

RollRoll Dice: An Effective Method to Improve Writing Skills among Year 3 Pupils in Constructing SVOA Sentences

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Abstract Recently, the incompetency in writing skills has been the main concern among the Malaysian Primary School. Sentence construction is considered the biggest obstacle, which hinders the pupils from obtaining a good result in the classroom-based assessment (PBD) especially among Chinese primary schools. Therefore, the researcher proposes an effective alternative in teaching sentence construction. This research aims to deal with the incompetency in writing skills and helps to improve the ability in sentence construction among Year 3 mixed-abilities classroom through 'RollRoll Dice' method. The dice serves as the core of the method introduced. The study focuses on constructing Subject, Verb, Object and Adverb sentences based on the pupils' level of proficiency. Pre and post-test were used as the main data collection method for the quantitative study. 30 pupils from an urban school in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia who were mostly weak in sentence construction were selected as the participants. The research findings revealed that 'RollRoll Dice' served as an effective method in enabling the pupils to understand the sentence pattern, consequently helped in improving writing skills especially in constructing SVOA sentences. The finding is believed to be beneficial to the practitioners, especially the ESL teachers and educators as 'RollRoll Dice' can be used as an insightful alternative in teaching writing skills. The recommendations that can be derived from this study is that, it would be better for the future researcher to carry out the study for a longer period of time.

Keywords Improve, Mixed-abilities, Quantitative, 'RollRoll Dice', SVOA, Sentence Construction, Writing Skills

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Language, as far as we know, is something particular to humans. In other words, language is our primary source of communication. Language is an important tool or instrument not only in the communication of ideas, but also in creating friendships, cultural ties and not to mention economic relations. Based on Reference [1], the language when viewing from its concept involves the field of language planning, language use and language attitude. Language planning involves the selection of a language as one of the means of communication that unites the people of a country. In another words, it is the method which facilitates the sharing of ideas and thoughts with others.

English is important as a second language in Malaysia. This is proven by the constant and continual teaching of English in all the schools and higher institutions. The English language is introduced to the children in Malaysian Education at the tender age of 5 to 6 years old (or known as preschool). In the context of Primary school, English learning comprises of various skills, namely listening and speaking, reading, writing and language arts in order to master the language entirely. Consequently, there is a need for the pupils to be aware of the prerequisite of mastering English in spite of being competent in the first language (L1) for their future use [2].

It is common that writing has always been addressed as the main issue and difficult task among the learners. According to Reference [3], Malaysian ESL teachers have established the truth that they face the same problem regarding learner development, especially in conventions and punctuation and this actually hinders or limits them to ensure their teaching and learning sessions go smoothly as

how it was being planned. Therefore, pupils who are unable to express themselves in writing, indirectly indicate that they tend to fail in communicating with professors, employers, friends, or anyone else.

Writing is also important in language acquisition and learning. A pupil who is able to read or speak but unable to write will definitely confront with difficulties especially during examination. Typically, pupils express their feelings or some words they feel uncomfortable to tell better through writing. Learner who encounters writing problems may face challenges in more than one aspect of writing skill, namely the proper usage of grammar, conventions, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and some basic and initiating aspects of writing [3].

1.2. Background of the Research

In order to inculcate the habit of learning English among the primary school pupils, various measures and alternatives have been introduced throughout the years for the learners to master English as second language. In Malaysia, the use of teaching aids in assisting and helping the pupils to learn English has been encouraged and implemented since years ago. The government has taken several measures and alternatives to overcome the issues of professional development in the teaching profession. Teachers are supplied with facilities and opportunities through several platforms for sharing references, ideas and experiences. The platform includes the in-service training which helps them to develop their own teaching materials [4]. This proves that the government are really looking into the education issue in our country and trying to enhance the quality of education in our country to make sure we are on par with international level.

Learning is a complicated process which involves several elementary factors such as the physical status, emotions, teacher's personality, the content of training, teaching space and not to mention teaching aids [5]. The use of teaching aids by the teacher in the classroom would be able to present the materials in cognitive structure to fit learners' needs. In addition, teaching aids also help to present abstract idea into solid and foreseeable content. It enhances the learners' imagination and helps them to transform their idea into real life experiences as well.

However, the importance of using teaching aids has slowly been neglecting in the normal language classroom. Perhaps, doing teaching aids is a burdening and time consuming task for teachers who are confronting with a thousand and one type of workloads nowadays. Most of the times, chalk and talk is a preferable method compared to promoting fun learning among the English native learners. As a result, the use of teaching aids are not fully introduced throughout Malaysian English classroom which further resulted in monotonous and boring lesson especially in teaching writing which requires a lot of understanding and patience. In order to cope with the monotonous and boring lesson in teaching writing

especially among the primary school pupils, teacher should be flexible in implementing and utilising teaching aids especially in introducing sentence pattern to the learners. Teaching aids are also believed to be able to help them to acquire the target language in a meaningful and purposeful manner. Hence, 'RollRoll Dice' could be one of the approaches which helps the learners to improve their ability in constructing simple Subject, Verb, Object and Compliment (SVOA) sentences on a daily basis.

1.3. Problem Statement

Primary school teachers play an important role as a moderator (or catalyst) in the development of children through the teaching and learning process in the local classroom. In line with this view, the Ministry of Education has taken several approaches in implementing an education system towards a common goal and direction through several curriculum revamp such as The New Primary Schools Curriculum (KBSR) in 1983 and The Integrated Secondary Schools Curriculum (KBSM). The New Primary Schools Curriculum for English language teaching emphasized on the acquisition of the 3R's namely reading, writing and arithmetic. Besides, the implementation also focuses on mastering the four basic language skills such listening and speaking, reading and not to mention writing [6]. On par with this, the active participation from the learners is expected by the stakeholders especially the school administrators and teachers.

Apparently, although the pupils are required to undergo almost 12 years of learning English in school (6 years for both primary and secondary education), most of them still confronting with the issues of low proficiency level of English and the capability of them in using target language are still at stake. One of the possibilities that leads to the phenomenon above could be the way how English lesson is delivered in school. The way how teacher conveys the lesson would be one of the causes of why the learners fail to master the language efficiently, especially in applying their knowledge in writing skills. In Malaysia, drilling method is still widely used as one of the teaching methods by most of the English teachers. Reference [7] stated that English classrooms in Malaysia are still dominated by traditional teacher-centred approach and drills.

Reference [8] also further proposed that, in English teaching and learning, writing has been widely known as a critically essential skill as it is an overall skill which helps to improve vocabulary, grammar, thinking, planning, editing, revising and just to name a few. They also further opined that writing involves a lot of usage in grammar which requires a lot of practices from the learner. Most of the time, pupils tend to use their mother tongue when communicating with their family members and friends. They also use their mother tongue to converse with their peers. Hence, the chances of using English are lesser. This

resulted in poor writing performances because they lack of practices. However, this phenomenon is not obvious until it comes to examinations and consequently affects their writing performance to meet the target.

