IMPROVING YEAR 4 PUPILS' ABILITY TO SPELL COUNTABLE PLURAL FORMS OF NOUNS THROUGH THE USE OF 'MAKE IT PLURAL' (M.I.P) CHART

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ABSTRACT: The lack of understanding and confusion on the basic rules of plural nouns faced by the pupils has greatly affected their ability to write correct spelling of the plural forms of the nouns. A research was conducted on 4 selected participants from Year 4 B of SK Z who obviously showed difficulties in applying appropriate spelling rules to form correct plural forms of the nouns. Hence, this action research was conducted to develop the pupils' ability to spell the countable plural forms of the nouns correctly. A plural form chart named 'Make It Plural' Chart was used as the intervention to address this issue. Four lessons using the intervention with different focused in spelling rules of the plural nouns ('-s', '-es', '-ies' '-ves') were implemented throughout this research in order to assist the pupils in improving their ability to spell the countable plural forms of the nouns correctly. The data for this study was collected through observation, the result of worksheets' scores and the result of the pre-test and post-test. The results of the findings from three different sources showed that the use of 'Make It Plural' (M.I.P) Chart has significantly improved the participants' ability to spell the countable plural forms of the nouns correctly. Discussion of the findings, reflection and suggestion for further research was highlighted in the last section of this article in order to develop more quality and comprehensive teaching and learning session in the future.

KEYWORDS: spelling rules of plural nouns, 'Make It Plural' Chart

INTRODUCTION

Realizing the importance of the English language, the Ministry of Education Malaysia has introduced the standardized Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR) to boost the English language learning as a means of pushing the younger generation towards being able to compete with the global community in the future ("English language and its importance to Malaysia's growth", 2012). One of the important aspects included in the new curriculum is on grammar module which emphasized on ensuring that all the pupils should be able to use correct and appropriate rules of grammar in speech and writing before the end of Year 6 primary schooling. This is supported by Macfayden (2016) who claims that it is important to develop a solid foundation in basic English grammar rules as it will help the learners to construct sentences correctly and to make it easier for them to improve in both their spoken and written communication skills. Reducing the scope, Bonn (2016) maintains that noun is the core of a sentence which conveys the meaning of what is being talked about and is viewed as the most prominent subject that makes a sentence works.In conjunction to this statement, the researcher intends to focus on one of the crucial parts in grammatical components which is on countable plural nouns where she found that majority of the learners from her past teaching experiences wereable to understand the function of singular and plural nouns but when it comes to the spelling rules of

transforming the singular nouns into the plural nouns, the pupils tend to get confused and spell the word form changes incorrectly.

In order to further address this issue, the researcher had conducted preliminary data collection through observation and diagnostic test. Based on the observation, the researcher found out that the pupils were unsure of the plural noun rules to be applied for certain types of nouns and some of them seemed clueless and responded as if they have never learnt on the plural noun rules before. Apart from that, the researcher also managed to identify four pupils who had shown repeated errors in spelling the plural forms of the nouns including the rules of adding '-s', '-es' , '-ies' and '-ves' and they scored the lowest marks ranging from 0% – 40% compared to the other classmates. This indicated that these pupils required more attention and the researcher had decided to use an intervention named 'Make It Plural' (M.I.P) Chart in order to improve the pupils' ability to spell the countable plural forms of nouns correctly.

RESEARCH FOCUS

Based on the previous teaching experiences, the researcher had discovered that most of the pupils had encountered difficulties in recognizing and differentiating the changes in the plural forms of the nouns. The ability to distinguish singular and plural nouns is considered as one of the important grammar lists that the learners in the primary level should acquire and able to use before moving to other complex grammar components (Sekelji & Rigo, 2011). The researcher had discovered several factors that led to the problem in applying the spelling of the plural forms among the pupils. The first contributing factor concerning this issue is the differences that exist in grammatical structures between Malay Language and English language. According to Wee, Sim, & Jusoff (2010), the English language learners in Malaysia face great difficulties in mastering the English plural forms due to the great differences between the noun system of English and the Malay Language. For example, the word form of 'buku' is spelled as 'buku-buku' as the plural form of the noun in the Malay Language. In contrast, the plural form of the word 'book' in the English language should have an '-s' at the end of the word to make it plural; that is 'books'. The second factor is the pupils tend to overgeneralise the rules of plural nouns where they assume that they only have to add '-s'in order to change the nouns into the plural forms. There are several common mistakes done by the pupils in conjunction with this factor. For instance, the nouns that end with –s, -ss, -sh, -ch and –x are added with an 's' only, which should actually end with '–es' to make them plural nouns. As for the nouns that end with 'y', 'f' or 'fe' such as battery, loaf and knife, the pupils just simply add an 's' instead of 'ies' and 'ves' to make those words plural.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Research Objective

