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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE EDUCATION 2023

**EMBRACING CHANGE:
EMANCIPATING THE LANDSCAPE
OF RESEARCH IN LINGUISTIC,
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

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‘MASTERMIND’ ENGLISH BOARD GAME

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ABSTRACT:

As the English language is normally taught through schools and books, it does not motivate people to enjoy the process of learning the language. In order to make the process of learning enjoyable, this research has been conducted to uncover the ability of a board game named Mastermind as a supplementary medium to learn English among people. The main objective for is to identify the potential of this game as fun and enjoyable platform of learning language. It is also hoped to motivate people to engage with English Language while playing. Through the board game, players are challenged with 100 random questions from different categories; grammar, science, riddle, translation and general knowledge. These questions were all written in English language. They do not only test the players’ basic grammar knowledge but also their critical thinking, communication and translation skills. The game was played by 14 players between 18-22 years old. The findings of the survey revealed that the ‘Mastermind’ board game received positive feedback from the respondents and playing the game helped them increase their engagement in the English Language.

Keywords: supplementary medium, board game, critical thinking, communication skills

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is an important form of communication among people. For everyone, they must have a first language that they were introduced to when they were young. Learning a new language is never easy hence it requires a lot of practice and dedication to understand the language itself. In Malaysia, it is common for everyone to learn a second language which is English. As reported by Darmi (2013), when Malaysian students begin their primary school at the age of seven, they are formally introduced to English as a second, crucial language in addition to Bahasa Malaysia. Even though English is considered a second language in Malaysia, there are still some people who have difficulties in understanding and using the language with other people. As the English language is only learned in schools, the language is only used among teachers and friends and it is not frequently used outside of school. Despite that, English is also used while working but it does depend on the situation and type of work. English is used when communicating with people around us but due to the less frequency, English is also only used among people who acknowledge the language and this does widen the gap between society. According to research made by Ming (2012), even though English is taught formally for a number of years, there are still Malaysian learners who still lack of motivation and interest to learn English.

1.1 Project Objective

Language is a subject that can be learned through books and with the help of teachers or tutors. Books are commonly considered a learning tool that is used by people when they need to learn or

to gain information on a certain topic or subject. But due to the number of pages and lengthy continuous words, people find that books are boring and do not benefit them. In addition to that, teachers may find it hard to teach students by only relying on books as they do not have many learning tools. Not to forget, as technology is getting more advanced, there are also other sources for people to learn language with the help of the Internet but it also can lead to other misleading activities as the Internet itself is broad which may cause distraction.

A study conducted by Klimova (2014) found that children learn about the world around them naturally via play. Consequently, it should be a fundamental component of all of their education, including the study of foreign languages. All instruction ought to be illustrative and supported by concrete examples. Additionally, the teacher should start with simple examples and work his way up to the more challenging ones. Games also motivate learners to learn and encourage creative and spontaneous use of language in informal situation (Kupeckova, 2010). According to Jacobs (2019) games in language classroom create a pleasant stress-free and relaxing atmosphere in a language class, help the teacher to create contexts in which language is useful and meaningful and decrease students' anxiety to speak in front of other students as they feel less intimidated in this less formal learning situation.

Therefore, to overcome the issue of being afraid to converse in English and to create another informal platform to get engage with the target language, the researcher designed a board game with the purpose of specifically focusing on English-based questions which consist of general English questions such as riddles, science, translation, and basic grammar questions. The purpose of this board game is to create a sense of enjoyment when playing while also learning English language. This board game can also create a sense of awareness in people that language can be learned through games as well (Carrier, 1985). Learning through books may cause boredom as it is the traditional way of learning and it can encourage people to think that learning is dreary. In order to make learning much more interesting and effective, games can be incorporated into learning (Chen, 2005).

1.2 Entrepreneurial Opportunities

Mastermind was developed to bring the joy of learning English to people and it is considered another medium to learn English. The entrepreneurial opportunity of this board game is it can be used in school settings for a fun activity to be played in class that teachers can use to encourage students to use English. Teachers can use this board game as an opportunity to have more interaction with students and gain students' interest when learning. In addition to that, not only the board game can be used in schools they can also be played with family members. Parents can use it to teach and introduce their children to learn English. This way parents can encourage their children to learn English as the game brings fun and excitement while playing. In order for this board game to be introduced to schools and families, Mastermind should be introduced in local bookstores to broaden the entrepreneurial opportunities of the game. This way more people can get their hands on the game. Furthermore, as the game aims to be a medium and tool to learn English, Mastermind also aims to create another version of board game as a learning tool. For instance, Mastermind it contains different themes, and concepts to obtain players' interest. Lastly, Mastermind could also would like to collaborate with game companies to turn the game more interesting and also make it into an e-game. This will make the game more accessible for more players.



