

# Using Hot Seat Game to Improve Pupils' English Vocabulary Mastery

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## Abstract

Malaysian pupils generally have been introduced to English language since pre-school level. However, the pupils still have a problem of lack of English vocabulary which hinders them from being proficient in the language. Teachers need to try different teaching strategies that can enrich pupils' English vocabulary. Thus, the research's objective was to determine whether teaching vocabulary by using hot seat game can improve the pupils' vocabulary mastery. This action research involved 26 Year 3 pupils in a rural area primary school in Pahang. Data for this study was collected quantitative and qualitatively through vocabulary pre and post-tests, observation and semi-structured interviews. The mean of the pupils' score in Cycle 1 was 65.8 in the pre-test and went up to 77.1 in the post-test. During Cycle 2, the mean of the pupils' score was 75.2 in the pre-test and increased to 81.2 in the post-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that hot seat game was able to improve English vocabulary mastery of the Year 3 pupils after only two months of implementation. For further researches, a longer research's duration and more frequent use of hot seat game are advised as it might shows a better result in pupils' English vocabulary mastery.

**Keywords:** Hot Seat Game, Vocabulary, English Vocabulary Mastery, Teaching Vocabulary, Primary School Pupils

## Introduction

English is considered as the second language in Malaysia following Malay Language as the first language. This language is introduced to Malaysian children since preschool, when they are at 5 or 6 years old. It is then being taught at the primary and secondary school, as well as post-secondary and tertiary levels of education. Therefore, we can say that a Malaysian who receives formal education from preschool to tertiary levels basically undergo at least 14 years of English language education.

Even though English is a compulsory subject at Malaysia's primary and secondary schools, it is not compulsory for the students to pass the subject. This might be the reason why there are many students who did not excel in the subject. It was reported in 2013 that less than 50% of the students who had completed primary education for six years were literate in the English language (EPU 2016, pp. 10-2). It is such a waste that the time spent for

learning English failed to equip the children with at least the basis of it. This problem does not stop at primary schools' level but becoming more serious in the current years. This is with regards to graduate unemployment, where low English proficiency level or poor command of English is cited as the second reason for employer to not hiring them (Employer: Fresh Graduates Unrealistic Expectation, 2015).

It is afraid that if this problem on English proficiency level is not being given enough attention to, no solution will prevail to solve it. The longer the time taken to address and solve the issue, the more students will finish their studies without being excel or proficient in English language. This is such a loss to our country too as despite the English language status as the second language in Malaysia and the early exposure tried to be provided to the students, Malaysians in general are still incompetent in the language.

Even though the pupils have been taught English language since pre-school, the pupils are still having a problem of lack or vocabulary. Pupils with such problems can be seen in every class including Year 6 pupils whom are already in their last year in primary school but still did not understand many words in English language. Certain pupils did not even know simple English words that are frequently used such as eat, go, play and talk. Apart from that, the pupils also have problems in communicating in English language as well as responding to teacher's instructions and questions due to their lack of vocabulary. Therefore, the pupils were passive in classroom. They tend to avoid sharing ideas or giving opinions if the teacher asks them to speak in English. In addition, there are also pupils who have problems in spelling and pronunciation of English words. This might be due to the lack of practice in using English words and less frequency of recalling previously learnt vocabulary in the next lessons.

There are many internal and external factors that can lead to the pupils' lack of English vocabulary. The internal factors are like the pupils' IQ, motivation, interest and talent (Shabrina, 2018). The external factors on the other side are like the learning environment, teachers, friends, facilities, and media (Shabrina, 2018).

In learning vocabulary, the pupils often have problems in recalling the words they have learnt before when they need to use the words. In order to make pupils remember the words, the words need to be use repeatedly, not only once during the first lesson. The teacher plays an important role in recycling the vocabulary during English lessons. One of the way the teacher can use is by implementing the hot seat activity. The hot seat activity is known as a medium for pupils to recycle their vocabulary during the teaching and learning process.

Based on that, this action research is conducted to determine whether teaching vocabulary by using hot seat game can improve pupils' vocabulary mastery. Besides that, this research also aims to study the pupils' perceptions on the implementation of hot seat game during the English lessons.

## Literature Review

Vocabulary is a core element the pupils need to master in order to communicate and be proficient in English language. It is an essential aspect of the language that cannot be left out. Thus, many researches have been done in relation to vocabulary in English language. Many researchers try to find the best technique, strategy or method possible to enrich the students' vocabulary to help them become more proficient in the language. Some of the related researches are as follows.

Eka (2013) said that there are many words the young learners need to understand and memorized. In order to help them, the teachers need to be creative in their lessons.

