence, it can be assumed that inappropriate teaching methods and textbook content play a significant role in students' writing ability.

A large number of teachers admitted to having limited knowledge of and exposure to CEFR (Ngu & Aziz, 2019). Having sound content and pedagogical knowledge of the new curriculum is crucial for teachers as it would help them to identify the students' learning needs. Thus far, limited studies have been conducted on the teaching of writing skills in the CEFR-aligned curriculum. Therefore, this study was conducted to shed light on the use of alternative instructional aids in the teaching of writing skills. The study, involving ten participants, was conducted at a semi-urban school in Sarawak. These participants were selected purposely as this study was intended for low proficiency pupils. Match Plate is a teaching-learning aid, designed to suit the CEFR syllabus, and the main focus is sentence construction. The researcher developed this idea as limited relevant exercises exist to be used by the low-proficiency pupils to practise their writing skills.

1.1 Problem Statement

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was started with the establishment of the English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC) in 2013. Learning materials, including textbooks and workbooks, are CEFR aligned and sourced directly from overseas. According to Nawai and Said (2020), teachers expressed their concerns on the insufficient teaching materials and assistance, as well as the inadequate number of textbooks and workbooks distributed. In fact, many teachers had to find materials online or prepare their own materials and share resources with others (Ngu & Aziz, 2019). Nevertheless, pupils are expected to achieve A2 by the time they have completed primary school education; making it crucial for them to achieve A1 upon entering level 2. One of the detailed descriptors for A1 includes “Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases”. These descriptors applied to all the language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, pupils with a limited vocabulary may find it challenging even to produce simple sentences, be it in writing or speaking tasks.

According to Graham and Perin (2007), the ability of children and adults to compile meaningful writings, demands similar fundamental and essential competency. In other words, one’s language competency is reflected through one’s writings. A recent study conducted by Mohamad Uri and Abd Aziz (2018) found that the teachers were able to accept CEFR positively, but they had very limited knowledge and a low level of awareness of the framework. In line with this concern, Aziz et al. (2018) emphasized that training needed to be aligned with the local context so that teachers could find the input provided to be more relevant to them and to their students.

The CEFR six-level global scale was developed with the intent of being open, dynamic, and flexible in order to assist language learners in mapping the CEFR to their assessment and syllabus (Mohamad Uri & Abd Aziz, 2020). With the six detailed descriptors and “can do” statements included in the framework, teachers could easily identify what type of expressions, phrases or sentences are expected to be produced by the pupils regardless of their language skills. Additionally, most of the tasks included in the textbook and activity book provide examples of phrases or sentences with different sentence structures to be used for each task. Yet, this might pose a challenge for the low-proficiency pupils due to their limited vocabulary. In a recent study reported by Miin et al. (2019), pupils showed significant improvement in sentence construction with the implementation of 4-step sentence construction activities. As Match Plate is designed to aid pupils’ writing skill, especially in sentence construction, this study was conducted hoping to provide an alternative teaching tool for teachers to teach writing skills which are appropriate for the CEFR-aligned syllabus.

1.2 Origin of Match Plate

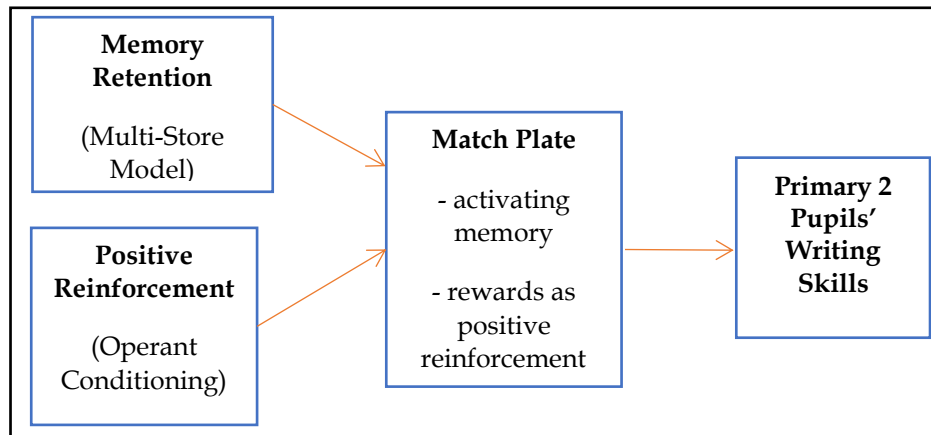


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Research Implementation

As illustrated in Figure 1, the research implementation is founded on two theories, which are memory retention and positive reinforcement. The core idea of Match Plate is mainly based on memory retention, which originated from the Multi-Store Model as proposed by Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968), and positive reinforcement as included in the Operant Conditioning Theory proposed by Skinner (1938). Match Plate consists of five shapes that are arranged in a line. Each shape represents one sentence part that was used to form a sentence. The sentence parts include a noun phrase, verb, preposition, adjective and proper or common noun. Match Plate can be used for pupils to form sentences with a maximum of five sentence parts. Apart from that, this innovation was carefully designed to fit the Year 2 syllabus. This study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. How effective is the Match Plate in aiding pupils' writing skills?
2. What are pupils' perceptions regarding the use of Match Plate in learning writing skills?

