

# Effectiveness of Bingo Game in An ESL Context: A Qualitative Study on ESL Learners' Vocabulary Acquisition

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## Abstract

Studies on English as a second language indicate that games can be used to enforce rules or provide instructional variants that allow students to learn in a more relaxed environment. Younger students as well as those just starting their education still require encouragement. Word games are thought to have the benefit of setting up a relaxed environment that aids in students' attention being focused on the work at hand. Even when they play, students use their language skills without realizing it. One of the games that are widely suggested for teaching young learners is Bingo. Bingo, a game-based educational tool, has significantly caught the interest of educational scholars and stakeholders, as this application has demonstrated beneficial learning outputs in a non-stressful setting. Hence, this research was conducted to explore the effectiveness of Bingo in improving young ESL learners' vocabulary acquisition. This qualitative research gathered data from a sample of 20 ESL primary students by conducting pre and post-test, observation and interview sessions which were then analyzed and discussed descriptively. The findings revealed that positive responses from the students have reflected their positive perception and acceptance towards the game which directly exhibits the effectiveness of using Bingo Game in ESL classrooms. Thus, it can be concluded that Bingo Game can help in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among primary ESL pupils.

**Keywords:** Word Games, Bingo, Effectiveness, Vocabulary Acquisition, ESL Learners

## Introduction

Humans utilize language as a means of communication to engage with one another. It is a vital instrument for communication in human life, allowing ideas to be expressed through words or symbols. Humans harness a variety of languages in daily life, and English is one of them as it is an international language that people all over the world study and use. Following this, English as a foreign language (EFL) is taught formally in Malaysian schools from Year 1 to Year 6, equivalent to Grades 1 through 6 in the US school system and spans the ages of 7 to 12 (Sidek, 2018). As a result, the government understood the value of English education as a

tool for national growth and worldwide communication. Therefore, the country's resolve to significantly raise our students' English language competency is demonstrated by the education ministry's release of English Language Education Reform in Malaysia: The Roadmap 2015–2025 (Don & Abdullah, 2019). This was done to motivate students to reach the required competency levels in English.

Vocabulary, according to González-Fernández and Schmitt (2017), is the set of terms and expressions that a person uses when conversing in a particular language. Acquiring proficiency in English vocabulary is essential for learning the language. Jalalzai, Kanwal, and Ashraf (2023) expressed that people with a strong vocabulary are better able to understand the details that are inherent in both written and spoken language, as well as to express their ideas and thoughts clearly and efficiently. The lack of a proportionate English vocabulary will make it extremely difficult for the students to use the language both orally and in writing. Amanda et al (2023) supported this by stating that without a proportionate English vocabulary, students will struggle to use the language and also emphasized that to communicate, grammar is not enough, particularly in the beginning, when kids are eager to pick up simple vocabulary. Hence, one can say that vocabulary is essential for communication and it is impossible to overstate the value of vocabulary when studying English as a second language. Many individuals throughout the world are aware of how crucial it is to understand terminology. Vocabulary mastery is crucial since it is one of the language components that affects all language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Ermawati & Trianasari, 2019). This explains the importance of vocabulary learning among pupils, especially the younger ones.

Teaching young students is extremely different from teaching teens or adults since they get distracted easily (Bakhsh, 2016). He also emphasized that since kids enjoy playing and having fun, teachers should select appropriate teaching strategies that fit with kids' personalities. Alavi & Gilakjani (2019) stated that both teachers and students face significant challenges when it comes to teaching and learning vocabulary, and teachers often overlook this aspect of the curriculum. It is vital to take into account that a sufficient vocabulary is essential for learning a second language, as a limited vocabulary might hinder communication. Educators must become efficient in developing a fun environment for the teaching and learning process and they need to figure out how to keep pupils interested in learning English. This is because young students require both outside incentives and a supportive atmosphere to learn (Wahyuni & Kyafei, 2016). Using educational games in the classroom is one method of helping students retain new terminology (Alavi & Gilakjani, 2019). Out of various educational games, Bingo is the recommended game that is intended to teach young learners whereby this is an engaging and challenging game. Bingo is an enjoyable game and can be played easily which can be applied to teach contextual vocabulary to pupils of all age groups. According to Khotimah(n.d), Bingo is one of the games that offers activities that assist kids in using the target words in class. Hence, this study explores the implementation of the Bingo game in ESL classrooms for young pupils to learn vocabulary.