Interactive and communicative learning activities in classroom can encourage the children to learn English language better.

Sanusi (2009) in his research suggested that there are certain techniques in teaching vocabulary that are considered effective for the students. There are visual technique, verbal technique and the use of vocabulary. However, the use of these techniques also needs to consider the teachers' competency, the students' ability and also the allocation of time.

Wika (2016) in her research found that there is an effectiveness of hot seat game towards students' vocabulary mastery and translation skill compared to Grammar Translation Method. Hot seat game is an interesting learning technique that are able to make the class environment livelier and more conducive.

Astia (2015) thought that the role of teacher is important in managing the materials to teach English vocabulary to the students. She emphasized that teachers need to be creative in choosing the methods to teach vocabulary in their classrooms. Hot seat game is one example of a method that can be used to enhance students' vocabulary mastery not only in junior high schools but also in college.

From the findings of these previous researches, hot seat game is suggested as a game suitable to be implemented in the classroom to help students to improve their English vocabulary mastery. This is due to the reason that the game provides opportunity to the students to participate actively during English lessons. However, previous researches usually involved students in secondary or tertiary level of education. There has not much significant study conducted for primary school context on the use hot seat to improve pupils' vocabulary mastery.

## **Methodology**

The research design for this study is action research. Carr and Kemmis (1986: 162), regard it as a form of 'self-reflective enquiry' by participants, which is undertaken in order to improve understanding of their practices in context with a view to maximizing social justice.

For this study, quantitative and qualitative data are collected from the vocabulary pre and post-test, observations, and semi-structured interview.

In this study, the research was conducted in one of the rural primary schools located in Bandar Jengka, Pahang. The participants of this research are 26 Year 3 pupils in the school where they are all in the same mixed ability classroom. There are 15 boys and 11 girls in the class. The names of the participants will not be revealed in this research thus the researcher used coding B1 to B15 to represents the male pupils (B = boys) and G1 to G11 to represents the female pupils (G = girls). They have medium and low socio-economic status background which explains their lack of exposure to English language at home.

The vocabulary pre and post-tests for this study consists of ten multiple-choice questions (MCQ) and ten subjective questions which are divided into four sections. Section A is a four-questions section. Each question in this section is based on a picture. Section B consists of six questions where all the questions are based on one picture. Section A and B are both MCQ questions with four choices of answers. Section C comes with five matching questions. The pupils need to match the pictures to the correct words. Section D are on unscramble the letters to form the correct word based on the picture given.

**Findings****Research Question**

- 1) Is the use of hot seat game able to improve pupils' vocabulary in English language?

Table 1

*The Result of Pupils' Score In Pre and Post Test Cycle 1 and Cycle 2*

No.	Initial of Pupils' Name	Cycle 1				Cycle 2			
		Pre-Test	Outcome (>75)	Post-Test	Outcome (>75)	Pre-Test	Outcome (>75)	Post-Test	Outcome (>75)
1	B1	80	Passed	95	Passed	95	Passed	100	Passed
2	B2	95	Passed	100	Passed	85	Passed	100	Passed
3	B3	25	Failed	30	Failed	55	Failed	80	Passed
4	B4	20	Failed	25	Failed	50	Failed	75	Passed
5	B5	55	Failed	75	Passed	75	Passed	80	Passed
6	B6	35	Failed	40	Failed	30	Failed	35	Failed
7	B7	60	Failed	80	Passed	70	Failed	75	Passed
8	B8	70	Failed	85	Passed	95	Passed	100	Passed
9	B9	90	Passed	95	Passed	85	Passed	95	Passed
10	B10	85	Passed	100	Passed	95	Passed	95	Passed
11	B11	95	Passed	100	Passed	100	Passed	100	Passed
12	B12	15	Failed	35	Failed	40	Failed	40	Failed
13	B13	90	Passed	95	Passed	90	Passed	100	Passed
14	B14	80	Passed	85	Passed	50	Failed	70	Failed
15	B15	95	Passed	100	Passed	95	Passed	90	Passed
16	G1	45	Failed	60	Failed	40	Failed	70	Failed
17	G2	80	Passed	85	Passed	75	Passed	80	Passed
18	G3	100	Passed	100	Passed	100	Passed	95	Passed
19	G4	85	Passed	80	Passed	85	Passed	100	Passed