The research objective for this study is:

To describe the extent the use of 'Make It Plural' (M.I.P) Chart is able to improve Year 4 pupils' ability to spell countable plural forms of the nouns correctly.

Research Question

The research question for this study is:

To what extent does the use of 'Make It Plural' (M.I.P) Chart enable the Year 4 pupils' to improve their ability to spell the countable plural forms of the nouns correctly?

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The researcher acts as a catalyst to assist the subjects or participants of the research in supporting them to work and improve themselves using the best solutions to the issue that concern them (Stringer, 2007). Hence, the role of the researcher is being emphasized as a resource person where they become the

participantobserver, the facilitator and the reflector in this action research. Based on the research conducted, the researcher has selected 4 participants consisting of 3 males and one female participants from Year 4 B to conduct this research. All of them are ethnically homogenous.They are Malays and have low level of proficiency in the English Language. These participants are selected because they are the weak scorers in the diagnostic test and had shown repeated errors in spelling the plural forms of the nouns.

RESEARCHIMPLEMENTATION

In order to address the issue, the researcher has planned to use 'Make it Plural' (M.I.P) Chart as the intervention in enabling the pupils to recognize and apply the correct rules of word form changes of the plural nouns focussing on four basic rules of the plural nouns including adding '-s', '-es', '-ies' and '-ves'. The use of charts and other visuals by the teacher help to graphically depict the grammatical relationships to assist learners in their learning of grammar rules (Brown, 2007).Apart from that, the implementation of this intervention is based on two learning theories that are Cognitive Constructivism Theory by Piaget (Philips, 1978)and also Zone Proximal Development (ZPD) Theory by Vygotsky (McLeod, 2014).
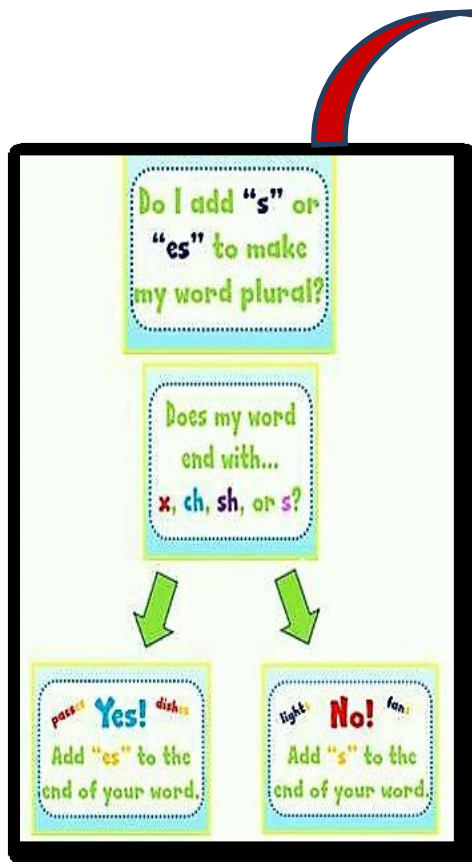