Concerning the content, based on the observation, the researcher identified some issues in the process of teaching and learning vocabulary, especially among young ESL learners, specifically Year Two pupils. The indicators were the students' incapacity to learn and grasp new and unfamiliar vocabulary, which was followed by their lack of focus and involvement in class during English classes. Considering the difficulties students have in learning vocabulary, the researcher suggests using the Bingo Game as a teaching method to help students learn

vocabulary in a fun and relaxed environment. The objectives for the study that was set by the researcher include :

1. To identify the effectiveness of the Bingo Game in teaching vocabulary to Year Two pupils.
2. To see how Bingo Game helps in improving Year Two pupils' vocabulary knowledge.

Ultimately, the result of this study can be expected to contribute some significant progress in terms of teaching and learning vocabulary, especially among young ESL pupils. This study can further enhance the pupils' motivation and engagement in learning vocabulary effectively.

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

The method employed in this study is classroom action research. Through the process of "action research," educators carefully and methodically apply research tools to analyze their practices (Khasinah, 2013). This research method focuses on implementing a concept into practice to change or improve anything, attempting to impact the circumstance. As the study is mainly based on improving vocabulary learning among young pupils, hence, it is best conducted by implementing action research. This study used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather insightful data. The researcher tries to improve young pupils', specifically the Year two, vocabulary mastery by implementing the Bingo game in lessons.

This research used the model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart in Burns (1999:32). This classroom action research was conducted in four fundamental steps which were planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. In the first step, planning, the researcher examined the students' problems and determined the best technique. The lesson plan and media were then organized in the last step. The intervention was carried out by the researcher after the arrangement of the lesson plan. The activities, instruction, and learning processes are completed before the pupils take the test. While the teaching and learning process happens, the researcher also observes students' condition in the classroom. This was done to make sure that the teaching and learning process goes based on the plan arranged and to know the students' activeness in the classroom. On the next day, a post-test was given to the students. This post-test is done to know the results obtained after the implementation. After the test was given, the researcher did a reflection. This step is done to know the result of the research, why the result was obtained, and decide what should be done next, and whether the next cycle needs to be done or not.

### **Research Participants**

The subject of this research is the Year Two pupils from an urban Tamil school located in Pahang, Malaysia. Based on the focus of this research, the researcher chose pupils who have low language proficiency and interest in English. Hence, twenty pupils were the purposive sampling participants. According to Crossman (2020), a purposive sample is a non-probability sample chosen in accordance with the study's goal and the population's characteristics. The pupils who participated in the research were ten boys and ten girls.

Thus, the characteristics of the population are the low proficiency pupils which is per the objective of this study. Figure 1 displays the twenty participants along with their English proficiency level and their English Test results.

	Participant	Proficiency	Spelling Test Result (15 words)
1	A	A1	2
2	B	A1	3
3	C	A1	3
4	D	A1	3
5	E	A1	4
6	F	A1	3
7	G	A1	2
8	H	A1	3
9	I	A1	4
10	J	A1	3
11	K	A1	2
12	L	A1	4
13	M	A1	4
14	N	A1	3
15	O	A2	5
16	P	A2	6
17	Q	A2	4
18	R	A2	4
19	S	A2	5
20	T	A2	5

Figure 1

### Research Instruments

The efficiency of any research study depends on the selection of adequate and practical measurement tools. The instruments that were employed in this study were interviews, observations, and tests, which were pre and post-tests. According to Davis, Golicic, and Boerstler (2010), using multiple methods to study a phenomenon is proposed to produce results that are more robust and compelling than single-method studies. Thus, it is important to have a wide variety of data collection instruments.

### **Data Collection Method**

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect sufficient data. The qualitative data were gathered through interviews and observation, whereas the quantitative data was compiled through the pre and post-tests.

An interview is one of the qualitative research approaches that uses questioning to get data whereby two or more persons participate and one of them is the interviewer who poses the questions (George, 2023). The researcher gathered insightful data by interviewing the participants via open-ended interview sessions. A set of questions was prepared to guide and obtain participants' responses to find out the effectiveness of the study. The interview was carried out after the implementation of intervention during both cycles. Interviews were conducted by the researcher on an individual basis.