The truth is that the use of the conventional approach in delivering the lesson is no longer applicable to the y-generation learners nowadays. The y-generation who are exposed to digital technology would expect something fun, interesting and interactive activities in teaching and learning especially English as a Second Language. It was found that drilling method has become teachers' preference to teach writing, such as sentence construction or essay writing. As an educator, it is important to let the learner grasp and decide their idea on how to write, such as constructing a simple sentence, applying grammatical rules, punctuation, spelling and not to mention complementing the sentences. They are responsible for their own writing outcome. For instance, the pupils are provided with a mini handbook entitled 'We Love English' in the researcher's schools. The book has an embedded and compact note on grammar, synonyms, antonyms, verbs, phrasal verb, idioms and similes. Besides, examples are also given in the form of sentences. However, it does not seem to help the pupils acquire the target language meaningfully since the pupils do not know how to apply the knowledge on paper, except for those elite ones.

Unfortunately, most of pupils are still having difficulties in writing especially in the examination hall nowadays. Although several approaches and methodologies had been applied, all of them were in vain. The main contributing factor of this difficulty is the due to the lack of exposure towards English since most of them do not practise it at home. Based on a research done by Reference [9], they discovered that teachers tend to use their autonomy to make decision on what should happen in the classroom, without providing students the opportunity to voice out their views or ideas. In accordance to this, we could say that the learners are lack of motivation since they are not provided with a surrounding to learn and expose themselves towards more usage of English. This demotivated them to learn and practise English especially through writing. Most of the time, they refused to answer the questions when it comes to constructing sentences, and this can be proven through their behaviour and expression each time after writing task is assigned to them. Hence, they need some motivation to help them to be involved in the lesson. In this study, it was believed that the use of teaching aids (which referred to 'RollRoll Dice') and Total Physical Response would help to motivate their learning habits.

Besides, the researcher also further collected additional data on pupils writing performance through the formative test score obtained by the Year 3 pupils of the entire school during the end of the last year. As examination system was abolished among the lower primary pupils, the researcher had to categorise the pupils writing performance into several levels based on own perspectives.

Based on the annual report, it was found that only 16.7% of the pupils were able to obtain excellent level in their Paper 2, which is also referring as the written paper. 34.4% of the pupils were at the average level. There were 56 out of 213 of them who did not pass the particular paper, which means that the rest of them were below average. This is quite an alarming scenario since they are going to be exposed to essay writing in the future. Besides, most of the teachers also agreed that the pupils were not familiar with the sentence pattern. This will consequently lead to poor writing performance in Year 4 later on.

In accordance to this, the learners also do not know how to construct simple SVOA sentences because they are unable to understand the meaning of the sentence. This phenomenon indicates that they do not understand the pattern or structure of the sentences and this indirectly demotivates them to write, needless to say constructing sentences. In this context, sentence pattern refers to the way how the sentences are put together [10]. English is different compared to the other languages because of its uniqueness of arranging the words in its pattern in order to form the meaning. Reference [10] also further argued that the learners would be able to understand the words by understanding the patterns. As a result, it is vital for a learner to master how to differentiate the sentence pattern prior attempting to write.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

In general, the purpose of this study was to discover the effectiveness of 'RollRoll Dice' in improving pupils' ability in constructing simple SVOA sentence in simple present tense especially among the Primary Year 3 (mixed-abilities) pupils. The study also aimed to prove that the use of 'RollRoll Dice' would be able to get the learners familiarise with sentence pattern and further helped to improve their ability in constructing SVOA sentences. This helps to support and provide the teachers in designing fun learning activities and also implement the use of teaching aids in their lesson especially when it comes to writing lesson. Besides, it would be helpful for some of the non-optionist English teachers to obtain some novelty ideas in teaching writing in order to allow the learners acquire language in a more meaningful experience. On par with the aims stated above, the answer will be sought to reciprocate the research questions below:

- Does the use of 'RollRoll Dice' help to improve pupils' ability on constructing SVOA sentences?
- Does 'RollRoll Dice' serve as an effective method in helping pupils to construct simple SVOA sentences?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Writing Issues among the Primary School Pupils

The primary source of communication is language.

Human use language as a technique to share their ideas and thoughts with others [13]. It is undeniable that English plays a vital role in this millennium era of globalisation. Writing is vital because English is widely used when one wishes to pursue higher education and work in a particular country [8]. Pupils who are unable to express themselves in writing indirectly indicate that they tend to fail in communicating with professors, employers, friends, or anyone else. Writing is also important in language acquisition and learning. Typically, pupils express their feelings or some words they feel uncomfortable to tell through writing. This could be explained when pupil who is able to read or speak but unable to write will definitely confront with difficulties especially during examination. Hence, the proper use of grammar, conventions, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and some of the basic and initiating aspects of writing would be some of the difficulties that might be confronted by the individuals with writing problems [3]. Consequently, it hinders them from achieving a good academic result in the examination.

In Malaysia, the enactment of the English language as the second national language in Malaysia has undergone a lot of revolution may it be at the primary, secondary school level and also at tertiary education level [14]. In today's competent and challenging world, teachers are confronting with a variety of problems and limitations especially in Teaching English as a Second Language among primary school pupils [15]. This includes developing the ability of reading and speaking, vocabulary, understanding spoken English language and not to mention developing written ability of the learners. In order to facilitate a positive learning atmosphere among the learners, teachers play an important role in discovering alternatives and motivate them to continue learning the language as well as reinforce the core knowledge for the pupils to acquire and communicate effectively in learning English. Writing occupies the most part in learning English since it requires pupils to write and describe their inner thoughts. Also, writing serves as one of the ways in evaluating how far the pupils have applied the knowledge obtained throughout the teaching and learning process. Hence, it was proposed that having good writing skills are vital to ensure a positive passing of university assignments for the learner [16].

To date, there are four main language skills to be focused in the Malaysian typical ESL classroom, namely Listening and Speaking, Reading, Writing and Language Arts. In the current curriculum aligned with CEFR, listening and speaking skills have even been separated into two different skills. Apparently, writing has always been the demanding assignment especially for the English Language Teaching expertise. Lim, Yunus & Embi [8] proposed that since communication can be done through several ways other than orally, writing serves as an essential and mandatory skill especially in learning English as a second language. Hence, writing serves as

one of the important skills to be taught in class in order to prepare the learners for further higher learning education. Besides, it also gives the learners confidence to confront the real world outside the classroom [17].

There are a few writing models that can be followed, however process and product writing would be the most common models that are widely used in teaching and learning of ESL practitioners these days. The essential elements that should be taken into consideration when a teacher selects the writing models for both process and product-related models are not only the relationship between the learning and development, but also between writing and making sense [18]. A meaningful sentence which makes sense is able to make the readers understand the message well. Typically, most pupils can talk and speak fluently in English, but when it comes to writing, not many of them can truly write well.

