# IMPROVING YEAR 4 PUPILS' UNDERSTANDING AND USAGE OF PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE THROUGH THE USE OF FROG VLE

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The fourth wave of industrial revolution has brought remarkable change in our education today. Grammar is one of the language components in English and it is one of the vital elements in increasing pupils' proficiency in the English language. This research aims to study the effectiveness of using Frog VLE in increasing pupils' understanding on preposition of place at Sekolah Kebangsaan Mentakab Jaya, Pahang. The participants consist of six pupils from Year 4 primary school. This study employed a qualitative research methodology and its research design is an action research. The usage of Frog VLE was highlighted throughout the intervention sessions in order to increase the pupils' understanding on prepositions. This study employs the model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart's. They developed a cyclical action research process, which are Plan -Act - Observe - Reflect. This study was conducted in two cycles and six different tasks had been assigned in Frog VLE Assignment to the participants. The intervention sessions was done twice a week where the participants had to login into their Frog VLE account and complete the tasks given in every intervention sessions. The data were collected from three data collection techniques comprising document analysis, observations and also semi-structured interview. Based on the observations done, the participants were very eager to come to the intervention sessions and complete the tasks assigned in the given time. In addition, the data obtained from the semi-structured interview shows that the participants agreed that the usage of Frog VLE really helped them in improving their understanding towards preposition of place. Meanwhile, the data obtained from the document analysis showed there were tremendous improvements in the participants' understanding and usage of preposition of place in cycle one and cycle two. Hence, it can be concluded that Frog VLE had successfully helped the participants in increasing their understanding and usage of preposition of place.

Keywords: grammar, preposition, Frog VLE, understanding, language

## INTRODUCTION

According to Mart (2013), grammar is a system of evocative structures and configurations that are administered by particular realistic limitations. The English teacher is often portrayed as a grammar inspector whose job is only to detect others' fault in using the language (Baron, 1982). This is because, when the teacher tells the pupils that they will learn grammar on that day, the pupils will start to feel bored as grammar is considered as the rules of the English Language. However, every teacher should try their best to teach the pupils grammar in a non-threatening, imaginative and interesting way so that the pupils will be attracted to it.

This research focuses on the teaching of grammar, using the new curriculum (KSSR) which is slightly different from KBSR (Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah). In KBSR, grammar is introduced since the pupils were in Year 1 but for KSSR, it is introduced in Year 3. It is stated in the Document Standard (2011) the rationale for introducing the grammar in Year 3 onwards:

Pupils should be given the opportunity to develop an awareness of grammar in their first language and this awareness may then be exploited when English grammar is introduced in Year 3. This approach will reduce the load and stress of learning in the early years where the emphasis is on learning through fun and play. (p.5)

Nesamalar, Sithamparan and Teh (2005) stated that the definition of grammar is a set of principles in language that monitor the way in which words and sentences are put together to give the message a meaningful meaning. On the other hand, according to Jianyun (2009), it is important to make pupils understand the grammar rules, because grammar and vocabulary is the basis of English language. Hence, if the pupils have problems in the basic rules of grammar, they will have bigger problem in more complex rules of grammar such as parts of speech, subject verb agreement and tenses. Therefore, by improving on their grammar aspect, it will help the pupils to write better in their essays. It is English grammar that will permit you to be a better speaker, listener, thinker, reader and writer (Folega, 2012). In order for a pupil to be proficient in a language, they need to have an adequate knowledge of grammar as grammar helps them to be more confident in using a language. Lin (2008) supported this argument as she mentioned that the knowledge on grammar helps to enhance the confidence of the pupils in their reading and writing.

#### Focus of the Study

Grammar is the basic item in English and it is one of the important language components of English. In order for the pupils to master the skills in English which are listening, speaking, reading and writing, they need to know the basic rules of grammar as it will guide them to be better English speaker, listener, writer and reader. Preposition of place is one of the important elements in grammar. The pupils and teachers will use prepositions in giving instructions and directions in English. As a result, if the pupils failed to understand simple instructions, the teaching and learning session will be disrupted, as the teacher needs to explain the meaning of the instructions all over again. As argued by Islami (2005), mastering of English language prepositions is one of prerequisites to become skilled at English language fluency and accuracy. However, in Malaysia, the pupils might not use English as the medium of instructions in their daily life and they will only use it during the English lessons. Hence, the pupils will be exposed to the language only in the English language class.