Observation, as Bhasin (2020) says as the name suggests, is a way of collecting relevant information and data by observing. Hence, observation was carried out by the researcher's co-worker. This is because the researcher wanted to focus fully on the lesson. The researcher's co-worker observed the class after the implementation of the intervention in the first cycle and second cycle. The researcher provided the co-worker with an observation checklist along with listing some criteria that needed to be observed. Thus, the observation method was used to have a wide view of the pupils' behavior during the implementation of the intervention in the lesson.

The researcher also implemented pre and post-tests for the participants to measure their ability to improve their vocabulary knowledge. Kuehn (2020) claims that in addition to measuring how much students have improved in one semester of study, the pre/post-test can be a valuable diagnostic tool for more effective teaching. Hence, the researcher employed the tests before and after the cycles to record the progress. The pre-test was conducted before the intervention using the selected list of vocabulary. After the intervention was implemented, a post-test was implemented with the same list of vocabulary.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the process of evaluating data using logical and analytical reasoning to carefully examine each component of the data collected or provided (Perez,2019). Data analysis was required for this study whereby the researcher used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather the data.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collection to produce insightful and trustworthy findings. Firstly, the researcher got familiar with the data whereby data was reread a few times. Next, the researcher did the coding for the whole text or conversation and looked for themes that are related to broader patterns of meaning and then reviewed them to make sure that they fit the data. Furthermore, the researcher defined and named the themes and finally did a write-up to create a coherent narrative that includes quotes.

The researcher took the observation checklist into account and analyzed it thoroughly. Then, it was altogether gathered to identify the common themes. The themes were then reduced to categories for example when the researcher analyzed the behavior of participants in responding to the Bingo Game. Hence, by using the thematic approach, it may direct quotes from the words found repeatedly in the transcript to fully describe a category or theme.

Pre and post-test results were analyzed by calculating the difference in the pre and post-test of the participants. This was done to examine the statistically significant difference between the test scores. The data gathered from the tests were described and explained based on the data from observation and interview.

**Findings and Discussion****The Use of Bingo Game in improving ESL pupils' vocabulary skill**

Based on the findings, this intervention has shown its effectiveness as the participants did show improvement in their vocabulary skills and at the same time enjoyed the lesson throughout. Hence, the findings based on pre and post-test score results and observation depicted that participants showed improvement and were motivated to participate wholly when they were exposed to my intervention. The behavioral patterns and aspects listed in the observation checklist along with the pre and post-test scores prove the effectiveness of Bingo Game.

Table 1

*Tabulation of Pre-test and Post-test during Cycle 1*

Participants	Pre-test (10 marks)	Post-test (10 marks)	Difference
A	3	4	+1
B	2	5	+3
C	2	4	+2
D	3	5	+2
E	2	5	+3
F	3	6	+3
G	4	7	+3
H	3	7	+4
I	3	6	+3
J	2	7	+5
K	4	6	+2
L	2	6	+4
M	2	5	+3
N	2	4	+2
O	3	7	+4
P	4	7	+3
Q	4	7	+3
R	4	7	+3
S	4	6	+2
T	4	7	+3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>55</b>

It was evident from the data that the pupils' test scores had improved both before and after Bingo was implemented. It occurred because the students who learned vocabulary through the Bingo Game reported that using words and pictures made it easier for them to remember the language. When they were playing the bingo game in class, the pupils also expressed interest in the pictures displayed. As a result, when the teacher used the Bingo Game to teach vocabulary, they focused more on the provided materials.

Table 1 above depicts the data collected from participants during the pre and post-test in Cycle 1. Based on Table 1, participant A scored three in the pre-test and progressed in scoring four during the post-test. Moreover, participant J scored two in the pre-test and later on scored seven in the post-test. Both the highlighted participants showed improvement in the

first cycle itself Based on the data, all the participants showed improvement and progress because all of them scored better in the post-test. The researcher implemented the intervention in the production stage and realized that the participants were so engaged in the lesson throughout. Table 1 also shows that the total scores for pre-test and post-test are 60 and 115 respectively. The increase in total from 60 to 115 indicates that the performance of the participants has progressed and improved gradually. Hence, the analysis of the results as shown in Table 1, depicts that the intervening action, which is, Bingo Game was effective in assisting participants to retain new vocabulary learnt. In addition, the researcher says that the participants were able to improve their vocabulary skills followed by the feedback from observation given by a practicum teacher. The researcher prepared a checklist and grouped some aspects to support the findings stated above.