Writing skills play the role as vital components of literacy; pupils are required to be skillful and well-trained to be actively involved in the future literate society [12]. Reference [11] suggested that writing comprises of several procedures, beginning from pre-writing, then while writing, and lastly post activities. All in all, it is believed that writing stimulates the one's creativity, understanding and also imagination. Then, thinking process which involves brain process takes place during writing. Based on Reference [19], vocabulary, grammar, and ability in constructing good sentences are prerequisites needed by a learner to create a good piece of writing. For instance, the writer is required to organise their idea accordingly and put their thoughts into words creatively when they attempt to write [19].

2.2. The Importance of Basic Grammar

In this era of globalisation, spoken language has been part and parcel of our lives. We use spoken language every single day to communicate and convey ideas, thoughts, and emotions with those around us. No doubt most of us can communicate smoothly, but sometimes we may not be really good in written language. In accordance to this, grammar would be the main contributing factor towards pupils' writing ability. For instance, the pupils tend to mix up the usage of 'is' and 'are'. Hence, the sentences that they construct would be partially wrong and meaningless. This happens when they are not aware of when to use singular and plural verb.

People who talk in the similar language are able to exchange ideas because they instinctively understand the grammar rule of that language which is also referred as the rules of comprehending meaning [20]. Hence, pupils who are originally English native speakers have already understood how to apply grammar in their writing. Whereas some of the pupils are confronting with difficulties in recognising the sounds, needless to say the meanings, and the different ways of putting words

together in order to construct meaningful sentences.

In Malaysia, the pupils are required to undergo Primary School Achievement Test or also known as 'Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah' (UPSR) by the end of their six years primary schooling. However, due to the writing component, English has been one of the killer subjects among the candidates. This is further supported by [8] saying that in the teaching and learning of English as a Second Language (ESL), writing has been commonly considered as a vital skill as it serves as a thorough skill that reinforces components in it such as vocabulary, grammar, thinking, planning, editing, revising and just to name a few. As a result of the weak mastery in grammar and also vocabularies, it then leads to lack of interest in learning English. Hence, they also refuse to learn and to read all sorts of English materials. Consequently, they would refuse to write as well.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Based on the objectives of the study mentioned earlier, the research design of this study would be quantitative in nature. Therefore, an action research consisted of control and experimental group pupils were involved in the study. The researcher also utilised pre and post-test to evaluate the effectiveness of 'RollRoll Dice' method in improving the pupils' ability in constructing sentences. Kurt Lewin's model of action research (1946) was adapted. The model included four phases which include the planning stage, the acting stage, the observation stage and the reflecting stage. Lewin's action research model is a method which the researcher intervenes after the research problem is identified.

3.2. Research Samples and Participants

The ideal population of this study encompassed the Malaysian's primary school pupils only. This study was carried out in a Chinese primary school in Kota Bharu. The school is located in urban area which is fully equipped with the facilities of ICT, including Yes, FROG VLE, e-board and just to name a few. 30 pupils from Primary Year 3 were selected as the participants of the study. They were from a mixed-abilities class. Moreover, 30 pupils from another mixed-abilities class were also selected as the control group. The pupils from the control group did not undergo the 'RollRoll Dice' method. They served as the group for comparison purpose only. The reasons of grouping them this way was to investigate the effectiveness and impacts of 'RollRoll Dice' in helping them to construct SVOA sentences between both groups.

In addition, the research sample was also selected based on the Classroom-based assessment. It was found that in

one of the past year's assessments, there were 13.7% of them who failed in their English Paper 1 (which represents the Comprehension Paper). However, there were 28.5% of them who failed in scoring their English Paper 2 (which represent the Composition Paper). This was quite worrying since they would be having difficulties in writing essay as they grow up. Based on the school's English Panel report, it was reported that 27.6% of them managed to score A in Paper 1. On the other hand, there were only 11.7% of them who managed to score A when it came to Paper 2. Due to the examination system being abolished by the Ministry of Malaysia Education, the researcher was not able to get the recent result obtained by the Year 3 pupils. However, the researcher managed to acquire the latest result from the head panel and some of the analyses were also made from the Classroom-based assessment which is still implementing nowadays.

3.3. Instruments

There are three main instruments used in the entire study to collect the data throughout the study, namely the pre and post-test which were answered by the participants and questionnaires that were distributed to the participants after the study had been carried out. Moreover, the researcher also carried out interview sessions to collect some detailed data that were intended to be discovered in the particular field.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

First, a brief test on sentence construction was carried out among the target groups to gauge the level of the participants in the particular field that is going to be studied. After selecting the ideal participants, the researcher introduced 'RollRoll Dice' and guided them on how to make the dice based on the layout given. The pupils were required to label the dice based on the clues provided in the pictures. The participants have to roll the dice until they obtained the right outcome as describe in the pictures.

However, in the following practices, the participants were encouraged to label the dice using their own favorite words (in SVOA sentence pattern). The pupils were required to roll the dice 4 times in a row and then jot down the outcomes of the dice by writing it in a sentence form. During the end of the study, the researcher carried out the post-test with both groups again. However, the content to be tested was exactly same as the one they answered before the study is carried out. This was to study the effectiveness and impact of 'RollRoll Dice' method in improving the pupils' ability in constructing sentences. The researcher then collected all the worksheets to keep track on the participants' development throughout the study. The whole process of the study took approximately three months from the preliminary data collection to

implementation and then finally the evaluation which post-test was carried out.

In this study, the questionnaires were distributed to participants after the study to collect the data about the participants' perceptions towards learning writing through 'RollRoll Dice' method. The scales that were applied frequently in medical education research are the Likert-type scales [21]. Likert-type scale assumes that the strength/intensity of experience is linear, i.e. on a continuum from strongly agree to strongly disagree, and makes the assumption that attitudes can be measured [22]. Referring to Table 1, the Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1- Strongly disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Acceptable, 4-Agree and 5- Strongly agree) was used in identifying their perceptions.

Table 1. Likert Four-Point Scale Range Interpretation

POINT	SCALE RANGE	EXPLANATION
4	4.00 - 3.00	Strongly Agree
3	2.99 – 2.00	Agree
2	1.99 – 1.00	Disagree
1	1.00 – 0.99	Strongly Disagree

A survey questionnaire developed by the researcher was used as the main tools to gather data on the pupils' perception on the use of 'RollRoll Dice' method in improving the writing skills among the pupils. The questionnaire was proofread by three optionist teachers (Teaching English as Second Language) before distributing them to the participants. The pupils were given a single English period (a duration of 30 minutes) to answer the questionnaires on printed paper. The items in questionnaire were explained one by one in order to cater for the needs of some pupils who are not proficient in English. The survey questionnaires were then collected on the spot right after the particular lesson and the data gathered was further analysed by the researcher in order to answer the research questions.