In today's era, the pupils are very attracted to the usage of the ICT (Information and Communications Technology) in learning. The integration of ICT in the process of teaching and learning will attract the attention of the pupils to learn. According to Jani, Muszali, Nathan and Abdullah (2018) traditional teaching is not valid anymore during these days and teachers need to combine modern approaches in teaching as well. The Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025) suggests integrating the usage of ICT to enhance the quality of learning. For that reason, the Ministry of Education introduced Frog VLE to the teachers and pupils at school. Frog VLE is a very interesting website to be used by the teachers and pupils to share the teaching and learning materials, have discussions, submit assignments using Frog Assignments and connect with each other using Frog Chat. Frog VLE is a webbased learning that duplicates actual learning where the learning took place virtually.

The usage of Frog VLE in the classroom can really attract the attention of the pupils in learning. Shazali and Hashim (2018) mentioned that "the teachers have been using Frog VLE in their teaching and learning to create fun and exciting environment rather than the traditional method of "Chalk and Talk" (p.2). On the other hand, Nor-Fadzleen and Halina (2013) also agrees with this statement as she mentioned that the usage of virtual learning in the classroom gave positive outcomes on the teachers, pupils and parents as the learning can took place anytime and anywhere.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1. Does Frog VLE help the participants to increase their understanding on preposition of place?
- 2. How effective is the use of Frog VLE as a learning medium in boosting pupils' mastery of preposition of place?
- 3. How do the pupils perceive the use of Frog VLE in teaching and learning process?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

# The Teaching And Learning Of Prepositions Of Place

Grammar is the basic language component that needs to be mastered by all students in the Malaysian English Language curriculum (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2000). English is the subject that the pupils learn starting from year one until they enter the third level of education, which is the university. Grammar is always being regarded as one of the problematic language elements compared to language arts. The pupils can really enjoy themselves in the language arts lesson as they have the opportunity to sing songs, jazz chants, read poems and many more. However, it was found that most of the pupils would have problems in grammar although they have learnt it for many years. Cabuk (2009) pointed out that the main reason for the pupils to have problems in learning preposition of place is their lack of understanding the context in using appropriate prepositions and they do not know which preposition to use.

Arjan, Abdullah and Roslim (2013) mentioned that prepositions could be considered as one of the difficult language's elements to be mastered by the second language learners. This happens due to the influence of their first language. In Malaysia, English is the second language and the first language is Bahasa Malaysia. Second language learners will directly translate what they think of in their mother tongue into English. This will make the sentence uttered or written by them grammatically incorrect. Hence, it is very vital for teachers to teach the pupils on the ways of using prepositions correctly. Preposition sometimes wrongly used in oral and written sentences. However, Morenberg (1997) mentioned that prepositions are always considered as the most important elements in teaching writing and speaking. As a result, in order for the pupils to write and speak better, they need to learn and master prepositions. Lack of practice in using English is also one of the factors that cause the pupils to be less proficient in English. They will only use English in English Language class and they have less opportunity in using the language. This aspect will delay them from developing their proficiency in English. For that reason, Tetreault and Chodorow (2008) stated that the non-native speakers usually make errors in their writing due to prepositions. Non-native speakers will not use English prepositions as their daily language and that is why they can easily be perplexed with the prepositions.

Pooja (2017) mentioned that the teaching strategies used by the teachers would provide great impact on the pupils' performance. If the teaching method used by the teacher suits the learner, the pupils will be able to be very proficient in English but if the method used does not suit the learners, they will not be able to develop their language competence and they will just stay at the same level throughout the year. As a result, teachers need to be up-to-date with the current teaching methods and they should be aware of the new teaching strategies highlighted by the Ministry of Education. They should always reflect on their teaching in order to find a perfect way to help the pupils to increase their understanding about prepositions. Hence, that is why conducting

action research is very important among teachers as they can improve on their teaching methods and it will also help the teachers to know the learners better.

