INNOVATION IN ACTION: TURNING IDEAS INTO REALITY

Chapter 66
Emoji Story Quest

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ABSTRACT

In the Malaysian primary school context, enhancing English language learning continues to be a key priority, particularly in fostering vocabulary development, creativity, and student engagement. Conventional classroom strategies often fall short in meeting the needs of digital-native learners, who benefit more from interactive and visually rich experiences. To bridge this gap, Emoji Story Quest was developed as a gamified and collaborative storytelling tool that supports language acquisition through creative expression and digital literacy. This innovation integrates two core components: Moji Moji, an emoji-based guessing game, and the Story Wheel, which provides vocabulary prompts to guide students in building original narratives. By combining vocabulary learning with visual decoding and group-based storytelling tasks, the platform nurtures critical thinking, social interaction, and imaginative language use. It differentiates itself through its emphasis on student agency and engagement, encouraging learners to construct meaning in context and express themselves with confidence. Emoji Story Quest also aligns with the goals of inclusive education by catering to various learning styles and proficiency levels. Its flexible design makes it suitable for both physical and digital classroom settings, with strong potential for integration into wider educational initiatives. Overall, this innovation represents a creative, student-centered approach to English language learning—supporting 21st-century skills and enriching the language learning experience in fun, meaningful ways.

Key Words: Vocabulary, Emoji, Storytelling, Gamification, Digital Literacy

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Language learning is a complex process that requires both cognitive and creative engagement. In many traditional classroom settings, vocabulary topics often lack excitement, resulting in reduced students' motivation and retention. With the rapid advancement of digital tools and increased student exposure to visual communication, there is a need for innovative educational approaches that combine technology, creativity, and interactivity.

Emoji Story Quest was developed to solve this issue. This project aims to transform the conventional methods of vocabulary teaching and storytelling instruction through an engaging, student-driven game. By combining elements of gamification and visual literacy, the innovation offers a new way for students to encourage themselves to explore language meaningfully and collaboratively. The game is particularly effective for upper primary students and can be used in both face-to-face and remote learning environments.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

From Chon et al. (n.d.) research, gamification in education is defined by integrating game-based mechanics and dynamics to create engaging and immersive learning environments. The integration of digital tools and play-based activities in the classrooms encourages productive learning and fosters 21st- century skills' requirements such as creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking.

One of the most commonly used gamified learning platforms is Kahoot!, has been used worldwide to boost student engagement through competitive quizzes and instant feedback (Wang, 2015). Similarly, Quizlet also offers the same methods where it focuses more on students' vocabulary development and understanding. However, while these tools are effective for supplying knowledge, they often lack opportunities for deeper language use and creative ways of reaching the objective.

On the other hand, storytelling is a more effective method of teaching languages than traditional teaching materials like textbooks (Ghafar, n.d.). The storytelling approach could help the students to improve their vocabulary and grammar while enhancing comprehension, memory retention, and emotional intelligence. When students are encouraged to co-create narratives, they become active participants in their own learning improvement journey, constructing meaning in context and improving their confidence in communication. Additionally, Emoji, as a visual medium in language, have gained popularity as communication tools in digital literacy contexts. Mudure-Iacob (n.d.) research stated that emojis in language learning is applied to storytelling as a mechanism of developing a multiliterate discourse.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The "Emoji Story Quest" is an interactive storytelling game which was developed through a collaborative and coordinated design process. This innovation is specifically designed for year 6 primary school students. The methodology of this project is aimed at creating an engaging and informative game that combines emoji-based guessing, vocabulary building and story creation. This website was shared with 15 primary students in the state of Pahang. A Google Form was administered to these students to gather data regarding their overall experience with this game. The development process of this Emoji Story Quest game involved a few essential stages, such as spinning the vocabulary wheel.

Firstly, the initial stage required brainstorming ideas and identifying the key components of the game. These include the incorporation of emoji puzzles, also known as 'Moji Moji', vocabulary wheels (adjective and verb), and cooperative story creation.