1.2.1 Multi-store model by Atkinson and Shiffrin 1968

The Multi-Store model, as proposed by Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968), refers to multiple memory stores which are sensory memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory. The processes involved are attention, rehearsal and retrieval. The first process, called attention, involves transferring information from sensory to short-term memory (STM). When a stimulus is presented, often in the visual system, the stimulus will be registered instantly within the appropriate sensory dimensions. The particular features of visual registration would enable us to identify it as a distinct component of memory (Sperling, 1960). In this research, the Match Plate consists of five different shapes. The shapes used in the Match Plate are registered in the participants' short-term memory as they recognise the differences in each shape. After that, the second process will occur, which concerns the information to be transmitted to the long-term memory (LTM). This process is called rehearsal. Short-term memory can be regarded as the 'working memory'. Information has a tendency to disappear upon entering the short-term memory, however, it requires more time to disappear compared to the time it

takes to disappear from the sensory register. Therefore, there should be ample opportunity for the individual to review the information. In this research, the participants were given sufficient time to construct sentences by matching the different shapes onto the plate, allowing them to retain the information. . Lastly, the third process requires the individual to retrieve the existing information from the long-term memory back into the short-term memory. In this research, the participants gradually memorised the sentence structures by matching the shapes onto the Plate. Therefore, the participants were able to retrieve their knowledge on sentence structures and apply it during the administration of the post-test.

1.2.2 Operant Conditioning by B.F. Skinner

Operant conditioning, as proposed by Skinner (1938), is defined as a process that aims to change specific behaviour by incorporating positive and negative reinforcement. Skinner proposed this theory based on the findings of various experiments that had been conducted (Shrestha, 2017). An example in an educational setting is when a teacher gives rewards to active or well-behaved students. Learning behaviour can be improved by incorporating an appropriate stimulus and reinforcement, as averted by Skinner (1938). Individuals associate particular behaviour and the consequence through operant conditioning. Therefore, the students eventually realised that they would get rewards if they participated actively in activities or behaved properly in the classroom. In this study, the participants' actions of matching the shapes onto the plate is considered as operant behaviour. Meanwhile, the rewards given each time they successfully match the shapes on the plate are considered positive reinforcement.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Writing Skills

Writing gained high social prestige as it plays a vital role not only in communication, but also in education. Even with the advancement of technology, writing still is not regarded as the conventional way of communicating, as one still needs to acquire competency in writing skills to communicate with others through social media. More important, though, is that most professional communication, such as proposals, memos, reports and e-mails, demands competent writing skills. Thus, writing undeniably is an essential skill. Writing is a challenging cognitive activity that demands the learner's control over a variety of circumstances (Nunan, 1989). In Malaysia, English writing skill is regarded as the most challenging skill to be acquired by the students (Jusun & Yunus, 2018). A study conducted by Shah (1999) concluded that the top three factors affecting the students' English language achievements were attitude and motivation, socio-cultural factors and individual differences. On the other hand, undergraduate students who majored in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) in Malaysia stated that they preferred to speak English in English classes, but acknowledged the need for the first language (L1) to complete their tasks quicker (Manty & Shah, 2017). These two studies indicated that students' learning preferences or individual differences are crucial and need to be acknowledged in English language learning.

2.2 Writing Skill in CEFR-Aligned Curriculum

In 2013, Malaysia took a big step to elevate students' English language proficiency through the implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). This universally recognised framework provides a sound basis for language qualifications. Besides, the framework includes six detailed descriptors which are used to assess students' performance in language learning. Basically, language users are classified into three main groups, namely Proficient users (C1 and C2), Independent users (B1 and B2) and Basic users (A1 and A2). The "can do" statements are included for each level to help teachers assess their students' performance in each language skill. Teachers need to refer to the descriptors during the evaluation of their students' performance.

There is a huge difference in writing in a CEFR-aligned curriculum as compared to the previous curriculum known as Primary School Standards-Based Curriculum (KSSR). In KSSR, the content of the textbook was arranged modularly. Each topic contained a few suggested activities or tasks for each language skill: listening, speaking, reading and writing, and also for the teaching of grammar and language arts. For example, the writing tasks or activities included in the textbook portrayed clear directions of how students should progressively improve in their writing throughout the whole syllabus. Besides, teachers only needed to adapt the activities to cater for their students' needs. On the other hand, the content of the CEFR textbook did not provide for local contexts, causing teachers to struggle to adapt the materials. The content mostly entails pictures and is not arranged modularly. Most of the activities included require from students to perform listening and speaking tasks, but not much writing. Furthermore, some of the writing tasks require students to use the sentence structure of a spoken language, such as, "No, it isn't". The sentence structures included in the textbook suggest that grammar is taught covertly. However, this may lead to confusion when it comes to proper sentence construction as pupils are constantly exposed to the use of contractions. Besides, students then find it difficult to differentiate between spoken language and written language.