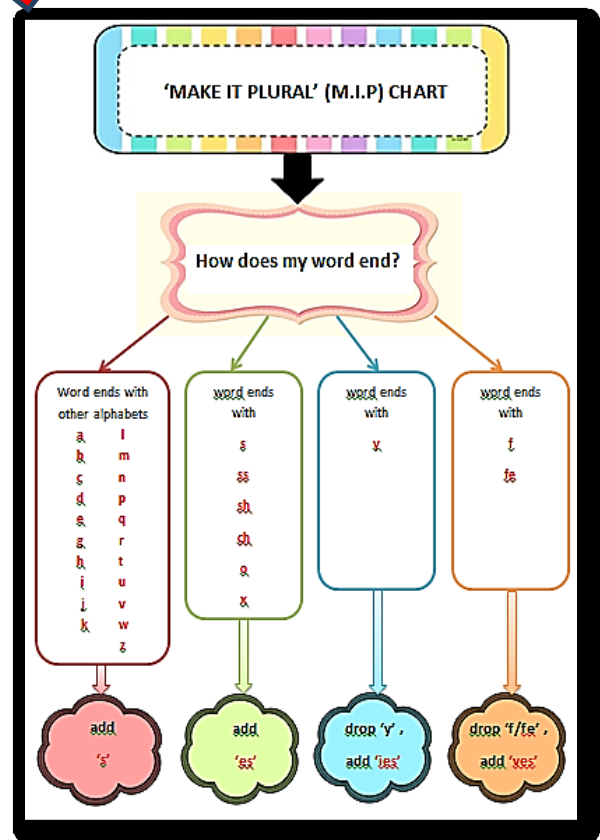*Figure 2: The original version of the singular nouns and plural nouns chart.*

Figure 3: The adapted version of the singular nouns and plural nouns chart become the 'M.I.P' Chart

This 'M.I.P' Chart is an adaptation of the original singular

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and plural nouns chart found by the researcher in the Pinterest Website online.It has been introduced progressively from simple to more complex spelling rules. This is to ensure that the pupils are able to retain their understanding in applying each rule thoroughly during each stage of the intervention implementation process. The researcher has carried out four lessons with different focus of the plural rules in each lesson by using the 'Make It Plural' (M.I.P) Chart in order to improve on the participants' ability to spell the plural forms of the nouns correctly.

Table 1
Steps of the Research Implementation

Pre-test	Before the implementation of the intervention
LESSON 1	Activity 1→ Spell the Plural Forms of nouns by adding 's' and 'es' using the 'M.I.P' Chart Worksheet 1 is distributed at the end of the lesson contains the singular nouns that need to be added with 's' and 'es'.
LESSON 2	Activity 2→ Spell the Plural Forms of nouns by adding 'ies' using the 'M.I.P' Chart Worksheet 2 is distributed at the beginning of the lesson contains the singular nouns that need to be added with 's' and 'es'. Worksheet 3 is distributed at the end of the lesson contains the singular nouns that need to be added with 'ies'.
LESSON 3	Activity 3→ Spell the Plural Forms of nouns by adding 'ves' using the 'M.I.P' Chart Worksheet 4 is distributed at the beginning of the lesson contains the singular nouns that need to be added with 's', 'es' and 'ies'. Worksheet 5 is distributed at the end of the lesson contains the singular nouns that need to be added with 'ves'.
LESSON 4	Activity 4→ Spell the Plural Forms of nouns by adding 's', 'es', 'ies' and 'ves' using the 'M.I.P' Chart Worksheet 6 is distributed at the end of the lesson contains the singular nouns that need to be added with 's', 'es', 'ies' and 'ves'.
Post-test	Carried out after the implementation of the intervention.

The data for this research has been gathered through three different data gathering methods which are the observation, the document analysis and also the pre-test and the post-test. The results from all these three data enable the researcher to collect more detailed evidence on the level of performance and progress shown by the participants when using the 'M.I.P' Chart to spell the plural forms of the nouns. All the data collected through the three methods were then analysed and interpreted both qualitatively through a thorough description on the results of the data and quantitatively by calculating the scores that involves percentage. The result are presented in the form of figures or tables. Based on the result of the data analysis, all the data from the three different methods used in this research are triangulated in order to increase the reliability and

validity of the research as well as to provide more accurate and comprehensive data on the participants' performance after using the intervention.