The next stage was focused on the specific mechanics of the game. Virtual wheels were designed to produce vocabulary cues, which include the categories for adjectives and verbs. Emoji sequences were created to represent words or story elements, which require players to decode them. The game was then structured to encourage students to apply creative thinking skills to produce a collaborative story writing, using the vocabulary cues and emoji puzzles as inspiration.

Multiple emoji combinations and story scenarios were created to guide and illustrate the game's potential. Therefore, this iterative process ensured that the methodology of this project utilised a user-friendly approach while prioritising the creation of a fun and impactful learning experience for students of all backgrounds. Ethical concentration was also considered during the innovation process

4.0 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The participants answered the Google Form within two weeks. The results are as below. All 15 participants (100%) who responded to the survey indicated they enjoyed playing "Emoji Story Quest". (refer to figure 4.1)

Figure 4.1: Respondents enjoyed playing Emoji Story Quest

The most popular aspect of "Emoji Story Quest" was "All of the above" (40%). Many participants (33.3%) especially enjoyed "Spinning the vocabulary wheel." Smaller groups preferred "Writing stories in groups" (13.3%), "Solving emoji puzzles" (6.7%), or the "Story challenges" (6.7%). (refer to figure 4.2)
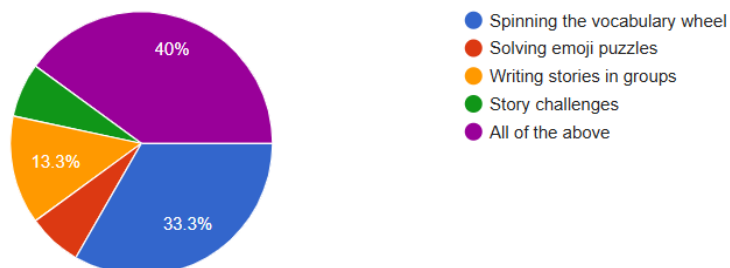

Figure 4.2: Part of the game that respondents enjoyed the most

Most participants (80%) felt the game helped them greatly in using adjectives and verbs, while 20% said it helped a little. (refer to figure 4.3)
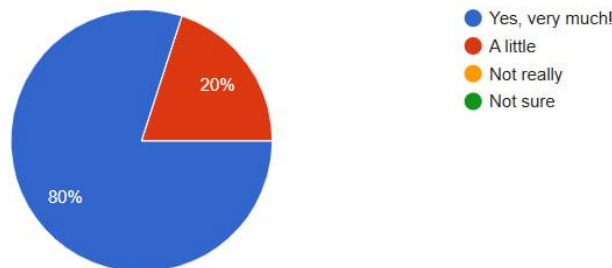

Figure 4.3: Understanding of the respondents on the usage of adjectives and verbs in a sentence or story

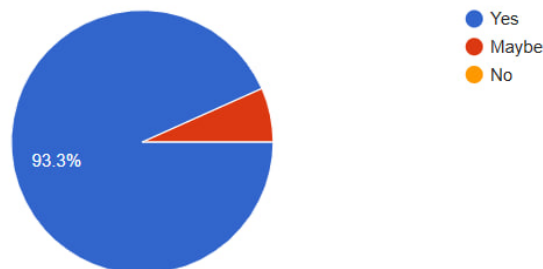Most participants (93.3%) would recommend "Emoji Story Quest," while 6.7% said "Maybe."(refer to figure 4.4)

Figure 4.4: Participants' willingness to recommend Emoji Story Quest

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Emoji Story Quest is an innovative and functional approach to enhance users' vocabulary and writing skills effectively by combining emojis, vocabulary wheels, and storytelling. This project aims to boost students' confidence levels and digital literacy in students. There are also a few suggestions in this project to maintain the effectiveness of the project development. First of all, it is highly recommended to conduct empirical studies with students of all categories. This includes a comparison of learning outcomes between students who approach this game and other traditional methods. Moreover, this game can be enhanced with more features, such as a wider variety of vocabulary wheels and more options for different story genres. This could broaden students' perspective on vocabulary usage for their writing skills. Therefore, the Emoji Story Quest presents a promising avenue for engaging students and fostering essential language skills. By implementing the recommendations and suggestions, this innovation has the potential to significantly impact vocabulary learning, writing proficiency, and digital literacy among young learners.

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