2.3 Challenges of Teaching Writing Skills in ESL Classroom

Acquisition of writing skills is extremely challenging in ESL classrooms (Jusun & Yunus 2018). Previous studies have shown that Malaysian ESL students are still struggling with the acquisition of writing skills (Ghabool et al., 2012; Maarof & Murat, 2013; Ien et al., 2017). Malaysian ESL students experience problems with writing tasks, especially in language use, grammar and punctuation (Ghabool et al., 2012). According to Misbah et al. (2017), a major obstacle to mastering writing skills is students' lack of vocabulary. Furthermore, students often make mistakes in subject-verb agreement, pronouns, tenses, articles, prepositions and basic sentence structures (Fareed et al., 2016). Hence, it definitely is not an easy task for teachers to teach writing skills due to the many impediments students have to overcome. Some of the challenges encountered by teachers in teaching writing are students' motivation, different proficiency levels and time constraints (Moses & Mohamad, 2019). Most students are not interested in and motivated to learn English writing. According to Dornyei and Ushioda (2010), motivation refers to the effort and desire of an individual to pursue his or her goals. The students need

to have motivation to give their best effort to learning. Hence, teachers need to provide extrinsic motivation to keep them motivated.

According to Mukundan et al. (2005), the teaching of writing skills in Malaysian classrooms has yet to be successful. Having to teach in a mixed-abilities classroom is a common scenario for most teachers. However, many teachers still express their concerns about providing suitable materials during the English writing class. For instance, if the classroom consists of two proficiency levels, such as high proficiency and low proficiency, it would be quite challenging for teachers to give the instructions, as the gap is too big. In some cases, the advanced students may complete the weaker students' tasks instead of making an effort to assist them to complete their work independently.

Another challenge that is often faced by teachers of writing skills, is time constraints (Moses & Mohamad, 2019). Usually, it will take more than one lesson for teachers to teach a new topic, especially when the students require more practising time for them to understand the lesson content. It might lead to a major drawback in the students' motivation and performance if the lessons were to stop halfway, especially when the students are just about to form a new understanding. This scenario is quite common in rural or suburban schools where the English language is seen as less important because the teachers have to spend most of their time on explanations.

2.4 Use of Jigsaw Technique in the Teaching of Writing Skills

The jigsaw teaching method was first discovered by Eliot Aronson in 1970, as cited in Dabell (2019). This cooperative learning technique has resulted in many successes. Jigsaw technique allows students to be assigned different roles, and each student would have to play his or her role well in order to complete the task as they are relying on each other. As none of the roles overlaps, students would eventually try their best to accomplish the task and cooperate with their group members. In this study, the same technique was adapted to the innovation, though the participants were not grouped together. The participants were able to experience taking on different roles despite having to work on the Match Plate by themselves. A study conducted by Bafadal (2015) proved that the Jigsaw technique is effective in teaching descriptive writing. Similarly, a study conducted by Ardila and Ginting (2013) found that the application of Jigsaw technique proved to be effective in improving students' ability in writing narrative texts. Although these studies (Bafadal, 2015; Ardila & Ginting, 2013) revealed that this technique is effective in improving students' paragraph and essay writing, the researcher decided to incorporate Jigsaw techniques into the innovation in teaching sentence construction in order to gain a better understanding of how Jigsaw technique can be used to teach CEFR-aligned writing skills to lower primary ESL students. It is hoped this technique will have a positive outcome by improving the participants' performance regardless of the writing tasks, thus providing new insights on the technique.

2.5 Effective Strategies to Improve Writing in the ESL Classroom

According to Cole and Feng (2015), writing skill acquisition in the ESL classroom context can be improved through the use of technology, pre-taught vocabulary, various teacher influences, and the implementation of positive, diverse literacy practices. In this study, the researchers implemented a variety of techniques, namely journal writing, activating prior knowledge, pre-viewing vocabulary, utilizing graphic organizers, scaffolded instruction, and increased teacher/peer conferencing throughout a year with a group of ESL students (experimental group), whereas another group of students (control group) were taught based on the curriculum only. The data were gathered both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings suggest that the performance of the experimental group improved in comparison to that of the control group, and the students in the experimental group were able to identify their own weaknesses and strengths.

Chandran et al. (2019) conducted a study to assess Form 4 students' writing performance using the Hi-Five Fingers and Snack Bars via social media (Powtoon and Facebook). The researchers implemented a product-based approach during the administration of the pre-test and post-test, and also during the intervention. The intervention was carried out for three months. During the intervention, students were shown a video via Powtoon. After that, the students used Hi-Five Fingers to brainstorm their ideas and Snack Bars as guidance for their essay writing before posting their writings on a Facebook group which had been created earlier for peer and teacher feedback sessions. The findings suggest that both Hi-Five Fingers and Snack Bars had a positive impact on the participants' writing performance. This could be due to their active participation throughout the process, especially during the feedback session. As the feedback session involved not only the teachers but also the students themselves, they were able to provide constructive feedback and exchange new ideas.