#### **Technology and Language Learning**

In today's era, technology plays an important role in our everyday life. We use technology for communication, entertainment, business and many more. The same thing goes for our education system. Back then, teachers only use textbook as their main teaching source but these days, there are a lot of other teaching resources to be used in the classroom. It can easily be downloaded from the Internet. Other than that, LCD (Liquid Crystal Display), Interactive whiteboard or Smart Television can be used as gadgets in the classroom to attract the attention of the pupils to learn. The usage of technology in the classroom can attract the attention of the learners to learn. Costley (2014) supported this statement by saying that technology can change the climate of the classroom into an interactive learning atmosphere.

Technology can also be the source of motivation to learn. Some pupils do not like to learn a language as they mentioned that learning a language is not interesting to them. As a result, they tend to misbehave in the classroom. However, with the use of Internet, the teachers are able to attract pupils' attention to learn. Granito and Chernobilsky (2012) mentioned that technology infused classroom are able to motivate the pupils in learning a language. Atkinson (2000) agrees with them when she said that technology brings positive effect on the pupils' motivation. Hence, the usage of technology in the classroom can really enhance the teaching and learning session. It can also boost the pupils' interest and motivation to learn too.

In 2012, the Ministry of Education had introduced Frog VLE in Malaysia. Frog VLE is a web-based learning that allows the learners to use different learning tool to learn. According to Shen et al. (2017), Frog VLE is a very exciting website and it helps the teaching and learning to be more significant. This website allow pupils to be more engaging with the virtual learning and it can be implemented effectively. This website had been introduced in the Malaysian education system to enforce the seventh shift of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013) which is to leverage ICT to scale up the quality of learning across Malaysia.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses action research as the research design as it is aimed to solve problems in teaching grammar specifically preposition of place as one of the language components. Action research design is the systematic procedures done by teachers to gather information about and subsequently improve, the ways their particular educational setting operates, their teaching, and their student learning (Mills, 2011). Action research is a useful research design to improve educational problem as it will help the teachers to improve teaching method and the pupils will have the opportunity to understand the input given by the teacher in a better way. As a result, the pupils will improve themselves after the research had been done.

Action research was chosen as the research design as it helps the researcher to reflect on her own teaching practices. In an increasingly complex and challenging profession, the need for teachers, administrators and school systems to become involved in professional development activities is ever present (Hine, 2013). Teachers have limited time to engage themselves in serious reflective activities and by conducting action research; it helps the teachers to improve their own practices within the scope of the school for the school wide problem.

Yuliani (2011) mentioned that classroom action research begins with a question or questions about classroom experiences, issues, or challenges. Teaching pupils is merely not an easy task. Senior teachers might have a lot of experience in teaching but novice teachers are new in education scenes. They are still searching on their own perfect way of teaching. At the end of the lesson, teachers would think on how the teaching and learning session have taken place and that is where teachers reflect on their ability in teaching and ways to improve their weaknesses. Wright (2010) stated that conducting research will help us to identify the pupils' knowledge and how does the intervention created can affect on pupils' understanding.

This study employed Stephen Kemmis model. Stephen Kemmis has developed a simple model of the cyclical nature of the typical action research process. Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) stated that the model "Plan – Act – Observe – Reflect" spiral of activity provides beginners an easy entry to their action research journeys. Firstly, at the planning stage, the researcher has to identify the research issue that arises during the teaching and learning session through different types of preliminary data collections. After that, the researcher plans one intervention to solve that particular problem. Secondly, implementation of the intervention is carried out at this stage. Thirdly, the researcher have to observe how the pupils behaviour towards the intervention and how they respond to the intervention. Lastly, at the last stage, which is reflection, the researcher needs to revise on what is happening throughout the stages of this model. It is a must for the researcher to identify if the intervention works and objectives of the research are achieved or not. If the objectives of the study are not achieved and the intervention created did not suit the participants, the researcher need to undergo the second cycle of the research to improve the results of the study.