FINDINGS

From the result of the first data analysis on the observation checklists, the researcher managed to see the consistency in the participants' ability in using the 'M.I.P' Chart to spell the plural forms of the nouns in each stage during implementation of the research. The observation data is in Table 2.

Table 2
Comparison of the observation in each lesson

ITEMS	LESSON 1		LESSON 2		LESSON 3		LESSON 4	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1) The participant answers the question of "How does my word end?" on the chart.	2	4	3	1	4	0	4	0
2) The participant is able to recognize the ending of the nouns and the rule to be used to spell the plural form of the nouns.	3	1	4	0	4	0	4	0
3) The participant is able to spell the plural form of the nouns that need to be added with 's'.	3	1					4	0
4) The participant is able to spell the plural form of the nouns that need to be added with 'es'.	0	4					4	0
5) The participant is able to spell the plural form of the nouns that need to be added with 'ies'.			2	2			4	0
6) The participant is able to spell the plural form of the nouns that need to be added with 'ves'.					4	0	4	0

Based on the implementation procedures in Table 1 and the data findings in Table 2, the researcher noticed that all the participants had gradually improved in their performance from the beginning of using the intervention until the final stage of the implementation of the 'M.I.P' Chart. Each participant managed to develop their ability to spell the plural forms of the nouns correctly according to each rule being introduced in each lesson. Although there were some of them; such as Participant A and Participant D, who required more assistance from the researcher to use the chart at the early stage of the implementation, they finally managed to make use of the intervention by themselves at the final stage of this research implementation where they were able to spell the plural forms of the nouns more accurately.
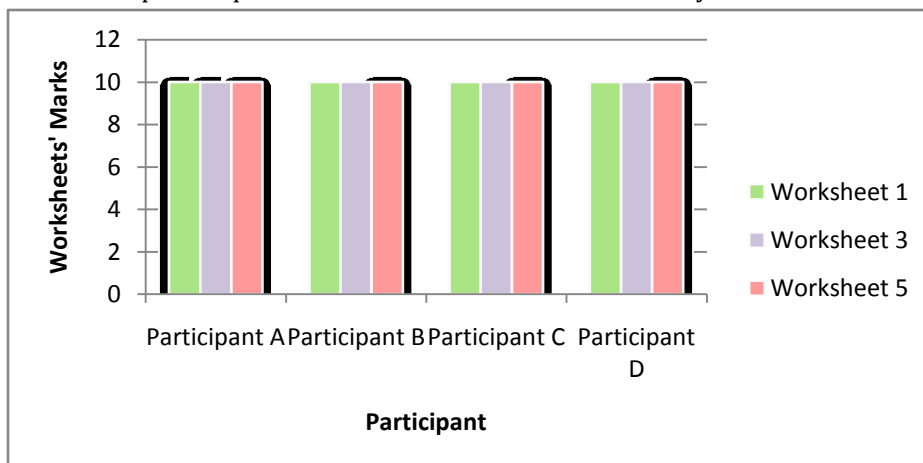
Figure 1: Comparison on the number of questions answered correctly in Worksheet 1,3,5 by the participants

From the resultsof the worksheet scores obtained by the participants, the researcher managed to discover the participants' level of progress in using the 'M.I.P' Chart to spell the plural forms of the nouns have improved. The worksheets were designed based on the focus of the intervention in each lesson. Worksheet 1, 3 and 5 were distributed at the end of every lesson to provide the opportunities for the participants to directly practise their understanding on the rules of plural forms nouns acquired from the use of 'M.I.P' Chart.
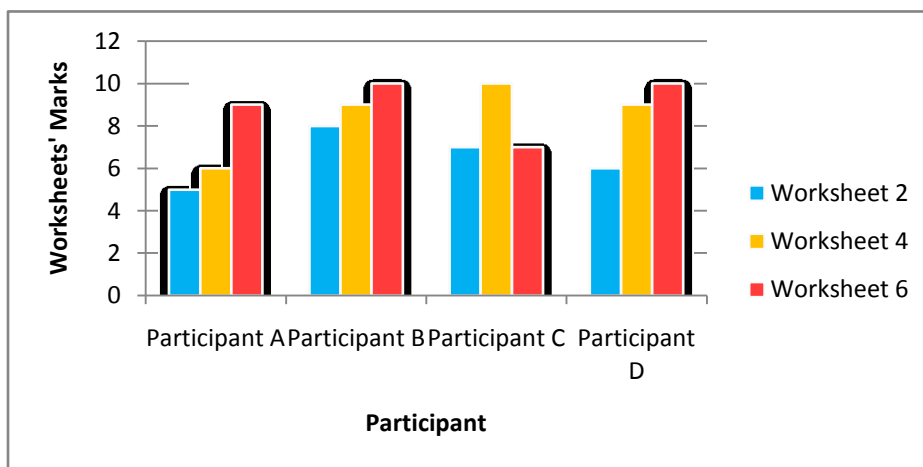