2.6 Motivation in the Learning Process

Motivation undeniably is one of the determining factors of second or foreign language learning success (Bradford, 2007; Dörnyei, 1998; Engin, 2009). In language learning, motivation serves as a driving force for learners striving to achieve their goals. There are four major factors that contribute to students' motivation, namely competence, autonomy, interest and relatedness (Bandura [1996], Dweck [2010], Murray [2011], Pintrich [2003], Ryan & Deci [2000], Seifert [2004], as cited in Filgona et al., 2020). At least one of these factors must be present to keep the students motivated. The more motivating factors present, the greater the probability that students' motivation will increase (Filgona et al., 2020).

According to a recent study of Omar et al. (2020), the implementation of motivational strategies relies on teachers' perceived motivation in teaching. This study was conducted in eleven public universities in Malaysia, involving 49 teachers altogether. The findings suggest that the most preferred motivational strategy was **proper teacher behaviour**, while the least preferred motivational strategy was to **promote learner autonomy**. According to Omar et al. (2020), **proper teacher behaviour** is a strategy where teachers are enthusiastic about their teaching, customise lesson plans to accommodate students' needs and provide a safe learning environment. The teachers believed that these actions would

motivate students in their learning, but they also were positive about the inclusion of learner autonomy. In fact, some of the teachers preferred to discuss the topic selections and the learning activities with the students.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

For this study an action research design was employed, as the purpose of the study was to implement the use of Match Plate in the teaching of writing skills among Year 2 pupils. The main reason for employing action research was to gain new insight about and understanding of the use of Match Plate for teaching and learning English writing skills. The study comprised five stages, which began with the identification of educational practices to improve learning, action planning, implementation, data collection, and, lastly, reflection on the action. A pre-test was done before the intervention. After that, the researcher developed a teaching aid, called Match Plate, to be used as a supplementary tool during the teaching and learning of English writing skills. Implementation took place as planned, but with some modifications to the initial plan, as the Recovery Movement Control Order (due to the Covid pandemic) had been extended. The initial plan of including fifteen participants in this study was to no avail as some of the parents still were reluctant to let their children attend school. Therefore, only ten participants were able to be included, and they were given a set of Match Plates to work on by themselves. After that, the researcher evaluated the effectiveness of Match Plate in aiding pupils' writing skills by means of three types of data collection, namely a pre-test and post-test, an observation checklist, and a questionnaire survey. Lastly, the researcher reflected on the research implementation, although there was only one cycle involved in this study. Hence, all improvements and amendments were recorded as recommendations for future study.

3.2 Research Procedure

The Match Plate is an adapted version of the concept of a jigsaw puzzle. A jigsaw puzzle requires the players to fit pieces of different shapes to complete a picture. The same concept was adopted for Match Plate, where the participants have to find the correct shapes and fit them into a mould which is the Plate. The shapes were arranged in a straight line as they represented one complete sentence. There are five shapes altogether, and each shape represents one sentence part. The sentence parts, which are represented in different shapes, are to be used to form a sentence. Unlike the usual jigsaw puzzle game that would require the players to use all the pieces to complete a puzzle, the participants may not use all the shapes in the Match Plate. Hence, Match Plate can be used for pupils to form sentences with a maximum of five sentence parts. A set of pre-tests was administered to the pupils before the intervention was carried out. After that, the researcher introduced Match Plate and demonstrated how to use the innovation to perform a writing task. The researcher carried out the intervention once a week during the writing lesson, which makes up a total of four sessions altogether. During the intervention, the researcher conducted the writing lessons as usual, but the writing tasks assigned to the participants required them to use the Match Plate to accomplish the task. Each student was given a set of Match Plates to work on. The

researcher had invited an expert teacher to observe the participants' performance. This was done to ensure that the data gathered were valid and reliable. During the last session, a set of post-tests was administered to the participants. The researcher decided to assign a fictional name (pseudonym) to all the participants for writing up the study to give anonymity to the participants.

3.3 Data Collection Methods and Data Analysis

In this study three types of data collection methods were employed, namely a pre-test and post-test, an observation checklist and a questionnaire survey. The pre-test was administered to the participants before the research implementation. The pre-test and post-test comprised three sections: Section A, Section B and Section C. Each section consisted of five questions which totalled fifteen questions. Section A consisted of five 'sentence halves' questions; Section B consisted of five 'blanks filling' questions, and Section C consisted of five 'arranging words' questions. Meanwhile, the post-test was administered to gather information on and evaluate the participants' writing skills after the research had been implemented. The post-test was constructed using the same type of questions, but different items were included for each section. This enabled the researcher to evaluate the participants' performance based on the same constructs and yet using valid instruments for the assessment. This allowed the researcher to make meaningful inferences based on the scores (see Messick, 1989; Moss, 1995).