This study was conducted in two cycles because during cycle one, the tasks given were more towards simple tasks, which help the participants to distinguish the prepositions. During the early stage, it is better for the researcher to help them to distinguish the preposition before they can use it in a sentence. However, after the participants were able to differentiate the prepositions, they need to know how to use it in a sentence. Hence, cycle two is conducted whereby more challenging activities were added to ensure that the participants understand the preposition before they can complete the tasks given correctly.

#### RESEARCH SITE

This study was conducted in SK Mentakab Jaya. It is a new school where it was officially open in 2010 and there are only 341 pupils and there are 11 classes for the pupils from year one until year six. All of the teachers and pupils at this school are Malay. This school caters for lower primary and upper primary pupils. There are two classes for each level except for year 5 because there are only 34 pupils in that particular class. This school is located in the district of Temerloh, Pahang. The school is situated in the middle between Temerloh and Mentakab town. Thus, most of the pupils from this school are living around the Temerloh and Mentakab area.

#### RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The research participants are six out of twenty-four pupils from Year 4 Ibnu Khaldun of Sekolah Kebangsaan Mentakab Jaya, Temerloh. The first class is named Ibnu Sina and the other one is Ibnu Khaldun. In this school, there are two classes. The differences between these two classes are their academic achievement. Ibnu Sina's pupils have better academic achievement compared to the Ibnu Khaldun. The participants were four boys and two girls. These participants were selected through observations during the teaching and learning session and it was found that their understanding about preposition of place was quite low. Hence, this research was conducted with the aim of enhancing their understanding on preposition of place.

#### RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

There are a few data collection instruments that had been carried out in this study. The first research instrument was document analysis. O'Leary (2014) mentioned that there are various types of documents and they are public records, personal documents and public record. As for this research, the personal documents belongs to the participants were checked and they are their answers related to the tasks given. In this study, the document that will be collected, checked and reviewed is the personal documents. The documents were their answers in each intervention session. The researcher checks their progress over time by collecting the participants' answers. Once the participants had submitted their answers, the researcher will check each and every one of their answers to see their improvements and compare it for each intervention sessions. Bowen (2009) mentioned that document analysis is one of the efficient ways to collect data as it is cost efficient and time efficient compared to other methods of collecting data.

Secondly, the research participants were observed during the intervention period. Goh (2012) said that there are a lot of constructive qualities of the observational research methodology. During the intervention session, the participants were observed on how they react to the Frog VLE. The participants' actions throughout the intervention session were summarized to get the idea regarding the participants' attitudes and behaviour before and after the intervention. The participants' ability in completing the task is observed. They were observed whether they are able to complete the tasks that had been prepared for them individually or they still need help from their peers. In addition, they were observed on how they enhance their understanding towards prepositions of place. However, classroom observation forms were provided throughout the intervention sessions because along the intervention sessions, the participants need to complete the different type of tasks in helping them to enhance their understanding towards preposition of place in a meaningful way. Hence, the behaviour and attitudes of the participants for every intervention session will not be the same.

Lastly, semi-structured interview was also conducted with the participants. Clegg and Stevenson (2013) emphasized that interviews are used to pursue in-depth understanding about a research issue as well as information about participants' language experience and feelings. Moreover, Alshenqeeti (2014) mentioned that semi-structured interview is one of the popular type of interview used by the researchers. Adhabi and Anozie (2017) said that in semi-structured interview, the questions asked by the researcher depend on the responses given by the participants. By conducting an interview, the researcher is able to ask questions or probe the participants in detail. It is where the facial expressions and the gestures made by the participants will also be observed as it will support the points that was said by the participants. During this interview, the participants were asked on their knowledge on preposition and how it helps them to be proficient in English. Conducting semi-structured interview is one of the effective ways to obtain information from the participants. Gubrium and Holstein (2002) supported this statement by saying that semi-structured interview gives freedom for the participant and the researcher in asking and answering questions. On the other hand, by conducting the interview, more questions could be asked and the chance to get a detailed feedback from the participants increased.