4. Findings and Discussions

First and foremost, the findings in this study were mostly obtained through the pre and post-test for both control and experimental groups. The question in pre and post-test was designed based on their level and also on par with the recent CEFR curriculum. Next, the pupils were required to complete a questionnaire which was designed by the researcher after the entire study was done. Moreover, short interviews session were conducted among the experimental group. The interview aimed to discover in depth the view of pupils before and after experiencing the 'RollRoll Dice' of the study. The main findings of the study would be further explained and discussed in detailed under this section.

4.1. Main Findings of the Study

Generally, the study has proven that the use of 'Roll Roll Dice' was able to improve the pupils' ability in constructing sentences especially among the pupils who have lower performance in writing SVOA sentences. Writing skill is considered as one of the main factors in hindering pupils from achieving satisfactory result in the examination. Typically, most of the pupils in SJKC (Chinese Primary School) can only write provided that the guidance is directly given to them. As a result, they tend to rely on the teachers' guidance or answers. However, when it comes to examination, they would be panic and feel uneasy since the teachers would not be there to provide any clues or guidance. Hence, this has affected their confidence to write on the paper.

After the pre-test was carried out among both groups, it was found that most of the pupils were confronting with difficulties especially in constructing SVOA sentences. Most of them were able to write simple sentences, however their sentences did not have the proper sentence structure. They just wrote whatever they want to write. For instance, their first sentence could be in the form of Subject, Verb and Object (SVO) but their second sentence could be in the form of Subject, Verb and Adverb (SVA), provided that clear instruction was given by the researcher. Moreover, many of them did not manage to write five sentences based on the pictures. Consequently, both groups did not show an ideal performance and ability in constructing sentences but surprisingly the control group achieved slightly better performance compared to the experimental group. The result would be further presented and tabulated below.

The post-test was carried out among both groups right after the intervention. In order to ensure the validity of the entire study, the questions given in the post-test was totally same as the pre-test that they had taken before. As expected, the pupils from experimental groups showed a great improvement compared to the result they obtained in the pre-test. Since they were from mixed-abilities classroom, the researcher no longer provided guidance for the elite pupils. However, guidance was still given to those who have lower proficiency in English.

It was also observed that most of the pupils were motivated and confident to write on the paper. The weaker pupils would try their best to divide the lines into four columns (representing SVOA) before they started to write. The result proven that 'RollRoll Dice' has improved the pupils' ability not only in writing but also in constructing SVOA sentences, which will then help to speed up their learning process in Year 4. On the contrary, the control group did not show a lot of improvements in their post-test. It was discovered that some of their sentences still did not make any sense at all. The control group was believed to undergo the traditional 'Chalk and Talk' teaching method. The result would be further discussed below.

4.2. Findings and Discussions

As mentioned earlier, the study was carried out with the aim to improve the ability to construct simple SVOA sentences among the pupils. Hence, the reports of the findings would focus mainly on the pupils’ performance before and after the test, followed by questionnaires and also interview sessions. The difference between the score obtained by the pupils during the pre and post-test served as the main focus for the entire study. The pupils would be given 3 marks as the full mark for each sentence that they managed to construct. The total marks for both tests are 15 marks respectively.

Table 2. The Mode, Median and Mean for Pre and Post-test

	Control		Experimental	
	Pre (Marks)	Post (Marks)	Pre (Marks)	Post (Marks)
Mode	0	7	3	10
Median	4	7	3.00	9.50
Mean	3.93	6.80	3.73	9.37

Based on Table 2, the marks tabulated shown the

difference of the marks achieved by both control and experimental groups in pre and post-test. The data recorded showed the level of both groups were relatively at the same level in the beginning of the study. This can be proven by the mean score obtained by both groups, which are 3.93 for control and 3.73 for experimental group. In other words, the experimental group is slightly weaker than the control group before ‘RollRoll Dice’ was introduced. However, the reports of the findings revealed the potency of ‘RollRoll Dice’ as an effective way in helping Year 3 pupils to improve their ability in constructing SVOA sentences through the difference of the mean score obtained by both groups at the end of the study. Throughout the end of the method was introduced, the experimental group has shown a great improvement of the mean score 9.37. This is a strong evidence to show that ‘RollRoll Dice’ has actually helped to improve their writing skills compared to the mean score of 6.80 obtained by control group.

The scores obtained by pupils in both tests are further presented in Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3 and also Figure 4 for a better understanding.