During the implementation, an observation checklist was used to conduct a formative assessment. The items included in the observation checklist were based on a Revised Academic Success Model by York et al. (2015). However, some modifications had been made as this model was designed for assessing college students' performance. Hence, the researcher found it necessary to make some modifications to the existing model in order to suit the research context. With careful consideration, one of the elements in the model, which is career success, was omitted. Therefore, the observation checklist was derived from five elements only. Three items were included for each element. The checklist used 'yes' or 'no' statements to make it easier for the researcher to observe the students' performance. A column for 'written remarks' was included to enable the researcher and expert teacher to jot down any outstanding behaviours or incidents that were not included in the checklist. This checklist was used throughout the implementation period.

Apart from that, the questionnaire was distributed to the participants to gather their perceptions on the use of Match Plate in the lessons. The items in the questionnaire were rated on a 4-point Likert scale. No safe or 'neutral' option was included so that more specific opinions could be gathered from the survey questionnaire. The items included in the questionnaire were aimed at determining the extent to which the participants agreed or disagreed with the statements regarding the use of Match Plate in learning English writing skills. The researcher used descriptive analysis to interpret the data and thematic analysis was used to interpret data gathered via the observation checklist, which served a purpose as triangulation of data.

4. Findings

4.1 Comparison of Results of Pre-Test and Post-Test

Table 2: Comparison of Results of Pre-Test and Post-Test

Pseudonym	Pre-Test (%)	Post-Test (%)	Difference (%)
Mirza	49	68	+ 19
Qhaira	31	48	+ 17
Amanda	46	57	+11
Jessie	45	57	+ 12
Hanan	48	69	+ 21
Alif	43	52	+ 9
Akif	52	74	+ 22
Haikal	52	68	+ 16
Brian	35	57	+ 22
Eric	48	65	+ 17

As illustrated in Table 2, there is a positive increment in the post-test as compared to the pre-test. Based on the table, Alif showed the least improvement in the post-test (9%), whereas Akif and Brian showed the biggest improvement in their post-tests with a definite increase of 22%; Qhaira and Eric improved by 17% in their post-tests. Meanwhile, Amanda showed a positive increment in the post-test with 11%, and Jessie improved by 12% in the post-test. On the other hand, Haikal, Mirza and Hanan improved in the post-test by 16%, 19% and 21%, respectively. This obviously demonstrates that Match Plate did improve the participants' writing abilities. This could be owing to the Match Plate having been used extensively throughout the study. By using Match Plate, the participants were exposed to the sentence structures repeatedly, thus enabling them to memorise the sentence structures.

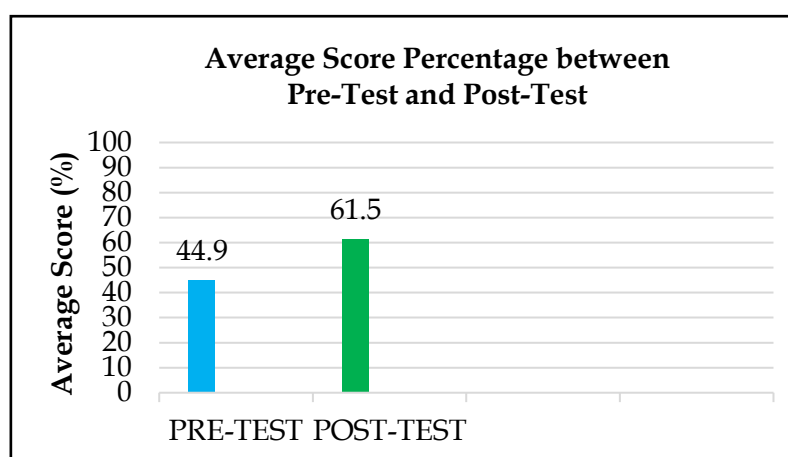


Figure 3: Average Score Percentage between Pre-Test and Post-Test

Figure 3 shows the difference between pre-test and post-test average score percentages. There is a positive increment of 16.6% in the post-test. Therefore,

Match Plate clearly brought positive changes in the participants' writing skills, as shown by post-test results.

4.2 Pupils' Perceptions on Match Plate

Table 4: Pupils' Perceptions of Match Plate

No.	ITEMS	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean Score
1.	I can define each sentence part when asked verbally.	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	6 (60%)	2 (20%)	3.0 (MODERATE)
2.	I can differentiate the sentence parts used in the Match Plate when asked verbally.	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	4 (40%)	4 (40%)	3.2 (HIGH)
3.	I can state the examples for each sentence part in the Match Plate when asked verbally.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	3.4 (HIGH)
4.	I am excited to complete supplementary worksheets using Match Plate.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	3.4 (HIGH)
5.	I enjoy using Match Plate to build sentences individually.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	3.5 (HIGH)
6.	I am motivated to use Match Plate in learning sentence building.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	3.7 (HIGH)
7.	I can give full attention when learning sentence building using Match Plate.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	3.4 (HIGH)
8.	I am not afraid to ask questions when I am facing difficulties in using Match Plate.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	3.7 (HIGH)
9.	I enjoy competing to complete the supplementary worksheet using Match Plate.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (40%)	6 (60%)	3.6 (HIGH)

