

## **WORCHITECT: AN ENGLISH GRAMMAR (PARTS OF SPEECH) CARD GAME**

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**Abstract:** Mastery of the English grammar is an intricate subject. Conventional teaching and learning of the English grammar have found to be an arduous task for teachers and a lacklustre one for students. The traditional pen and paper method often cause second language (L2) learners to become unmotivated in understanding this important element of the language. Thus, it is critical to provide L2 learners with the motivation to engage learning grammar in a more meaningful and purposive process. An ideal way to provide such learning experiences is through the use of language games that accommodate L2 learners' desire to grasp grammar rules in an enjoyable way. To fill the gap for a purposive and meaningful grammar-based language game, Worchitect, a card-based game that focuses on (English) parts of speech is developed. The card game poses players/learners with questions that will foster their understanding of the rules of grammar for them to play the game and accumulate the highest scores possible. This game provides a constructive reinforcement to L2 users as it allows for the English parts of speech (and grammar) rules to be deductively attained. Furthermore, Worchitect is highly marketable as it is suitable for learners of various language proficiencies; for language teachers to be used as reinforcement or the actual learning activity; for parents who are looking to spend quality time with their children; and for any language enthusiast.

**Keywords:** Language games, grammar, parts of speech, vocabulary

### **1. Introduction**

The learning of English grammar among second language users has always been among the major issues in the process of English language acquisition, especially here in Malaysia where English is learned and spoken as a second language. The traditional form focused instruction in teaching and learning grammar is still widely used by teachers and language trainers. This approach in teaching and learning English grammar focuses the teaching and learning of grammar rules through practice and drilling in hope that students will be able to apply and use the correct form of grammar in their life (Yu, 2013). Another important aspect of learning grammar is the ability of the learners or the language users to internalize and be aware of the grammar and language forms that they are using.

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Despite the contributions of form focused grammar teaching and learning, this process is often thought of being uninteresting, difficult and demotivating. Thus, the process of learning grammar gives great challenges to both teachers and learners. According to Wright, Batteridge and Buckby (1984), L2 learners must have a purpose or meaning to learn a language for this process to be meaningful and successful. Traditional paper and pen practice and drilling usually deter the learners to motivationally understand this important element of the English language. In terms of grammar teaching, it can be defined as ‘any instructional technique that draws learners’ attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it’ (Ellis, 2006). This definition calls for the ESL learners to be aware of the language forms that they are learning.

### 2. Problem Statement

As mentioned earlier, form focused grammar instruction in teaching grammar in a formal setting is not really effective especially for the modern day ESL learners. Although this type of instruction is much favoured by students as it provides the basis and platform for the ESL learners to feel more secure in learning grammar (Al Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2011), having a formal grammar lesson is highly disputed by Larsen-Freeman (1995, as cited in Hoda, 2011). They propose that ‘instruction is necessary, as some grammatical features cannot be acquired through communicative tasks only, and that instructions can be used in various ways to enhance the acquisition of grammar in second language teaching’ (Larsen-Freeman, 1995, as cited in Hoda, 2011, p. 391). Thus, a formal grammar lesson can be changed to a different way to ease the process of learning grammar. The traditional approach of drills, exercise, identifying and communicative approach should be combined to prosper the linguistic development of ESL learners (Yarrow, 2007; Ellis, 2001). Benati and Lee (2008) suggest that, the best way to teach grammar is by focusing on input rather than output. At the early stage, learners should be exposed to the formal way of learning grammar. Students are required to complete tasks that mainly help them to understand the target form instead of producing the grammatically correct form. Consequently, this will help the learners to enhance their abilities to make meaning of the target form. Thus, using a suitable and constructive language game may allow the students to practice or utilize the knowledge that they can acquire in a non-traditional and interesting way (Uberman, 1998). Therefore, Worchitect, an English Grammar (Parts of Speech) game that focuses on parts of speech is developed to overcome this problem. Through the use of cards, learners will have to recognize the rules of grammar for them to answer the questions. In addition, this game also flexes the learners’ vocabulary skills as it requires them to use the material given to them. In a study by Adi Idham et.al (2016), this game has been found to useful as an input enhancement device in teaching and learning English parts of speech where the respondents (who are also students) were able to deductively grasp the concept of the use and function of parts of speech in sentences and passages. For that reason, it is hoped that by having a grammar language game may help to assist the L2 learners in empowering their grammar skills and ultimately their proficiency of English language.