## **FINDINGS**

The data were collected and presented into several themes guided by the research questions (RQ). The findings were presented into three parts as accordance to the research questions. The first provides the answer for RQ1, which is - Does Frog VLE help the participants to increase their understanding on preposition of place? The second part provides the answer for RQ2, which is - How effective is the use of Frog VLE as a learning medium in boosting pupils' mastery of preposition of place? The last part provides the answer for RQ3, which is - How do the pupils perceive the use of Frog VLE in teaching and learning process?

Research Question 1: Does Frog VLE help the participants to increase their understanding on preposition of place? Theme 1- Frog VLE As A Suitable Medium To Teach Preposition

Frog VLE can be considered as one of the suitable mediums that can be used by teachers in teaching preposition of place. The participants mentioned that Frog VLE helped them a lot in differentiating each preposition of place. This can be concluded based on the response obtained during the interview and classroom observations done. Based on observations done, the participants showed positive feedback as the looked very happy while they were completing the tasks given. They were also very focused in doing their work. All of them were sitting in their own chair and completed the tasks given silently. On the other hand, based on the interview conducted, the participant A said that "I like the idea of using Frog VLE in teaching preposition" (Q6, PA). Furthermore, participant E mentioned that "I can understand the lesson better if the teacher use Frog VLE in the classroom." (Q6, PC).

Hence, based on the response obtained, it shows that the use of Frog VLE in teaching preposition of place is one of the suitable ways in teaching preposition of place. Frog VLE is a very engaging and interactive website as teachers and learners because teachers can add pictures, videos and audios to attract the attention of the learners to learn as well as in assigning tasks to the learners. In this study, pictures were added to guide the participants in differentiating the prepositions. Saunders (1979) mentioned that photographic prints could create interest in arousing and sustaining attention and is capable of stimulating imagination. As a result, by adding the pictures, it helped the participants in distinguishing the prepositions better. They were able to visualize the difference of the preposition of place easily.

# Research Question 2: How effective is the use of Frog VLE as a learning medium in boosting pupils' mastery of preposition of place?

#### Theme 2- Understanding Preposition Through The Use Of Frog VLE

After the intervention sessions, the participants had increased their understanding towards prepositions. They were able to distinguish each of the prepositions clearly during the intervention sessions. During every intervention sessions, the participants were asked to recall the preposition of place that they had learnt from the previous intervention sessions and the participants were able to recall each and every preposition easily. Based on the observations done, the participants were very excited in listing the preposition of place that they knew. Furthermore, during the interview, the participants were asked to name the prepositions and distinguish it. They had successfully listed out and differentiated the prepositions correctly. In addition, the data collected from the Document Analysis (DA) showed that the participants had showed tremendous improvements after the intervention sessions. The data collected from the first cycle were compared with the second cycle of the intervention sessions. The data clearly shows that the participants' understanding towards preposition of place had improved. The use of Frog VLE in enhancing the participants' understanding towards preposition of place had made a huge impact on the participants.

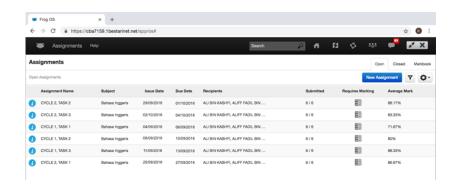


Figure 1: Overall achievements of the participants in cycle 1 and 2.

On the other hand, the participants agreed that the usage of Frog VLE is a powerful tool in enhancing their understanding towards preposition of place. This is due to the method used in teaching which includes the integration of ICT in learning. Participant D mentioned that "Before this my teacher had taught me this in my classroom, but she only explains the prepositions and gave us homework. But only now that I can differentiate the prepositions easily." (Q2, PD). Meanwhile, Participant E mentioned that "I wish that every teacher in this school can use Frog VLE as their teaching tools" (Q10, PE). Hence, it shows that the method use in teaching has a huge impact on the learning of the pupils. Teachers need to catch up with the current technology so that the method used in teaching was up-to-date. Furthermore, the participant B also mentioned that Frog VLE is a very interesting website because of its colorful layout. He said that "I like Frog VLE website because it is colorful and interactive" (Q6, PB). Furthermore, the usage of the video from the 'YouTube' had really helped the participants in increasing the participants' understanding towards prepositions. The video was created specifically for the participants using Powtoon. It was then uploaded to the YouTube. After that, the link was embedded in their Frog VLE account. The video was created to help the participants to see the difference between the prepositions clearly. Participant E said that "The video in the Frog VLE did really help me in learning preposition" (Q7, PE).