10.	I am able to match the puzzles with less guidance.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	3.7 (HIGH)
11.	I am able to write the sentences with similar sentence structures in Match Plate correctly.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (40%)	6 (60%)	3.6 (HIGH)
12.	I am able to identify the mistakes in sentences when asked verbally.	0 (0%)	3 (30%)	5 (50%)	2 (20%)	2.9 (MODERATE)
13.	I am able to rearrange words into sentences correctly.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	3.7 (HIGH)
14.	I am able to create simple sentences without the help of Match Plate independently.	0 (0%)	3 (30%)	5 (50%)	2 (20%)	2.9 (MODERATE)
15.	I am getting better in sentence building over time.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (40%)	6 (60%)	3.6 (HIGH)

As illustrated in Table 4, 50% of the respondents with a high mean score of 3.5 strongly agreed that they enjoyed using Match Plate to learn sentence building. As Match Plate was an adapted version of a jigsaw puzzle, the participants found it interesting to use this while learning sentence construction. Besides, most of them had been exposed to the jigsaw puzzle game itself, so it took less time for the participants to identify the assembling mechanism of the jigsaw puzzle adapted into Match Plate. Furthermore, 70% of the respondents with a high mean score of 3.7 strongly agreed that Match Plate motivated them to learn the English language. As low-proficiency students placed such a high value on exam results or performance in comparison to others, they rarely felt successful in their English education, which led them to give up learning English and be hesitant to seek help from teachers (Fukuda, 2019). Thus, motivation is indeed crucial in English language learning, especially to low-proficiency pupils. In this study, Match Plate not only promoted fun learning, but also served as a classroom energiser, especially when students were struggling in English language learning.

Apart from that, 70% of the respondents, with a mean score of 3.7, strongly agreed that they needed less guidance to match the puzzles. This indicates that the participants were able to match the puzzles as they understood the mechanism, helping them to accomplish the tasks. On the other hand, 30% of the participants responded negatively to item number 12, which deals with the identification of mistakes in sentences when they were asked verbally. This implies that three of the respondents still were unable to grasp the concept. On the other hand, 80% of

the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with item number 2, which indicates that they believed they could differentiate the sentence parts used in the Match Plate when asked verbally. This implies that two of the participants still were unable to understand (make meaning of) the function of each constituent part of a sentence, even after having used Match Plate. In sum, most of the participants had positive perspectives on the use of Match Plate, but few of them were unable to attain the learning outcome.

4.3 Observation Checklist

Table 5: Observation Checklist

ELEMENTS	CHECK-LIST ITEMS	RESEARCHER		EXPERT TEACHER		WRITTEN REMARKS
		YES	NO	YES	NO	
Attainment of Learning Outcome	Pupils are able to define each sentence part when asked verbally.	√		√		- few are not convinced with own answers (R) - few are hinting friends to give answers (ET)
	Pupils are able to differentiate the sentence parts used in the Match Plate when asked verbally.	√		√		- few still unable to differentiate (R & ET)
	Pupils are able to state the examples for each sentence part in the Match Plate when asked verbally.	√		√		- most can give examples especially verb, preposition and noun phrase (R)
Satisfaction in Learning	Pupils are excited to complete supplementary worksheet using Match Plate.	√		√		-most pupils portray positive responses while using MP (R & ET)
	Pupils enjoy using Match Plate to build sentences individually.	√		√		- most can work on their own (ET)
	Pupils are motivated to learn sentence building using Match Plate.	√		√		- some even shouted 'yeay' upon hearing MP to be used as the writing task (R)

Persistence in Learning	Pupils concentrated fully when learning sentence building using Match Plate.	√		√		-most pupils were seen giving full attention (R)
	Pupils are not afraid to ask questions when they are facing difficulties in using Match Plate.	√		√		- some even use Malay language to ask questions (R) - few of them choose to ask their friends and some are no longer avoiding eye contact (ET)
	Pupils are competing to complete the supplementary worksheet using Match Plate.	√		√		- most pupils are competing to complete the task the fastest (R & ET)
Acquired Learning Skills	Pupils are able to match the puzzles with less guidance.	√		√		-most pupils were able to match the puzzles independently (R & ET)
	Pupils are able to write the sentences with similar sentence structures in Match Plate correctly.	√		√		Pupils can write the sentences with similar sentence structure faster than before (R & ET)
	Pupils are able to identify the mistakes in sentences when asked verbally.	√		√		- few are not able to identify the mistakes (ET)
Performance/Academic Achievement	Pupils are able to rearrange words into sentences correctly.	√		√		-most pupils can rearrange the sentence parts
	Pupils are able to create simple sentences without the help of Match Plate independently.	√		√		- few still need guidance (R)
	Pupils are getting better in sentence building over time.	√		√		- some pupils have been progressing gradually (R)

As depicted in Table 5, both the researcher and expert teacher noted that the pupils were observed competing with each other to complete the task using Match Plate. Besides, the researcher and the expert teacher also agreed that pupils were

able to provide examples of verb, preposition and noun phrases when they were asked verbally. These remarks indicated that pupils slowly were learning to understand and differentiate each sentence part used in the innovation. The researcher also noted that some pupils used the Malay language to ask questions. This remark was included in the element of persistence in learning. These written remarks indicated that pupils were doing whatever it took to overcome the difficulties while using the innovation to complete the writing activity. Though the pupils were asked to use this innovation individually, it did not stop them from learning as they seemingly were more comfortable seeking their friends' help.

