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KYSS: KNOW YOUR STORY STRUCTURE

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ABSTRACT

UNESCO Institute of Statistics reported that Malaysia literacy rate stands at almost 95%. Despite the strong literacy presence, local academics are deeply concerned about the lack of a reading culture. As a result, students often struggle to narrate stories effectively and face difficulties in structuring ideas in writing. To bridge the gap between these challenges and the mechanistic writing instruction commonly practiced in writing classes, KYSS (Know Your Story Structure) has been developed as an innovative teaching and learning tool. It aims to sharpen students' skills in structuring narratives with purpose. This innovation enables students to identify the four types of narrative structures- linear, circular, parallel, and flashback -through an interactive gameplay experience. With each turn, participants draw upon their writing knowledge to identify story structures while actively listen to their peers. The unique blend of linguistic challenges and engaging activities provides a fresh and dynamic experience, allowing students to refine their listening and writing skills while strategizing to outsmart their opponents. KYSS benefits language teachers by diversifying their teaching methods and enriching their writing class materials. Students also gain a significant advantage as they learn to structure narratives effectively in an enjoyable and interactive way. This innovation holds immense potential for commercialization as it fulfills the learners' needs that the market has yet to offer.

Keywords: language game, writing skills, narrative structure, teaching tool

INTRODUCTION

Writing Process

Writing is an important skill in English. It involves expression of thoughts, ideas, information, or stories in written form. While the writing process is described differently among scholars, it is generally known to involve four main stages namely 1) Planning, 2) Drafting, 3) Revising and 4) Editing, (Seow, 2002). However, writing is rarely a straightforward, linear process. When writing,

writers often revisit prior stages and rewrites the essay. This is in line with Krashen (1984); ‘many good writers employ a recursive, non-linear approach-writing of a draft may be interrupted by more planning, and revision may lead to reformulation, with a great deal of recycling to earlier stages’.

Thus, it is imperative that students should be exposed to the writing process. The recursive process of writing could be a challenge for students. Challenges may arise stemming from the writers’ own lack of language proficiency (D Rohayu et. al, 2023), L1 interference (Nur Amalina & Hanita Hanim, 2021), and motivation (Tessem 2005), among others. Their essays may suffer from lack of clarity, no definitive structure, grammar mistakes and lack of cohesiveness if they are not exposed to continuous practice throughout each stage of the writing process.

Teaching Narrative Writing to Undergraduates

Although challenges in the writing process exist, proper use of writing strategies may mitigate the effects. One of the strategies is teaching students narrative writing. Teaching narrative writing to L2 undergraduates presents both distinct challenges and valuable opportunities. It provides a chance to enhance linguistic fluency, encourage personal expression, and foster cross-cultural awareness. Through storytelling, students can connect their personal experiences with language learning, leading to deeper engagement and improved communicative competence. However, a significant challenge lies in limited vocabulary and grammatical range, which can restrict students’ ability to convey complex ideas or emotions. Additionally, coherence and sequencing often pose difficulties, particularly when students are unfamiliar with common narrative structures (Lu & Pan, 2024). Even with strong creative ideas, learners frequently require guidance to organize their thoughts within a clear and effective structural framework that successfully engages readers (Kihlstedt & Izquierdo, 2021).

The KYSS (Know Your Story Structure) card game can support students in overcoming these challenges by helping them recognize and formulate ideas using key narrative structures—circular, linear, parallel, and flashback—through repeated exposure in an engaging format. By encouraging inference-making, vocabulary development, and structural awareness across multiple genres, KYSS enhances students’ ability to craft coherent and compelling narratives in their own writing.

Narrative Writing Structure

Narrative structure outlines the method by which a story is developed and conveyed. It is crafted to help the writer develop the story’s progression effectively. Although many narratives include an introduction, development, and ending, creating a powerful story often involves more nuance. Talented writers arrange content by deliberately following certain structures to maintain interest and momentum. Narrative structures vary, including linear, which presents events in chronological order; circular, which returns to the story’s starting point; parallel, which unfolds multiple storylines simultaneously; and flashback, which interrupts the timeline to reveal past events, each shaping the story’s flow and meaning in distinct ways. This thoughtful organisation draws readers in and sustains their engagement throughout the piece.

To support learners in recognizing and applying these structures, the KYSS game includes 20 story cards across five themes—romance, humor, mystery, adventure, and fantasy—with each theme represented in all four structures. Each card contains a short story designed to highlight the defining

features of its structure, encouraging players to analyze narrative elements and infer patterns in an interactive format.