Figure 2: Comparison on the number of questions answered correctly in Worksheet 2,4,6 by the participants

Figure 2 showed the level of progress achieved by each participant in the worksheet provided by the researcher after the use of the intervention. Participant A, B and D had consistently improved in their ability to spell the plural forms of the nouns in each worksheet using the 'M.I.P' Chart. However, Participant C was unable to maintain his good progress as his score in the last worksheet had decreased compared to other participants. This was because he was still confused in answering the questions in Worksheet 6 since the worksheet requires the participants to change all the different singular nouns into the plural nouns using '-s', '-es', 'ies' and '-ves'.
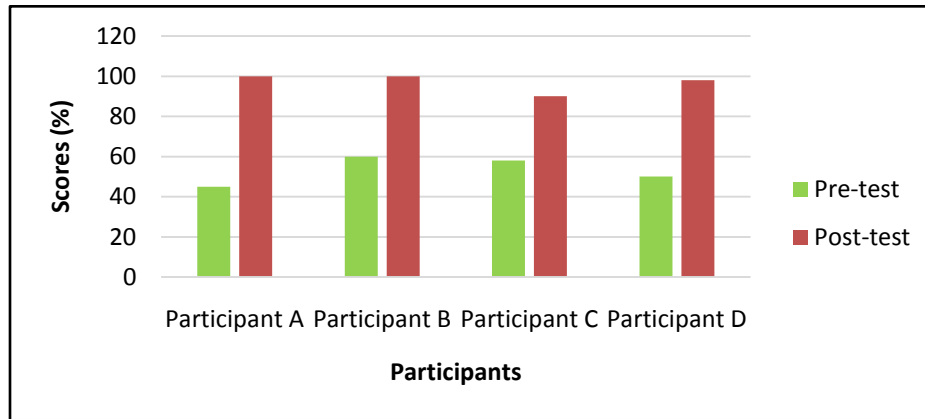
Figure 3: Comparison between participants' pre-test and post-test scores

The last data analysis done by the researcher was on the result of the pre-test and post-test done by the participants. The marks scored by the participants in both the tests enable the researcher to make comparison and examine the participants' improvement in their ability in spelling the plural form of the nouns using the knowledge gained from the use of the 'M.I.P' Chart. Based on the comparison shown by each participant in Figure 3, the researcher realized that each participant managed to make a tremendous improvement in their ability to spell the plural forms of the nouns after the use of the 'M.I.P' Chart. Participant A and Participant B managed to obtain the highest score in their post-test which was 100% while Participant C and Participant D also managed to obtain above 90% which had shown a huge increase compared to their scores in the pre-test. Therefore, the scores of the participants in their post-test indicated a remarkable achievement in their ability to spell the plural forms of nouns correctly after the use of the 'M.I.P' Chart. Therefore, the researcher could conclusively state that the use of the 'M.I.P' Chart has positively impacted all the participants' ability to spell the plural forms of the nouns correctly.