5. Discussion

5.1 The effectiveness of Match Plate in aiding pupils' writing skills

Based on the comparison of average score percentages in the pre-test and post-test results, there is a positive increment with a value of 16.6% in the post-test. This suggests that Match Plate is useful in aiding pupils in mastering writing skills, indicating that pupils' memory retention had gradually improved over time with frequent use of Match Plate. The particular features of visual registration enable humans to identify them as a distinct memory component (Sperling, 1960). In this research, the shapes used in the Match Plate were registered to the participants' short-term memory as they recognised the differences in each shape. Furthermore, the jigsaw technique provided the learners with an opportunity to become responsible, autonomous learners (see Esnawy, 2016). Benson (2001) states that autonomy is essential for effective learning, and learners' capacity to take control over their own learning is reflected through their actions. This means that once learners become autonomous learners, they are gradually developing into more responsible and critical learners. With the use of Match Plate, pupils are taking responsibility for their own learning, for they have to match the correct pieces in order to form the sentences correctly. Besides, they will be able to identify their own mistakes and learn from them.

5.2 Pupils' perceptions regarding the use of Match Plate in learning writing skills

As depicted in Table 4, the research participants had positive views on the use of Match Plate in general. The questionnaire's most notable finding was that 50% of the respondents strongly agreed that they enjoyed using Match Plate to perform the writing tasks. This suggests that Match Plate promotes fun learning. Meanwhile, 70% of the participants strongly agreed that they felt motivated to learn sentence building with Match Plate. Dornyei (1994) states that a motivational construct involves both instrumental and integrative motivation. In this study, the participants were given rewards each time they had completed a writing task correctly. The rewards acted as the stimulus or instrumental motivation for the participants to accomplish the task well in future. As asserted by O'Connor and McCartney (2007), the rewards which are offered as pleasant stimulus would make students feel interested in their immediate task and motivated to maintain their behaviour. Apart from that, 60% of the participants strongly agreed that this innovation allowed them to compete healthily with their friends. Verhoeff (1997) claims that healthy, diverse competition has much to offer

in education. In this study, the participants could be seen competing with each other to match the sentence parts. The competition encourages pupils to challenge their innate drive for competence as well as to engage in self-evaluation to discover their intellectual and talent potential, as affirmed by Rogers (1959). This process is important as it requires the pupils to build self-confidence and self-awareness.

5.3 Triangulation of Data

The researcher used an observation checklist to triangulate the data gathered from the tests and questionnaire. One of the written remarks that stood out most on the observation checklist is that "some pupils are no longer avoiding eye contact". This remark was written by the expert teacher under item number 8, which is, "Pupils are not afraid to ask questions when they are facing difficulties in using Match Plate". This item appears under the element of persistence in learning, and indicates that some of the pupils used to avoid eye contact, and they might have been reluctant to seek help before, even though they were facing difficulties with a task. The phrase, "no longer" here indicates that the pupils were not avoiding eye contact anymore, thus, it may be assumed that they had developed self-confidence over time. On the other hand, 20% of the respondents disagreed with questionnaire item number 2, which refers to the ability to differentiate the sentence parts, categorised under "attainment of learning"; 30% of the respondents also disagreed with item number 14, which states, "I am able to create simple sentences without the help of Match Plate independently". This item was included under "performance/academic achievement". These data correlated with the written remarks in the observation checklist, which state, "few still unable to differentiate and few still need guidance" (see items 2 and 14 respectively). Therefore, these similarities in the findings imply congruence in the results of the different data collection strategies, signifying that most of the participants had positive opinions on the use of Match Plate, but few still were unable to attain the learning outcome.

6. Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate the potential of Match Plate in aiding pupils' efforts to master writing skills. The findings proved that Match Plate showed great potential in helping pupils to learn sentence building. Generally, pupils developed a positive learning attitude due to Match Plate, though a few of the participants still were unable to differentiate the sentence parts and write sentences independently. Hence, this study has shed light on the use of alternative teaching aids in the teaching of writing skills. Note that no particular strategy for teaching writing skills is prescribed, and it is crucial to acknowledge pupils' diverse backgrounds and learning needs when teaching English as a second language. The teaching aids used should cater for pupils' learning needs, be appropriate in their contexts, and never settle for monotonous lessons, no matter how challenging the teaching and learning process might be.