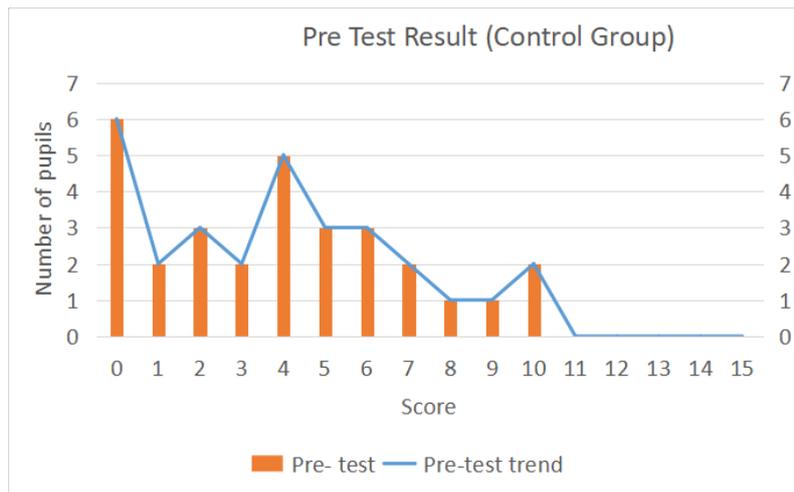


Figure 1. Pre-test Result for Control Group

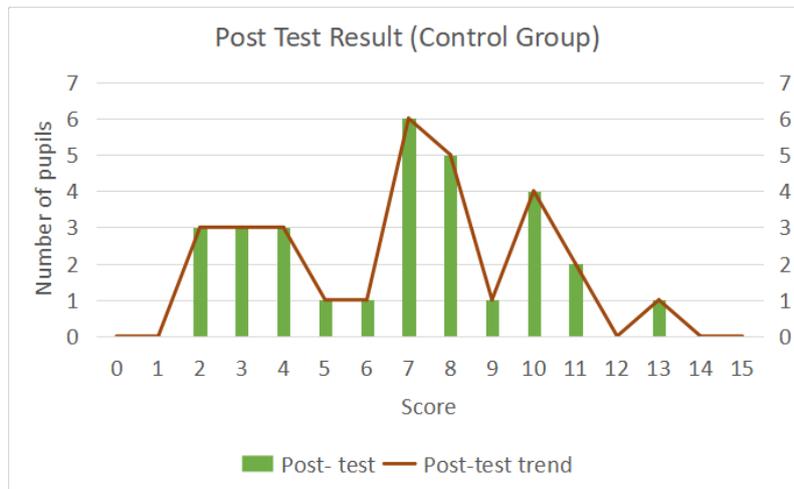


Figure 2. Post-test Result for Control Group

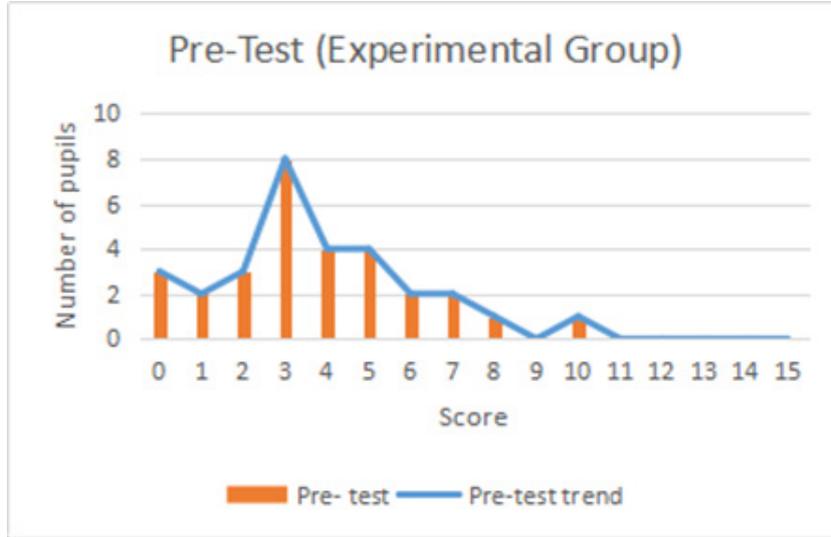


Figure 3. Pre-test Result for Experimental Group

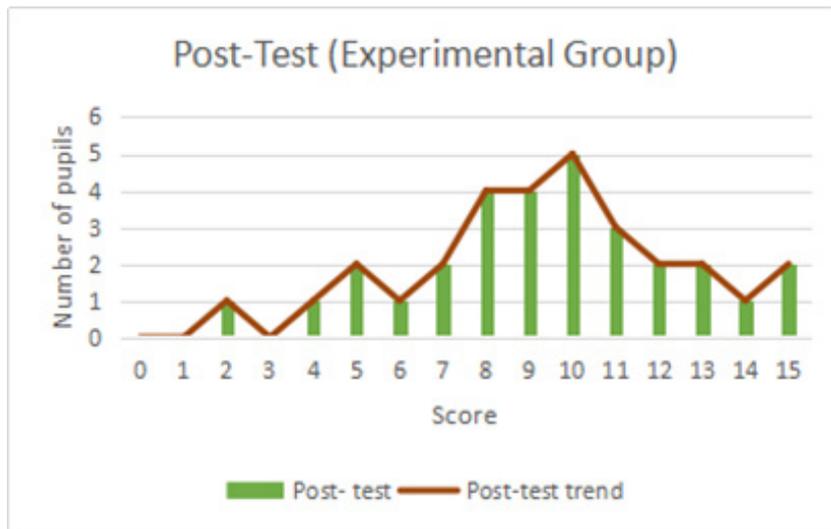


Figure 4. Post-test Result for Experimental Group

4.3. Discussions on the Findings

4.3.1. The Use of 'RollRoll Dice' in Helping Pupils' to Improve the Ability on Constructing SVOA Sentences

4.3.1.1. Pre and Post-test

Based on the result tabulated in Table 2, there was improvement recorded in the pre-test and post-test score for pupils in experimental group. Through the implementation of 'RollRoll Dice' method, the pupils have proven their ability to construct SVOA sentences in post-test result. This can be proven by the increase of mean score of pre-test and post-test from 3.73 marks to 9.37 marks out of total of 15 marks. This means that all the pupils were able to construct at least 3 SVOA sentences correctly towards the end of the study. Based on the post-test result, more than half of the pupils were able

to score 9.5 marks. In other words, there were 15 pupils who managed to score 10 or more than 10 marks out of 15 marks. The result indicates huge improvement compared to median score of 3 marks. There was also a total of 8 pupils obtained a majority of 3 marks during pre-test before implementation of 'RollRoll Dice' method.

It was found that before the method was introduced, most of the pupils only managed to construct a simple sentence consisting of SV or SVO only. Grammatical errors and mistakes in punctuation were still common issues during the pre-test. The pupils were able to construct at least two sentences fulfilling the criteria of SVOA sentence pattern after 'RollRoll Dice' was introduced. The highest difference of the score for post-test was 12 marks. In this case, minor mistakes and spelling errors were not included in the criteria of deducting the marks since the focus of the study was only to gradually improve and develop pupils' writing skills.

Although previously they were unable to write a complete sentence, all of the pupils managed to write at least two sentences correctly after the treatment. Since they were only from primary Year 3, their exposure towards vocabularies was still limited. Hence, they tend to spell some ‘Objects’ wrongly, but this did not affect the meaning of the whole sentence. Hence, marks were still given as long as the sentences made sense and followed the sentence pattern of SVOA. Based on the result tabulated, it was concluded that the use of ‘RollRoll Dice’ was able to improve pupils’ ability in constructing sentences in the form of SVOA. This can be also proven by the result obtained by the pupils of experimental group.

4.3.1.2. Questionnaire

The researcher further distributed a questionnaire to the experimental group to understand and assess the underlying factors which lead to the improvement in term of constructing SVOA sentences. The questionnaire was divided into five major categories, which included perception, understanding, fun learning, applications and innovation aspect and they were arranged randomly in the

questionnaires. The result was tabulated in bar charts and tables for better understanding of the underlying factors contributing to the improvement in constructing SVOA sentences.

Based on Table 3, most of the pupils agreed that ‘RollRoll Dice’ has helped them to improve their understanding towards writing especially in sentence pattern and structure which led them to the confidence in writing sentences. This can be proven when a total of 86% of them agreed that ‘RollRoll Dice’ method has helped them in constructing basic sentences. Besides, 27 pupils agreed that they can write longer sentences after using ‘RollRoll Dice’. The improvement in pupils’ ability to construct basic sentences and write longer sentences was mainly contributed by the enhancement of their understanding towards basic sentence structure. Figure 5 also further reveals that 29 out of total of 30 pupils agreed that ‘RollRoll Dice’ method was effective in improving their understanding towards application of SVOA in constructing sentences.