20	G5	65	Failed	95	Passed	85	Passed	100	Passed
21	G6	30	Failed	50	Failed	60	Failed	80	Passed
22	G7	70	Failed	70	Failed	65	Failed	85	Passed
23	G8	65	Failed	75	Passed	70	Failed	85	Passed
24	G9	85	Passed	100	Passed	80	Passed	85	Passed
25	G10	70	Failed	95	Passed	65	Failed	100	Passed
26	G11	25	Failed	55	Failed	30	Failed	60	Failed
Total		$\sum x = 1710$ $X = 65.8$		$\sum x = 2005$ $X = 77.1$		$\sum x = 1865$ $X = 71.7$		$\sum x = 2175$ $X = 83.6$	

From the analysis above, the pupils' ability in mastering vocabulary has slightly improved in post-test Cycle 1 compared to the pre-test. The mean of the pupils' score was 65.8 in the pre-test and went up to 77.1 in the post-test. 18 pupils or 69.2% of the whole class passed while only 8 pupils' or 30.8% of the pupils got the score fewer than 75. Thus, it can be concluded that there is an improvement in the pupils' ability in mastering vocabulary in post-test compared to the pre-test in this Cycle 1 after the pupils have been introduced with hot seat game during the first and last lessons of the unit. After the pre-test was conducted, the teacher introduced new vocabulary of the topic by using flashcards and later on recalling the vocabulary by using hot seat game at the end of the lesson. During the last lesson of the unit, the teacher again conducted the hot seat game to recall learnt vocabulary with the pupils before starting the post vocabulary test at the end of the lesson. By conducting hot seat game a few times as a tool to recall previously learnt vocabulary, the number of pupils who passed the test had increased from 12 pupils in the pre-test to 18 pupils during the post-test. This is supported by the data from the interview session where all three pupils (B1, B5 and G1) agreed that hot seat game has helped them to remember at least one new English word.

After the end of Cycle 1, the researcher found that two pupils who failed the post-test are the same pupils who did not participated actively in the hot seat game conducted during the teaching and learning process. The pupils are B4 and B6 and they were being caught doing other things like chit-chatting with a friend and being passive during the game as observed by the teacher through the video and photos from the lesson. The pupils complained that they did not get the chance to participate because everyone in the group is all talking at the same time while explaining the word to the representative on the hot seat. Thus, they just sit at the back and doing nothing to help the group to avoid the chaos. Due to this discovery, the researcher wants to continue to the second cycle to fix the problem in implementing the hot seat game even though the result of Cycle 1 already shows positive sign that the game is able to help pupils in improving their vocabulary mastery.

For Cycle 2, one new rule is introduced where the group members need to stand in line and take turns to explain the word to the pupil on the hot seat. If they cannot explain, then they can say 'pass' and go the back of the line again while the next person in line try to describe the word to the member on the hot seat. This change of rule has affected the game in a way that the flow of the game became more organised and systematic. At the same time,

pupils feel that they have equal opportunities to take part in the game unlike before where the game is being dominated by certain pupils only.

From Table 1 above, the pupils' ability in mastering vocabulary has also improved during Cycle 2. The mean of the pupils' score was 75.2 in the pre-test and went up to 81.2 in the post-test. 21 pupils or 80.8% of the whole class passed while only 5 pupils or 19.2% of the pupils got a score lower than 75 marks. Thus, it can be concluded that there is an improvement in the pupils' ability in mastering vocabulary in post-test compared to the pre-test in this Cycle 2 after the pupils have been introduced with hot seat game during the first and last lessons of the Unit 6 : Food. After the pre-test was conducted, the teacher introduced new vocabulary of the topic by using flashcards and later on recalling the vocabulary by using hot seat game at the end of the lesson. During the last lesson of the unit, the teacher again conducted the hot seat game to recall learnt vocabulary with the pupils before starting the post vocabulary test at the end of the lesson. By conducting hot seat game a few times as a tool to recall previously learnt vocabulary, the number of pupils who passed the test had increased from 18 pupils in the pre-test to 21 pupils during the post-test. This is supported by the data from the observation checklist during the last lesson in Cycle 2 where it can be seen that the pupils pay attention to the teacher, participated actively in the lesson and able to explain the word during the hot seat game verbally and with gestures. The pupils are also able to pronounce English words correctly during the game. Such behaviour shows that the pupils are becoming more familiar in using English language and at the same time their understanding of English words has also improved.

2) Does using hot seat game helps to improve English communication of young learners?