A few limitations in this study must be acknowledged. The main limitation was the small sampling size, ensuing in the realisation that generalisations could not be made. Another shortcoming in the study was the testing. Tests (pre-test and post-test) were administered before and after the intervention. Therefore, it is

possible that the participants showed improvements in the post-test due to similar items used in the pre-test, indicating their improvements may not be due solely to the innovation. A few modifications are recommended for future studies in this field, namely to include an erasable sheet for each shape to allow free-writing sessions. The researcher also may consider integrating different language skills. This would give a new direction to the study and enable the researcher to gather richer data.

7. References

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Appendix 1: Pre-Test

Section A: Sentence Halves

Match the sentences below.

She
Maria
I'm
The boys
My brothers

are singing.
hungry.
doesn't like cats.
likes to sing.
don't eat oranges.

Section B: Blanks Filling

Fill in the blanks using correct answers.

like	is	Eisha and Elisya	are	Aimin
------	----	------------------	-----	-------

1. _____ goes to school.
2. Haikal and his friends _____ swimming.
3. Mother _____ jogging at the park.
4. I _____ apples.
5. _____ dance in the room.

*Section C: Rearrange Words*Arrange the words and write the answers.

sing	my sister	to	likes
------	-----------	----	-------

1. _____

I	don't	orange juice	like
---	-------	--------------	------

2. _____

they	swim	on Wednesday
------	------	--------------

3. _____

Iqwan	an apple	eats
-------	----------	------

4. _____

buy	Husna and Inara	a storybook
-----	-----------------	-------------

5. _____

Appendix 2: Post-Test

Section A: Sentence Halves

Match the sentences below.

My sister
The girls
Inara
I
Hariz and Aryan

like to bake cookies.
am fishing.
is reading a storybook.
likes to play with her cats.
are skipping.

Section B: Blanks Filling

Fill in the blanks using correct answers.

don't	is	They	John	sleeps
-------	----	------	------	--------

1. Khalis _____ drawing.
2. She _____ on the floor.
3. The boys _____ like to eat chicken rice.
4. _____ are baking in the kitchen.
5. _____ is running from a dog.

Section C: Rearrange Words

Arrange the words and write the answers.

sandwiches	he	making	is
------------	----	--------	----

1.

pizza	eating	i'm	in	the kitchen
-------	--------	-----	----	-------------

2.

the ball	they	kick
----------	------	------

3.

in	the boys	dive	the river
----	----------	------	-----------

4.

the floor	Aniq and Khalis	sweep
-----------	-----------------	-------

5.

Appendix 3: Questionnaire

No.	ITEMS	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	I can define each sentence part when asked verbally.				
2.	I can differentiate the sentence parts used in the Match Plate when asked verbally.				
3.	I can state the examples for each sentence part in the Match Plate when asked verbally.				
4.	I am excited to complete supplementary worksheet using Match Plate.				
5.	I enjoy using Match Plate to build sentences individually.				
6.	I am motivated to use Match Plate in learning sentence building.				
7.	I can give full concentration when learning sentence building using Match Plate.				
8.	I am not afraid to ask questions when they are facing difficulties in using Match Plate.				
9.	I am competing to complete the supplementary worksheet using Match Plate.				
10.	I am able to match the puzzles with less guidance.				
11.	I am able to write the sentences with similar sentence structures in Match Plate correctly.				
12.	I am able to identify the mistakes in sentences when asked verbally.				
13.	I am able to rearrange words into sentences correctly.				

14.	I am able to create simple sentences without the help of Match Plate independently.				
15.	I am getting better in sentence building over time.				

Appendix 4: Observation Checklist

ELEMENTS	CHECKLIST ITEMS	RESEARCHER		EXPERT TEACHER		WRITTEN REMARKS
		YES	NO	YES	NO	
Attainment of Learning Outcome	Pupils are able to define each sentence part when asked verbally.					
	Pupils are able to differentiate the sentence parts used in the Match Plate when asked verbally.					
	Pupils are able to state the examples for each sentence part in the Match Plate when asked verbally.					
Satisfaction in Learning	Pupils are excited to complete supplementary worksheet using Match Plate.					
	Pupils enjoy using Match Plate to build sentences individually.					
	Pupils are motivated to learn sentence building using Match Plate.					
	Pupils are fully concentrated when learning sentence building using Match Plate.					

Persistence in Learning	Pupils are not afraid to ask questions when they are facing difficulties in using Match Plate.					
	Pupils are competing to complete the supplementary worksheet using Match Plate.					
Acquired Learning Skills	Pupils are able to match the puzzles with less guidance.					
	Pupils are able to write the sentences with similar sentence structures in Match Plate correctly.					
	Pupils are able to identify the mistakes in sentences when asked verbally.					
Performance / Academic Achievement	Pupils are able to rearrange words into sentences correctly.					
	Pupils are able to create simple sentences without the help of Match Plate independently.					
	Pupils are getting better in sentence building over time.					