Table 2  
*Findings based on the checklist used for observation*

No	Items	Pre-test	Post-test
1	Able to relate the definition and picture to the vocabulary correctly	No	Yes
2	Able to identify the vocabulary correctly	No	Yes
3	Able to remember the vocabulary	No	Yes

Based on the data in Table 4.1, all 20 participants were not able to achieve the required aspects in the pre-test. However, after the implementation of the intervention, they showed active engagement and were able to achieve the required aspects in the post-test. Upon observation, the participants improved gradually throughout the lesson. The researcher found out that these participants enjoyed exploring the Bingo Game using the input given.

The first cycle showed some good outcome but the researcher improvises the intervention to make it more effective as the application of technology can inculcate considerable interest in learners by adding variety and innovation to the classrooms. These days, technology is also heavily utilized in language teaching and learning. Teachers are now needed to indulge in using a variety of technological tools to enhance their instruction and involve students in the learning process of the bingo game. Thus, in the second cycle, the researcher integrated Powerpoint slides to make it easier to show pictures rather than asking participants to come and choose cards from a box. The researcher conducted a pre and post-test for the second cycle with the integration of Powerpoint.



Table 3

*Tabulation of Pre and Post-test scores during Cycle 2*

Participants	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
A	4	6	+2
B	4	6	+2
C	3	6	+3
D	5	8	+3
E	4	7	+3
F	5	8	+3
G	5	8	+3
H	5	7	+2
I	4	7	+3
J	6	10	+4
K	6	9	+3
L	7	8	+1
M	6	7	+1
N	6	8	+2
O	7	10	+3
P	5	9	+4
Q	5	7	+2
R	4	6	+2
S	4	6	+2
T	4	7	+3
TOTAL	99	150	51

Table 2 depicts the total scores from both the pre and post-test during the Cycle 2. Based on the table, after the integration of Powerpoint slides, participants' scores prove that all the participants progressed gradually. According to Host (2019), as an added benefit, with technology tools and a project-learning approach, students are more likely to stay engaged and on task, reducing behavioural problems in the classroom. All the participants showed better progress in Cycle 2 which can be seen based on their test scores. This statement is supported by the feedback given from observation by the researcher's fellow practicum mate.

Table 4

*Findings based on observation checklist*

No	Items	Pre-test	Post-test
1	Able to relate the definition and picture to the vocabulary correctly	Yes	Yes
2	Able to identify the vocabulary correctly	Yes	Yes
3	Able to remember the vocabulary	Yes	Yes



Table 4 shows the improvement of all the participants in Cycle 2. All the participants were able to meet the requirements needed to prove that Bingo Game does help in improving vocabulary skills. The intervention, Bingo Game did help in improving participants' vocabulary skill as the progress and improvement can be seen from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. Thus, these findings further complimented the researcher's standpoint on the first research question.

The researcher further gathered data from the participants via an open-ended interview session to explore how the use of Bingo Game helped to improve their vocabulary skills. Data from the interviews were analysed and put into categories after being coded into different themes that have been identified. This is to understand why the pupils show more interest and participate actively during the lesson with the presence of Bingo Game. There were three factors that can be identified.

Table 5

*Factors identified from the interview*

No	Factors	Frequency	%
1	It is very fun	6	100
2	It develops interest	3	50
3	It is easy to learn	5	83.3

According to Table 5, there were three factors identified. The factor with the highest frequency is 'It is very fun' with the percentage of 100% and followed by 'It is easy to learn' (83.3%) and 'It develops interest' (50%). This statement is further supported by responses from participant A and F as the researcher raised question on why Bingo Game was fun and easy to learn.

*Participant A : "... Bingo Game is so fun to play. I love the game because I have fun with friends. I learn the words very fast. The moving pictures in slide are nice. I can see the pictures clear."*

**(Translated)**

*Participant F : "I like to play Bingo because I have to be very fast. I have to cross the correct word. Now, I know new words and the meaning in English. I remember the words and pictures. The pictures very colourful and big. I like Bingo."*

**(Translated)**

Based on the interview transcripts above, the researcher finds that the use of moving and colourful images and big fonts were the major factor of the active engagement of the participants .