Table 3. Questionnaire items under the Category ‘Understanding’

Items/ Numbers of responses	‘RollRoll Dice’ method helps me in constructing basic sentences. (UND 1)	I can write longer sentences after knowing ‘RollRoll Dice’. (UND 2)	I can understand the sentence structure using ‘RollRoll Dice’ method. (UND 3)
Strongly Disagree	0	2	0
Disagree	4	1	1
Agree	12	18	16
Strongly Agree	14	9	13
Mean Score	3.33	3.13	3.40

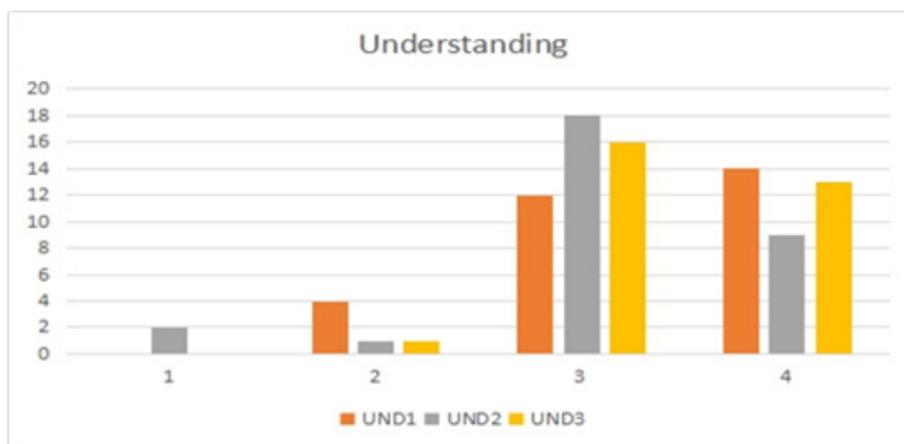


Figure 5. Category 1: Understanding

Table 4. Questionnaire Items under the Category ‘Application’

Items / Numbers of responses	I will apply this method in the future.	I can construct simple sentences by myself now.
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Disagree	7	7
Agree	13	14
Strongly Agree	10	9
Mean Score	3.10	3.07



Figure 6. Category 2: Application

Next, some of the items were further categorised under the theme of ‘Application’. Application of the sentence pattern is vital in this study for the pupils in order to write sentences. Ability to apply skills and knowledge learned to create own sentences is the enhanced level after understanding had been built among pupils of experimental group. For instance, the target language was introduced by using dices of different colours to distinguish between Subject, Verb, Object and Adverb for the pupils.

Based on Table 4, a total of 76% of the pupils agreed that they will apply this method in the future whenever it comes to constructing sentences. Despite some of them think that making the dices was quite time consuming for them, it helped them to understand better and they can write faster by referring to the concept introduced by ‘Roll Roll Dice’. Besides, Figure 6 also further shows that a total of 23 pupils also agreed that they can construct or write simple sentences on their own after the study was carried out. It shows that they were able to apply the knowledge learned in their daily task. As most of the pupils agreed that they can apply the formula in writing, it was proven that ‘Roll Roll Dice’ is able to improve the pupils’ ability in writing, especially among the Year 3 pupils in Chinese primary school.

4.3.2. 'RollRoll Dice' as an Effective Method in Helping Pupils to Construct Simple SVOA Sentence

4.3.2.1. Pre and Post-test

On the other hand, the pre-test result of control group was recorded at an average score of 3.93. It was then increased to a mean score of 6.8 in the post-test. As the ‘RollRoll Dice’ method was not implemented on the control group, it was believed that the improvement was mainly contributed by typical classroom teaching method such as drilling or direct translation method. The mode recorded in post-test result of control group was 7, slightly lower than the mode score 8 of the experimental group. Although the mode score for control group showed an increment compared to pre-test result, the lower mean score of 6.83 showed that the range of improvement

among pupils in control group was relatively inconsistent and volatile.

In this study, the word ‘improving’ refers to the progress and improvement of the score pupils obtained from pre to post-test. Based on the data collected, the mean score of the experimental groups has been increased by 5.5 marks, whereas the mean score of the control group only increased by 2.7 marks. In other words, ‘RollRoll Dice’ has more potential to improve the pupils ability in constructing SVOA sentences compared to other methods.

Moreover, it was discovered that most of the answers written by the control group were only simple sentences which consists of mainly Subject, Verb and Object only. Hence, this further supported the fact that ‘RollRoll Dice’ helps pupils in writing longer sentences. Since the pupils were given three marks each time they managed to write a sentence, a mean score of 9.37 indicates that the experimental group was able to write at least 3 sentences with a complete SVOA sentence patterns compared to the control group which obtained a mean score of 6.80 after the study. It was found that the marks of the mean score were not solely because the pupils were able to construct SVOA sentences. On the contrary, most of them were able to construct 3 sentences with SVO only. It is proven that the experimental group has shown an improvement in constructing SVOA sentences after the ‘RollRoll Dice’ was introduced, given that ‘RollRoll Dice’ method was consistently applied in teaching writing.

Based on the score obtained by the pupils in the post-test, the pupils from experimental group have shown great improvements in constructing SVOA sentences. This can be proven through the difference of the mean score of the pupils from both groups. As we can see, the mean score of pre-test for control group and experimental group are 3.93 and 3.73 respectively. It was found that the ability of sentence construction for both groups were almost at the same level before the method was implemented. Hence, once again it can be concluded that ‘RollRoll Dice’ serves as one of the effective tools in improving pupils’ writing skills, especially in constructing SVOA sentences which further answered the research

questions.

4.3.2.2. Questionnaire

In order to determine the effectiveness of ‘RollRoll Dice’ method towards improving their ability to construct SVOA sentences, the pupils of experimental group were assessed under perception, fun learning and innovation aspects which covered 6 out of 11 questions of the questionnaire. The result was tabulated in the following tables and graphs respectively.

Table 5 and Figure 7 show that the pupils from experimental groups have positive perception towards the ‘RollRoll Dice’ method. Based on the data collected from

the questionnaire, there were only 3 pupils who did not like the ‘RollRoll Dice’ method while the remaining 27 pupils liked the method and found it interesting to apply in learning. 93% of the pupils agreed that writing was difficult and boring before ‘RollRoll Dice’ method was introduced to them. Obviously, they discovered that learning process could be more fun and interesting with implementation of this method. Hence, positive perception and impression towards the method would be one of the vital factors which led to effective learning process in constructing SVOA sentences among the experimental group.