2. METHODOLOGY

Before developing the game, a lot of research was made on board games. This study adopted a qualitative approach and it was carried out physically at a public place and university involving 14 people from the age 18-22 years old. Data collection methods included a feedback form for the 14 people once they completed the game.

2.1 Studying and Preparing

At the first stage of the project the researcher had conducted a lot of studying and preparations to generate ideas for the design as well as the details on how the game should work. For instance, a research was made on various types of board games that area readily available in the market. This step is crucial to fully understand how to operate a board game and also to get inspiration. Not only that, the researcher also searched through physical board games in various bookstores and also through the existing online board games to study how the new board game can be created with no errors and can be played smoothly. It was also given a deep thought before it was finalized in order to maintain originality of the product.

2.2 Writing

Next, the researcher also created 100 questions that represented different categories namely; grammar, science, riddle, translation and general knowledge. The questions that were designed in the board game were mostly created by the researcher and some questions on general knowledge were also taken from online and sources. Therefore, the process took a longer time since the questions had to be chosen carefully and also modified to make them suitable for target players. Consideration was also given in identifying the questions level of difficulty as one of the objective of the game is to help players enjoy the game while engaging themselves in using English Language to communicate between them. Questions that are too difficult would hinder them from enjoying the game. The researcher also made a lot of research on possible questions that people tend to make mistakes and also focused on critical thinking questions to ensure that the player exercise their critical thinking abilities when answering the questions.

2.3 Testing

At the final stage of the project, the researcher tested out the board game to see if it works and achieves the objectives laid on the ground of creating it. Respondents were university students between the age of 18 to 22 years old. This process fortunately went smoothly as all of the players enjoyed playing the game and gave positive feedbacks. However, the researcher also received suggestions for improvement to make the game more fun and enjoyable.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey results will be discussed in this section. The questions were designed in order to find out whether the objectives of the research are successfully achieved or not. The figure below shows the final design of the board game.

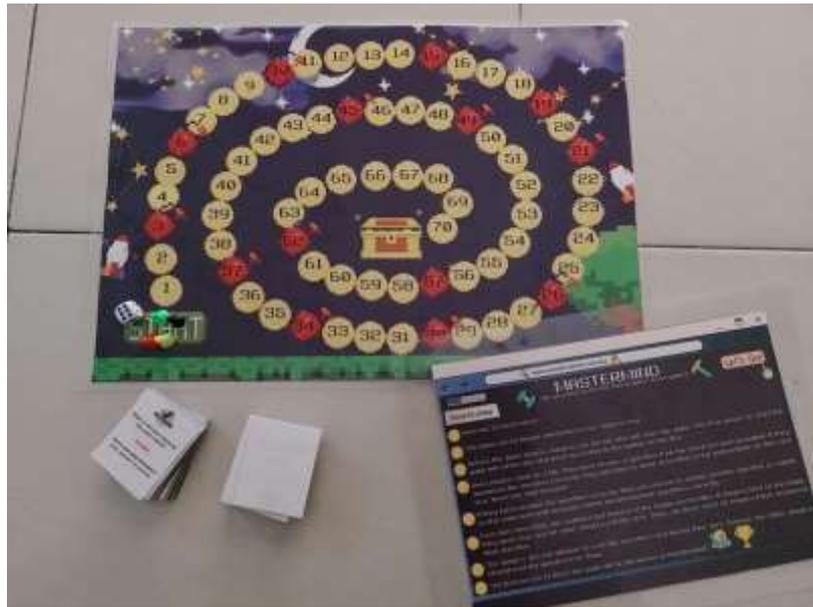


Figure 1: The completed board game

3.1 Players' Feedback on Mastermind board game

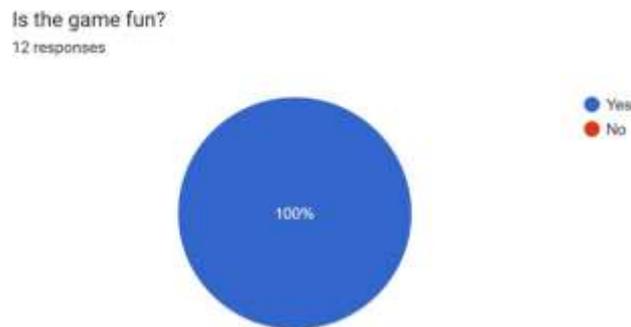


Figure 2: Response to question ‘*Is the game fun?*’