The extracts above by Participant A and Participant F proves that the integration of the ICT tools plays a huge role in creating a positive teaching and learning environment. The results show that Bingo Game helps to create a more fun and friendly classroom for the participants to learn. One obvious finding of this research is that the use of Bingo Games can be very

helpful in attracting the pupils' attention to the lesson and making the pupils to be alert in the classroom. This can be seen from the improved test scores of the participants, the observation checklist which shows pupils enjoyed the lesson, and the interview sessions showed that the participants liked the intervention. Thus, this highlights that the use of the Bingo Game is beneficial in improving vocabulary skills.

### **Conclusion**

This study highlights the vocabulary acquisition improvement among young ESL learners by implementing Bingo Game during English lessons. The results of the study demonstrated that most students' vocabulary competence increased when the teaching and learning process included the usage of bingo games. The pupils have not only improved their vocabulary mastery but also gained confidence and motivation at the same time. Based on the assessments, pupils showed great progress from the pre-test to the post-test scores, which motivated the researcher to do more research and change a few settings in the study. The researcher inserted PowerPoint slides to make the lessons more interactive and engaging. Even though this intervention has improved the vocabulary skills of the participants, there are several recommendations to be pondered upon. It is advisable to broaden the word range because in this action research implementation, I only used verbs as the main group aspect. Pupils, to improve and widen their skills, more groups should be added. Introducing more new words will make pupils to discover and explore the lesson. To conclude, the findings of this study proves that the implementation of Bingo Game can help pupils to retain new vocabulary, but to a certain extent. This game is effective for pupils with low proficiency as this game focuses on the familiarization of vocabulary. Therefore, Bingo Game does help in improving pupils' vocabulary skills through fun and effective learning. Last but not the least, the researcher does hope that these findings will be beneficial for the researcher and also the readers as well.

### **Research Contribution**

A crucial part of early education is teaching vocabulary to young students, and creative teaching strategies can greatly improve the learning process. Bingo is a useful teaching tool in the classroom since it provides theoretical and contextual advantages when used in vocabulary learning.

### **Theoretical Contribution**

#### **Constructivist Learning Theory**

Bingo game promotes **active participation**, aligning with the constructivist principle that learners construct knowledge through active engagement and interaction. Besides that, using Bingo Game as a catalyst for vocabulary learning in an ESL classroom also emphasizes **social interaction** in learning whereby it facilitates collaborative learning and peer interaction, which enhances language acquisition.

#### **Cognitive Load Theory**

Word games like Bingo help simplify the learning process by reducing cognitive overload. The game format makes vocabulary learning more manageable and less daunting for young pupils especially to those who are learning English.

### **Multisensory Learning**

Bingo game integrates visual and auditory learning, catering to different learning styles and enhancing memory retention. Besides that, it also encourages kinesthetic learning whereby marking the words in a bingo template engages the learners, making vocabulary learning a holistic experience.

### **Motivation and Engagement**

Word games such as Bingo Game foster intrinsic motivation by providing fun and enjoyment, which are important for young pupils. Besides that, the Bingo Game offers immediate feedback and rewards, which reinforces positive behaviour and successful learning outcomes.

### **Contextual Contribution**

#### **Classroom Environment**

Bingo fosters an engaging and dynamic atmosphere for learning in the classroom by motivating young students to participate actively and with passion. This promotes an interactive learning environment in the classroom. Besides that, Bingo Game in ESL classrooms can be adapted and catered for pupils, with different learning skills, which ensures inclusivity and accessibility for all pupils.

### **Curriculum Integration**

Bingo is an adaptable method for teaching vocabulary because it can be easily incorporated into a wide range of curriculum topics and themes. Other than that, teachers can tailor Bingo cards to focus on certain terminology related to the current unit or lesson, making it a focused teaching tool.

### **Assessment and Feedback**

Teachers can use bingo as a non-threatening, informal technique to check their students' vocabulary knowledge as part of a formative assessment process. Apart from that, teachers and students receive quick feedback from the game, highlighting areas requiring more explanation.

### **Summary**

The use of bingo games in vocabulary instruction has significant theoretical and practical advantages. It supports multimodal learning, lowers cognitive load, increases motivation, and is consistent with important educational philosophies. Bingo is a great tool that improves the classroom environment, easily integrates with the curriculum, offers valuable possibilities for assessment, and fosters social and emotional growth. This comprehensive method helps young students acquire language in a more effective, entertaining, and engaging way, which benefits their entire educational development.

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