INNOVATION OBJECTIVES:

1. To identify students' ability to recognize and distinguish between three narrative structures; linear, circular, and parallel through the KYSS card game.
2. To evaluate the extent to which students improve their listening and writing skills after participating in the KYSS card game.

METHODOLOGY

This study proposes the use of a custom-designed card game to enhance the ability to identify and narrate stories from four different types of story structures. KYSS, a card game, will be introduced among undergraduate students of UiTM Cawangan Johor, Kampus Pasir Gudang for two weeks during English classes.

KYSS is a card game that helps players practice identifying different types of story structures—circular, linear, parallel, and flashback—while also making inferences and building vocabulary and story comprehension skills. The game includes 20 cards, based on five themes: romance, humor, mystery, adventure, and fantasy. Each theme includes one card for each of the four story structures. This means that across the deck, each narrative structure appears once per theme (Figure 1).

To play (Figure 2), the cards will be shuffled and dealt evenly to all players. On each turn, a player reads a short story from one of their cards. The other players must listen carefully and infer which structure the story represents. If someone guesses correctly, they can ask for a card with that structure to help complete their set. The goal is to collect one card of each theme that shares the same structure. The first player to collect all four cards of the same structure wins.

A pre-test and post-test will be administered to measure students' ability to recognize and distinguish between linear, circular, and parallel narrative structures, as well as to assess improvements in their listening and writing skills. Additionally, a student feedback form will be distributed to gauge their engagement with the KYSS card game and its perceived usefulness in enhancing narrative understanding. The data collected will be analysed descriptively to evaluate the effectiveness of the innovation. Although implementation has not yet taken place, this proposed methodology outlines the framework for future validation.

HOW TO PLAY KYSS

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graph LR; A((Shuffle all cards)) --> B((Read the cards)); B --> C((Guess the cards)); C --> D((Complete all sets)); D --> E((Winning the game))
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- Shuffle all cards**
Each team will get equal number of cards.
- Read the cards**
One team reads a card aloud,
- Guess the cards**
The other teams listen and guess the story structure.
- Complete all sets**
Complete all sets of cards (according to its story structure) by listening carefully.
- Winning the game**
The team with the most sets of cards collected wins!

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from Dimailig et.al, (2024) suggest that narrative structure is important for organizing a literary work, acting as its backbone and helping readers understand the story more clearly. Utilizing the KYSS deck in class offers several educational benefits. By engaging with different storytelling frameworks, students can better understand various narrative structures. The range of themes in the deck can also encourage creativity and increase motivation in writing. Additionally, pairing themes with specific narrative structures can help students see how these patterns affect story development and coherence. This supports Sirhajwan's (2016) findings that skilled ESL writers focus on developing ideas during the pre-writing phase by using particular structures to expand their thoughts.

The KYSS game creates opportunities for students to explore narrative styles in an interactive and reflective way, which promotes deeper comprehension of how stories are built. Through collaborative guessing and analysis, learners become more attuned to how plot elements function within a specific structure. This not only strengthens their analytical skills but also nurtures cooperative learning in the classroom. Overall, these approaches may improve narrative organization, writing skills, and encourage collaborative learning. When students practice activities that improve their thinking skills, they are better able to overcome weak thinking strategies that might limit their ability to create and develop ideas (Sirhajwan, 2016).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study outlines the ideas and development of KYSS, an innovative card game aimed at enhancing students' narrative comprehension. By integrating listening, inference, and storytelling in an interactive and engaging gameplay, KYSS helps students to identify and recognize key features of various narrative structures. This proposed card game holds significant implications for both students and English teachers. For students, they benefit in the language learning process through a fun and joyful approach, which promotes their active participation and critical listening skills. This approach is an alternative to traditional listening and writing lessons, where students are not immersed in the learning process. KYSS offers an attempt for students to reapply the game in writing classes by copying the narrative structure they have learnt while playing it. For teachers/educators, KYSS provides a versatile tool that facilitates the teaching of narrative structures in an engaging and interactive way. This card game can be viewed as another classroom strategy to encourage educators to adopt more interactive pedagogy, aligned with current technology trends in learning English. Additionally, the ideas and concepts of KYSS can be adapted and expanded for other language learning objectives, as an alternative resource in the English language classroom. Overall, KYSS helps streamline lesson planning and fosters a dynamic classroom environment focused on collaborative learning and critical thinking.

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