Table 5. Questionnaire items under the Category ‘Perception’

Items/ Numbers of responses	I like the ‘RollRoll Dice’ method.	Writing is difficult and boring before ‘RollRoll Dice’ is introduced.
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Disagree	3	2
Agree	16	13
Strongly Agree	11	15
Mean Score	3.27	3.43

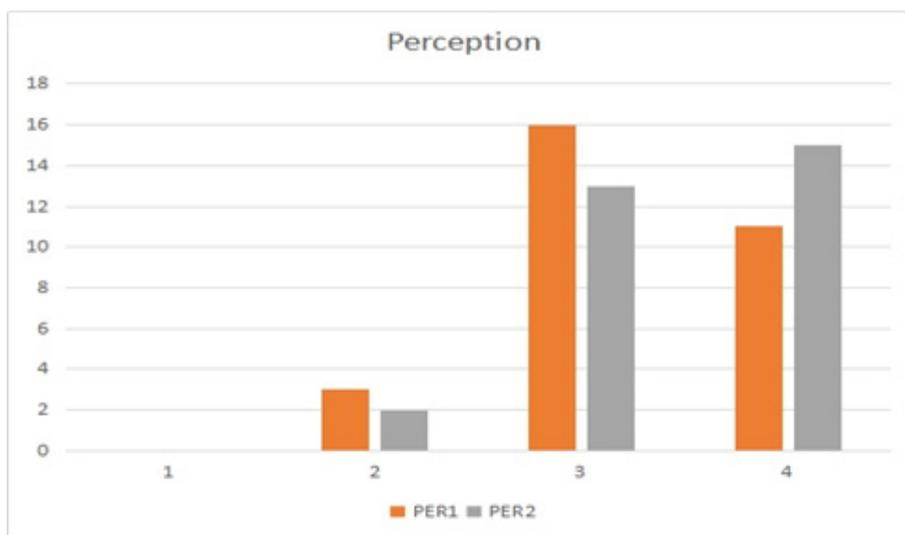


Figure 7. Category 3: Perception

Table 6. Items under the Category ‘Fun Learning’

Items / Numbers of responses	I feel writing and homework are easier and enjoyable through ‘RollRoll Dice’ method.	I will introduce this method to my friends.
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Disagree	1	4
Agree	15	14
Strongly Agree	14	12
Mean Score	3.43	3.27



Figure 8. Category 4: Fun Learning

Table 6 and Figure 8 provide a clearer picture for the researcher on how the experimental group feels about the ‘RollRoll Dice’ method. Based on Table 6, 29 out of 30 pupils in experimental group enjoyed using ‘RollRoll Dice’ method in completing ‘writing-related’ homework. Given a 3-months implementation period, the pupils of experimental group were able to learn and apply ‘RollRoll Dice’ method in their daily homework and assignments given by teachers.

Besides, the effectiveness of the ‘RollRoll Dice’ method towards improving pupils’ ability to construct SVOA sentences can be proven by the desire and eagerness of the pupils to introduce the method to their peers and friends from the other classes. Due to a positive experience throughout the exposure to the method, 86% of pupils in experimental group agreed that they would share their experience and recommend this particular method to their friends who encounter writing difficulties. This indirectly showed that the method was effective because it was able to increase the interest among the pupils by adding fun and interactive elements in the learning process.

Table 7. Questionnaire items under the Category ‘Innovation’

Items/ Numbers of responses	I hope the other language subjects can apply the ‘RollRoll Dice’ method too!	I think ‘RollRoll Dice’ can be used in learning other language skills.
Strongly Disagree	6	13
Disagree	12	15
Agree	10	2
Strongly Agree	2	0
Mean Score	2.27	1.63

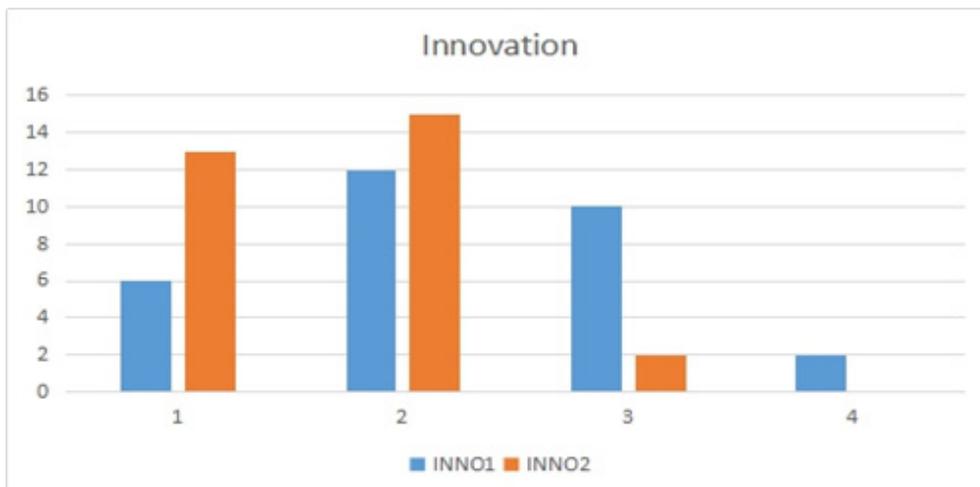


Figure 9. Category 5: Innovation

The items under the category ‘innovation’ were the only least favourable result towards improving pupils’ ability to construct SVOA sentences. This can be proven through the trend in Figure 9 when more than half of the pupils disagreed that the method can be applied to other subjects and learning other language skills. Based on Table 7, the researcher found that only 12 out of 30 pupils in the experimental group disagreed that ‘RollRoll Dice’ method can be applied in other languages. This showed that ‘RollRoll Dice’ lacked of innovative potential to be applied similarly in other languages such as the National Language (Bahasa Malaysia) and Mandarin which are also taught in the Chinese primary schools. In another words, ‘RollRoll Dice’ method has a lower potential to be applied in other subjects in order to cater for the needs of language learning difficulties. Moreover, the pupils also found it difficult to apply the method in other language skills such as listening, speaking and reading as the method was mainly specifically designed for improving writing skills among the pupils of experimental group.

4.3.2.3. Interview

Last but not least, two interview sessions were also carried out after the study. The interview sessions were conducted among the control group only. Each interview session involved five pupils who had experienced the ‘RollRoll Dice’ method. In order to further reveal the answer of the research question, a simple yet precise response obtained throughout the interview session was transcribed and coded into several categories by the researcher as below:

Table 8. Transcription based on Interview Session and the Theme

Keywords	Theme
- I feel <i>excited</i> when teacher used the dice to teach.	Motivation
- ‘RollRoll Dice’ is very <i>fun</i> and <i>interesting!</i> I like it! - ‘RollRoll Dice’ method helps me to write better. I feel writing is <i>fun</i> now!’	Interesting
- I like to roll the dice and write. I can <i>roll many times</i> until I get the correct answer.	Practice
- I prefer to <i>make my own dice</i> with my own words in it. And i will <i>roll until I get the answer</i> based on the pictures. It is fun!	Drilling
- The different colour dice make us <i>understand</i> sentences better. - It made us <i>understand</i> what are Subject, Verb and Object. And now, we know Adverb.	Familiarisation

Table 8 shows some of the keywords extracted from the interview sessions. A few questions were prepared and asked by the researcher in order to prompt the pupils to share their views and opinions on ‘RollRoll Dice’ in depth. For instance, 8 out of 10 pupils were able to mention the name of the method when they were asked by the researcher. Besides, 7 out of 10 pupils also mentioned the keyword ‘fun’ and ‘interesting’ when they were asked

how they felt about the method. For pupils who were not able to express themselves well, they also tried to utter some words to express that they felt ‘RollRoll Dice’ method was not boring and it has helped them to write more effectively. Most of the pupils also further agreed that the fun and creative criteria included in the method managed to engage them in learning writing compared to the traditional method.