Table 2

*The Observation Sheet of Pupils' Activity in Cycle 1 (Meeting 1-2)*

No.	Activity	Meeting of		Average	Description
		Cycle I			
		1	2		
1	The pupils come to class on time.	4	4	4	Very Good
2	The pupils pay attention while the teacher is speaking or giving explanation.	3	4	3.5	Good
3	The pupils are active during the lesson.	3	4	3.5	Good
4	The pupils ask question to the teacher if there is something unclear.	2	3	2.5	Moderate
5	The pupils can follow the rules of hotseat game.	2	3	2.5	Moderate
6	The pupils can explain the words verbally or using gestures.	2	3	2.5	Moderate
7	The pupils can work in groups.	3	4	3.5	Good
8	The pupils can pronounce the words correctly.	2	3	2.5	Moderate
<b>Total of average</b>		24.5			

Note: 1 = Poor 2 = Enough 3 = Good 4 = Very Good

Table 3

*The Observation Sheet of Pupils' Activity in Cycle 2 (Meeting 1-2)*

No.	Activity	Meeting of		Average	Description
		Cycle I			
		1	2		
1	The pupils come to class on time.	4	4	4	Very Good
2	The pupils pay attention while the teacher is speaking or giving explanation.	4	4	4	Good
3	The pupils are active during the lesson.	3	4	3.5	Good
4	The pupils ask question to the teacher if there is something unclear.	3	4	3.5	Good
5	The pupils can follow the rules of hotseat game.	3	4	3.5	Good
6	The pupils can explain the words verbally or using gestures.	3	4	3.5	Good
7	The pupils can work in groups.	4	4	4	Very Good
8	The pupils can pronounce the words correctly.	3	4	3.5	Good
<b>Total of average</b>		29.5			

Note: 1 = Poor

2 = Moderate 3 = Good 4 = Very Good

Based on Table 2 and Table 3 above, we can see that for item number 6 (the pupils can explain the words verbally or using gestures) the result from Cycle 2 is 3.5 which has increased by 1.0 from 2.5 during Cycle 1. This indicate an improvement in pupils' communication using English language as compared to how they were previously. Through four series of hot seat game conducted, the pupils were seen to put their effort in describing the word to their friend sitting in the hot seat in order to win the game. As the game is a competition between two groups, it has motivated them to step out of their comfort zone and use English language as well as gestures to make their friend understand they word that should be guessed. For item no 8 (the pupils can pronounce the words correctly), there was also an improvement from 2.5 in Cycle 1 and 3.5. This is a good sign that the pupils' English vocabulary mastery has improved in terms of pronunciation. After the first time the teacher implemented the hot seat game during English lessons, the pupils were seen to give more attention to the teacher in classroom. This is recorded at item number 2 (the pupils pay attention while the teacher is



speaking or giving explanation). They might pay more attention to vocabulary taught by the teacher in order to do well in the hot seat game. This explains how they can pronounce the words correctly as they gave their full attention towards the lesson. This shows that the pupils' interest towards the language can be enhanced if the teacher tries using an interesting strategy during the teaching and learning process.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In Cycle 1, the mean score of pupils in the pre-test is 65.8. Meanwhile, the class percentage which exceeded the passing score of 75 is 46.2%. It means that there are only 12 pupils who passed the test and there are 14 pupils who did not achieve the target. Furthermore, the mean score in post-test Cycle 1 is 77.1. This shows that there are some improvements of the mean score from the pre-test, that is 11.3 (77.1 – 65.8). Meanwhile, the percentage of pupils who passed the post-test is 69.2%. this is equivalent to 18 pupils who pass the test while there are 8 pupils whose score is still below the passing score.

In Cycle 2, the mean score of pupils in the pre-test is 71.7. Meanwhile, the class percentage which exceeded the passing score of 75 is 53.8%. It means that there are 14 pupils who passed the test and there are 12 pupils who did not achieve the target. Furthermore, the mean score in post-test Cycle 1 is 83.6. this shows that there are some improvements of the mean score from the pre-test, that is 11.9 (83.6 – 71.7). Meanwhile, the percentage of pupils who passed the post-test is 80.8%. this is equivalent to 21 pupils who pass the test while there are 5 pupils whose score is still below the passing score.

Based on the result of the pre-test and post-test of both cycles, it shows that the process of teaching and learning vocabulary using hot seat strategy is effective in increasing the Year 3 pupils' vocabulary mastery.

The teacher's effort to use hot seat game during English lessons are seen to be able to attract pupils' attention during the teaching and learning process. The pupils are able to work together in a fun way while learning English and at the same time compete with the other group in a healthy way. This group game encourages them to put extra effort in describing and guessing the words so that their group will become the winner.

Based on the findings and discussions presented, it can be concluded that the pupils' ability in mastering English vocabulary has improved after the implementation of Hot Seat Game during English lessons. This is indicated by the increase in the mean of the pupils' score and also in the significant improvement in the percentage of pupils who passed the post-tests compared to the pre-tests of both cycles. Pupils' communication in English language also shows an improvement as hot seat game has served as a platform for them to use the language and at the same time allows them to understand new English vocabulary better.

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