#### Research Question 3: How do the pupils perceive the use of Frog VLE in teaching and learning process?

Theme 3- Participants' Perception Towards Frog VLE

Pupils' interest in learning is one of the important keys in learning. Teachers need to make sure that the pupils have their interest to learn. If not, the teaching and learning sessions will not be meaningful. Integrating ICT is one of the methods that can be used by teachers to attract the interest of the pupils to learn. In Malaysia, English is the second language and the pupils are more attracted to their first language, which is Bahasa Malaysia, compared to English language. Hence, teachers need to equip themselves with the pedagogical knowledge in attracting the interests of the pupils to learn.

Incorporating ICT (Information and Communications Technology) during the teaching and learning sessions are able to encourage the participants to learn. The participants were very excited to come for the intervention sessions. They even asked the researcher when they are going to come again for the intervention sessions once the intervention sessions were done. The intervention created was able to attract the participants' interest in learning preposition of place. This is due to the strategy used, which is integrating the use of technology in learning.

On the other hand, during the interview, Participant B mentioned, "It is also fun as I do not feel sleepy at all" (Q1, PB). Furthermore, participant D stressed that "By using Frog VLE, I can now understand on how to use prepositions correctly" (Q1, PD). Moreover, participant A said that "I like to use the computer as it makes me to understand better, with graphics and animations" (Q1, PA). Based on the data obtained from the interview, it showed that the participants love the usage of Frog VLE during the intervention sessions. The participants were very eager to learn English using computer as it is different compared to their normal classroom where the teacher only uses the traditional method of teaching which is chalk and talk. In addition, these kids were born with the technological advancement. They are very attracted with the usage of Internet and computer. Hence, it is better for teachers to integrate the usage of ICT during the teaching and learning sessions.

#### CONCLUSION

Frog VLE is a very interesting website to gain the interest of the pupils to learn. Muir-Herzig (2004) states that the usage of technology in the classroom will make the learning fun as it is more pupil-centered and the pupils will be given more opportunity to explore the language on their own. There were many features that can be exploited by teachers to make the lesson interesting. That is the reason why the ministry of education introduced this website in our education system. Frog VLE had been introduced since 2013 to help the teachers to meet the desires of the ministry where they need to incorporate 21st century learning strategies during the teaching and learning sessions. Ahmadi (2018) mentioned that technology is vital for teachers now as it helps to promote learning. However, senior teachers prefer to use their traditional way of teaching rather than incorporating ICT during the teaching and learning process. This is because, they assumed that using Frog VLE requires a lot of time and effort for them to set up the LCD and the computers before they can begin the lesson. Teachers prefer to use the traditional method in teaching as they are not used to the usage of technology and they need more practice and in house training for them to incorporate the use of technology in the classroom, (Brand, 1998). As a result, the traditional way of teaching which was chalk and talk were more preferable among the senior teachers.

Based on this research, it can be concluded that the participants had improved their understanding towards preposition of place as they were able to distinguish each prepositions learnt. Other than that, they were able to use the preposition of place learnt correctly by writing sentences in the tasks assigned to them in their Frog VLE account. This showed that the usage of ICT in learning could really attract the attention and interest of the participants in learning as compared to the traditional method of teaching. Children nowadays were born with technologies. They had been exposed to the technology since they were small. Hence, teachers need to be aware of the current technological advancement and equip themselves with a great amount of pedagogical knowledge in teaching. Furthermore, teachers need to explore the usage of the technology in the classroom more as Bull and Ma (2001) mentioned that technology gives endless resources to the teachers. The usage of technology in the classroom will attract the interest of the pupils to learn as well as helps the teachers in preparing the materials in teaching. As a conclusion, it is important for teachers to find a suitable method in teaching to make the learning process more meaningful. Teaching and learning of grammar are tedious for learners but order for the pupils to speak, write, listen and read better, they need to learn grammar as the basic component of English language.

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