Next, the researcher further seeks for the answers on how ‘RollRoll Dice’ helps the learners in learning writing. 4 out of 10 pupils explained that the drilling method helped them to understand sentence structure better. Moreover, 2 out of them also mentioned about how the element of familiarisation in sentence structure has helped to improve their writing skill. This can be proven through the keyword ‘understand’ uttered by the pupils. As a result, they are able to write longer and complete sentences now. In other words, there has been improvement in their writing skills after the method was introduced. This further supports that ‘RollRoll Dice’ served as an effective method in helping pupils to construct simple SVOA sentence.

The pupils described that their teachers prefer traditional modelling method especially when it comes to writing lesson. However, there were times where the pupils with lower proficiency level could not follow the lesson since their vocabulary is limited. They further claimed that ‘RollRoll Dice’ was not only a simple teaching aid but it was also fun and effective and they can clearly understand the structure of a sentence now since the dice served as bricks and blocks for them to ‘build’ a sentence. Most importantly, they were able to apply their knowledge through the drilling practices given throughout the study. They were even able to make their own dice and roll the desired answer. This has further proven the research questions that ‘RollRoll Dice’ can improve the pupils’ ability in constructing SVOA sentences.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Factors Affecting Pupils' Writing Skills

After evaluating the pre-test of both groups, it was observed that pupils refused to write whenever it comes to writing task. The pupils’ level proficiency in English language was actually very weak and limited in writing. Hence, a teacher's responsibility is to provide opportunities and encouragement for students to attempt to write and simultaneously promote pupils' success in writing. The outcome of the pre-test for both groups has shown that pupils were confronted with difficulties in writing. This is a common phenomenon among the lower primary pupils.

Writing is rather challenging because it is linked to other language skills [23]. Besides, it also involves

comprehensive knowledge of grammar, appropriate word choice, writing mechanics, organizational technique and styles of writing. During the pre-test, most of them managed to construct only one simple sentence which consists of Subject, Verb and Object. Grammatical errors were clearly found in the sentences. However, this should not happen as they are going to be exposed to essay writing when they enter upper primary level later. They should be able to construct longer sentences, draft or plan an wider range of simple sentences. In other words, there was a need to help them to improve their writing skills.

5.2. The Use of 'RollRoll Dice' as an Effective Tool

There were several criterias needed to be fulfilled in order to produce effective teaching aids. Effective teaching aids should be captivating in terms of the appearance. They should also be durable and user friendly [24]. However, the aspect of low cost has been taken into consideration by the researcher prior to making the teaching aids. This is further supported by Reference [25] who suggested that low cost teaching aids are made of simple materials with the least spending which involves both teachers and the learners in making it. He also further opined that low cost teaching aids often requires the learners and teachers to create their own desired learning materials. This constantly inculcates their pride and pleasure in utilising the teaching aids to the fullest. In accordance to this, 'RollRoll Dice' was invented to fit the learning needs of the learners in 21st century learning.

Based on the responses collected from the questionnaires, most of the pupils approved that 'RollRoll Dice' is an effective tool in improving their writing skill, which can be explained through several aspects. Through the responses obtained from the questionnaire, the researcher discovered that most pupils had a perception that writing was difficult and boring before 'RollRoll Dice' was implemented. Moreover, many pupils agreed that they like the method very much. Interview sessions were carried out to discover the perception of the pupils in depth. The pupils told that they felt writing were difficult because they have no idea on what and how to write. Besides, their vocabularies were also limited and they could not spell some difficult words which demotivated them to write sentences. In addition, teaching aids were not fully exploited especially during writing lessons. Nevertheless, they felt writing is more fun and easier after they used 'Roll Roll Dice' because they are able to picture and imagine what a sentence should be like.

Besides, 'Roll Roll Dice' also included the aspects of fun learning. It was observed that pupils lose their interest when it comes to writing. This was mainly due to the monotonous teaching approach in some of the language classrooms. There is a need to master writing skills even in the native language and this is what makes writing a difficult and boring task since the learners would not be able to get direct feedback from the teacher [26]. Most of

the pupils from lower primary also have a shorter attention span. For instance, 'Roll Roll Dice' is a realia which the pupils are able to touch, feel and explore by themselves. The components in the sentences (SVOA) are also made with dices of different colours, such as red for subject, orange for verb, blue for object and green for the adverb. This helps the pupils to understand the sentence structure better than the traditional substitution table. Hence, fun and meaningful games serve as the best method to instil the interest in writing among the pupils.

5.3. Implications

There are a number of skills to be mastered by the Malaysian Primary School pupils before completing their six years' primary education, namely listening and speaking, reading, writing and not to mention language arts. However, writing seems to be the most crucial and challenging skills for them, especially among the Year 3 pupils. This can be proven by the pupils' performance in Task-Based Assessment carried out by the teachers in the class. Apparently, writing seems to be boring and monotonous for the lower primary pupils as most of them have not really mastered the skill before. Besides, another factor that hinders them from writing well would be the limited vocabularies. Therefore, there is a need to move away from the traditional 'Chalk and Talk' method of teaching writing in the typical ESL classroom. Taking into account the writing complications and incompetency confronted by the learners nowadays, the study was designed to help the pupils in solving the problem.

Based on the findings and discussion that had been explained in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that 'RollRoll Dice' served as one of the effective ways in improving the writing skills among Year 3 pupils especially in constructing SVOA sentences. The effectiveness of the method was explained through several themes, namely perception, understanding, application, fun learning and innovation. On the other hand, the dice was also considered as the 'realia' as the pupils can feel and touch them with their hands. Pupils were also trained to be creative as they were required to create their own dice during some of the sessions, hence it makes the teaching and learning more interactive and communicative.

In a nutshell, the study is believed to bring useful insights to the practitioners especially the teachers since the method can be served as one of the alternatives in teaching writing among the lower primary pupils. It also eases the teacher's job as the teacher only needs to provide the layout of the dice and make the pupils work for it. Hence, the pupils are trained to be responsible and committed towards their own learning. The materials used for this study were just thick coloured paper which was quite fragile for Year 3 pupils. The recommendation for further studies is that it would be better if the materials of the dice can be replaced with more durable materials.

Last but not least, it is advisable that the whole study can be carried out for a longer period of time so that a variety of practices can be given to them in order to expose the pupils to more types of sentence pattern instead of SVOA only. All in all, teacher needs to utilise teaching aids in ESL classroom creatively and wisely to double up the desired and expected outcome. It is believed that there are rooms for improvement in developing writing skills among the Malaysian Primary School pupils as long as the teachers make full use of the materials and teaching aids available around them.

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