Based on the results gathered from three different data, the researcher found that the use of the 'M.I.P' Chart had supported and answered the research question. The data from observation, document analysis and tests have shown that the M.I.P Chart has positively impacted the ability of Participant A, B and D as all the data are consistently converged to each other as all three data indicated a positive outcome after the implementation of the intervention. However, for Participant C, there were only two data from the observation and the pre and posttests that supported each other while the data from worksheet had shown a slight discrepancy and diverge from the two data earlier as Participant C could not consistently maintain good marks in answering the worksheet. This was due to his confusion in answering the worksheet 6 but he did score excellent marks in the two earlier worksheets which were Worksheet 2 and Worksheet 4. Overall, this action research revealed that the 'Make It Plural' (M.I.P) Chart can enhance the pupils' ability to spell the plural forms of the nouns to a large extent where 3 out of 4 participants had shown consistent improvements throughout the research implementation process.

REFLECTION

Based on this research implementation process, the researcher has acknowledged several strengths that contributed to the improvement made by the participants to spell the plural forms of the nouns correctly using the 'M.I.P' Chart. Firstly, the researcher realized that the structure of the 'M.I.P' Chart was able to help the participants to understand and recognise the rules to spell the plural forms of the nouns more easily. This was because the chart was presented in an orderly manner and was introduced progressively from the simple to more complex spelling rules in using the 'M.I.P' Chart to spell the plural forms of the nouns in each lesson. In line to the action taken above, this was supported by Verhaegen (2014) who claims that the teachers should present grammatical rules one at a time and provide opportunities for the learners to practice the

examples of each one before going to another. Moreover, the researcher also found out that the use of the 'M.I.P' Chart had impacted positively on the ability of the participants to spell the plural forms of the nouns as the researcher applied the scaffolding techniquethroughout the implementation process of this intervention. For instance, at the beginning of the implementation process, Participant A and Participant E showed the weakest performance and progress in using the chart. However, after several lessons being conducted with the guidance from the researcher, both participants had finally managed to use the chart and spell the plural nouns by themselves without many difficulties and in a shorter duration of time.

Despite all the strengths that were discussed earlier, there was also a weakness that has been discovered throughout the implementation of the intervention in the lessons that need to be improved by the researcher. The researcher noticed that lack of variety in the activitiesbeing used while the intervention was being implemented. The researcher felt that there was a tendency for the participants to feel bored if the same structure and similar activity are being conducted to use the chart for a long duration of time. Therefore, the researcher could provide different activities while using the chart to avoid boredom among the participants as well as allow them to practise their ability to spell the plural nouns in different ways. For example, the researcher can make use of the chart by integrating collaborative work among the participants where the participants will work in pairs to guide each other to use the chart and compete with each other to spell the plural nouns correctly based on the 'M.I.P' Chart.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION

Based on the research conducted, there are a few suggestions that will be good for other researchers to ponder upon. For future research, it is advisable that this action research is developed to introduce other plural spelling rules such as irregular plural nouns using the 'M.I.P' Chart. The pupils will be able to increase their knowledge and develop their ability to recognise and apply correct spelling rules of the various types of plural forms. The knowledge of the plural forms will enable the pupils to speak or write better throughout the process of learning the English Language. Apart from that, it is also highly recommended that the 'M.I.P' Chart to be developed into a computer-based game. The use of computer game will be easier and systematic for the teacher to find out the level of improvement made by the pupils in using the 'M.I.P' Chart to spell the plural forms of the nouns correctly and more easily. The computer game system will automatically calculate the pupils' score for every stage. Haldfield (1999 as cited in Sachdeva, 2016) claims thatthe teachers use the game as a tool for them to note areas of difficulty and take appropriate remedial action to address the issues faced by the pupils. Hence, it will be more convenient for the researcher in terms of saving time and effective in collecting data.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research really made the researcher think critically, become innovative and do a lot of reading in order for the researcher to really understand and able to analyse the focus of the study in depth and closely related to the targeted participants. In addition, it was worthwhile for the researcher to be able to innovate and conduct the intervention to address the difficulties faced by the participants concerning the countable plural forms of the nouns. Nevertheless, the researcher felt very proud and satisfied with the tremendous outcomes shown by the participants after the use of the 'Make It Plural' (M.I.P) Chart. This indicated that the 'M.I.P' Chart is able to provide a simple and comprehensive way to improve the Year 4 pupils' ability to spell the plural forms of the nouns appropriately.

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