The feedback on the question showed that all respondents said the game was fun and enjoyable to play. While playing the game, respondents were asked additional questions on why the game is fun and most of them stated that the questions that were included were challenging and required a lot of thinking. As most of the questions used being riddle-based questions, some respondents found them refreshing and different from other board games they have played.

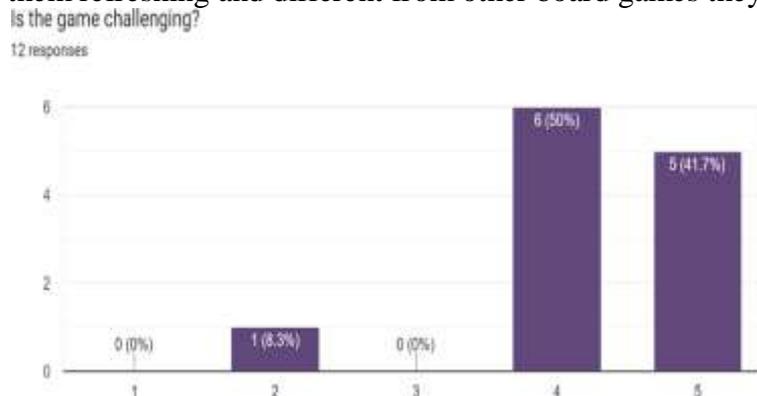


Figure 3: Response on question ‘*Is the game challenging?*’

Majority of the respondents said the game was challenging. When asked what made the game challenging, majority of them answered that the riddle-based questions were difficult but that did not stop them from not finding the game enjoyable. Instead respondents had fun

answering the riddle questions compared to the other questions given such as translation grammar-based questions. Even though some riddles were mind boggling they felt challenged trying to figure out the correct answers.

Feedback on the open ended question ‘*What is your opinion towards the game?*’ showed that the game had achieved its objectives. Majority respondents said that the game is fun, interactive, engaging, and challenging. Respondents also included that the game helped them gain new knowledge and information. Other than that, some respondents also stated that the game did help them improve their fluency and confidence when speaking in English.

One of the main objectives of the game is to encourage players to communicate in English while playing the game. Throughout the game, it was observed by the researcher that some respondents were code-mixing and code-switching from Bahasa Melayu to English as they had slight difficulties in fully understanding the questions in English whereas those respondents who conversed fully in English had no difficulties in understanding the questions. This also proved that the objective of the board game is achieved.

3.2 Supplementary Medium to Learn English

Mastermind was created through inspiration from the classical board game which is Snake and Ladder. The game is named Mastermind as it challenges the players with English-based questions that consist of riddles, translation, and basic grammar questions. Through this game, players can challenge and develop their critical thinking skills. Mastermind was invented as a supplementary medium to learn English language which can be used by teachers in classrooms as teaching material or even for parents who would like to teach or assist their children in learning language.

To find out whether Mastermind can be used as a supplementary medium, the researcher did a research on those who were fluent and less fluent in English. The overall observation on the implementation of the game was impressive and interesting as the player showed positive feedback and engagement when playing the game. The questions provided stimulate their critical thinking abilities, encourage them to speak in English, and improve fluency when speaking. The main objective of the game is to create a supplementary platform to get engage with the English language, to encourage people to communicate in English while playing game, and to provide fun and enjoyable learning experience.

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, even though the board game successfully achieved its objectives there is also room for improvement in terms of the instructions of the game which can make the game more interesting and exciting. From the research, it can be seen that Mastermind can be used as a supplementary medium to learn the English language that people can use and it also serves a platform for players to get engage with the target language. It challenges the players critical thinking skills and encourages them to speak in English more confidently as they may communicate with other better English learners. As it is a game, it lessens the pressure of feeling scared to converse in English and promotes good communicative skills. This project shows that Mastermind board game can be a supplementary medium to learn the English language.

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