### 3. Objectives

This game was created on the main basis that it can serve as a platform to make learning and attaining English Grammar more interesting, especially among students. Through research and case studies conducted during the product development, as well as through market/external stakeholders’ suggestions, Worchitect was further enhanced to serve several objectives. First of all, Worchitect helps to strengthen the students’/players’ understanding of English Grammar concept, specifically the parts of speech. The questions were carefully designed as to elicit responses that are not only grammatically correct, but also in terms of meaning. In this game, form and functions is the priority. Apart from that, Worchitect offers enjoyable and interactive way of learning English grammar in communicative situations. The nature of a game is that it has to be able to make the users/players feel a sense of

excitement for them to be interested in not only playing the game, but also to maintain their interest to continue playing it. Through the gameplay design of Worchitect, players will not only be motivated to play the game, but it is also very enjoyable and challenging. Other than that, Worchitect aids in enriching students' vocabulary. When students/players use other references during the game such as the English dictionary, or even when they play as a group, they will form a dynamic collaborative learning environment. Worchitect also provides teachers with an interesting tool to be used in their language lessons. Teachers can use this game as one part of their lesson or even as the whole lesson in itself. Furthermore, Worchitect allows parents to spend quality time with their children that can positively impact their language motivation and attainment.

#### **4. Novelty**

Using card game concept, Worchitect ensures fun and active learning engagement among students/players in learning and acquiring the English Grammar as used in context. This is important as linguistic competency is an important contributor in achieving communicative competence. Compared to other language games available in the market, Worchitect is unique as it is:

- a) Small and portable
- b) Does not have many components to be used
- c) Can be played with/without the assistance of a teacher
- d) Does not have any fixed answer; therefore depending on the student's or player's creativity and mastery of a language. Hence, it can be played many times without losing the novelty of the game.

Most importantly, Worchitect can break the monotony of learning and practising grammar, especially parts of speech. It will test the students/players understanding of parts of speech and at the same time expand their vocabulary while playing the game in interactive and communicative situations.

#### **5. Usefulness**

Worchitect is game that was designed to be versatile in terms of its applications. This game can be used in and out of the academic setting. Notwithstanding the venue and the avenue of its use, this game will yield benefits to its users. Firstly, Worchitect helps to reinforce the students understanding of English's parts of speech. It also offers an entertaining and interactive way of learning and practising English grammar while serving as a method to build students' vocabulary level. Formally, Worchitect can be a tool for English grammar teaching and learning in the classroom. Aside from formal setting this game can be used as an instrument to promote English grammar mastery outside the classroom. The versatility of this game also means that it benefits players/users across all English language proficiency level and is an excellent way to support student centred and collaborative learning.

#### **6. Commercialization Potential or Impact Towards Socioeconomy/Humanity**

Worchitect is a game that has a good marketability and commercial potential. This is due to the fact that even though this game was first created to serve as a teaching aid for a group of language tutors, the development process that it has gone through has made it even more versatile and far reaching. To begin with, Worchitect is suitable for players ranging from secondary school level and tertiary level. It can also be played by working adults.

Furthermore, Worchitect is suitable to be used by language teachers as one a teaching tool. If used as a teaching tool, teachers can make learning English grammar become more active and engaging to students. Worchitect also benefits parents as it is suitable for parents looking to provide meaningful language support and reinforcements at home, or just simply to spend quality time with their children.

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On the technical side, Worchitect is multiplayer card game as it can be played anywhere between 2 to 4 players per session. More players can benefit from the game if team play is initiated. Furthermore, Worchitect is mobile and portable due to its nature being in card form. This is very important as users prefer something that they can easily carry or store. Worchitect is also expandable, specifically the questions set. Teachers can reproduce the questions depending on their students' needs. The game itself can be produced to cater to other proficiency levels and skills set. With ample technical support for growth, this game has the potential to be digitalized as a mobile (game) application or to be installed on PCs and laptops to cater for digital and e-learning purposes. Lastly, the Worchitect game concept is protected under Malaysian Copyright Law.

### 7. Images (With Captions/Explanation)



Figure 1: Worchitect in its early development. These are images of product research conducted with secondary school students.



Figure 2: Images of Worchitect product research conducted with tertiary students.

## 8. Conclusions

This language game product is now close to its final developmental stage. Worchitect has proven to be reliable in usage and can help improve users/players knowledge and understanding of the English parts of speech. The widespread application of Worchitect, especially in the area of English teaching and learning, is a positive possibility and has now become the main foundation of the development of the product.

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