

## **Noun-it-Right Snake and Ladder Board Game: Learning about Nouns – An Enhancement Tool in the Teaching of Grammar**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Learning English is not an easy task especially when it comes to learning grammar. One way to achieve this is through using games. Due to the numerous benefits that games provide, the Noun-it-Right Snake and Ladder Game: Learning about Nouns was created. This study was conducted to determine whether the usage of this board game is able to improve the teaching and learning of grammar. The study was carried out among Standard 5 pupils in a primary school in Kedah. The data for the study was analysed using the paired-sample T test. The findings of the study suggested that the usage of this board game has helped the students understand nouns better.*

**Keywords:** Games; Snake and Ladder game; grammar; nouns

### **INTRODUCTION**

Educators are looking for ways and means to make learning more fun and interactive. One way to achieve this is through using games. Using games in education is an ever-increasing phenomenon. Scholars agree that using games in the classroom provides numerous benefits. Learning a language can be a scary and mind boggling experience to students.

Learning English is not an easy task especially when it comes to learning grammar. Teaching the grammar component could be a difficult task to English teachers. According to the study conducted by Al-Mekhlafi, and Nagaratnam (2011), with regard to teaching and learning grammar, teachers perceive that both teachers and students face difficulties. Students at the primary school also encountered problems in learning grammar especially nouns. They are

unable to differentiate between singular and plural nouns and countable and uncountable nouns. Apart from that, they are also unable to apply their knowledge in doing grammar exercises. Hence, English teachers need to incorporate interactive methods in teaching grammar so that students are able to engage themselves in learning it. One of the ways to learn grammar interactively is by using games. Using games can help students to learn grammar the fun way. Therefore, this study aims to answer these pertinent research questions:

- Does the board game help the students to differentiate between singular and plural nouns?
- Does the board game help the students to differentiate between countable and uncountable nouns?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The usage of games provides many benefits to the teacher and to the learners. Yolageldili and Arikan (2011) discovered in their study that Turkish EFL primary school teachers said that games are important and necessary in teaching and learning of English because games provide many benefits. Among the benefits of using games is games promote interest among the learners especially on topics or areas that learners have less interest in. Once the learners are interested, they will put in more effort in learning (Thiagarajan, 1999; Wright, Betteridge & Buckby, 2005 as cited in Jacobs, n.d.). This is in line with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984) which focused on concrete experience and active experimentation. The Experiential Learning Theory provides a "holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition and behaviour" (Kolb, 1984, p.21). The usage of games adds variety in the teaching and learning of English where it is a combination of behaviour, experience, perception and cognition.

In addition, de Wit (2012) listed many benefits of the usage of games in English classrooms i.e. games promote interaction, cooperation, creativity and spontaneity among the learners apart from maintaining interest among the learners. Hence, the teacher can use games to gauge learners' interests and create contexts where the learners can use the language.

An action research conducted by Huyen and Nga (2003) found that the competitiveness, motivation and relaxed setting that games provide made students prefer to have them in the classroom (as cited in Chen, 2005). Chen (2005) conducted a study on using games in language learning and concluded that games promote communicative competence.

There are many types of games that can be used in the classroom. Among them are board games. Treher (2011) stated that board games are useful in providing knowledge and skills for all subjects and for everyone regardless of age. Chang and Cogswell (2008) stated that with appropriate adaptations, board games can be used for people of all ages, people with different proficiency levels and different contents. Board game usage in the classroom provides an effective, stress-free and fun environment for students to learn. This is parallel to the Situated Learning Theory. According to Stein (1998), "situated learning uses cooperative and

participative teaching methods as the means of acquiring knowledge” (as cited in Ladley, 2010, p.4). Hence, when board games are used, students are directly involved and able to benefit in terms of the knowledge acquired and also maximize the learning outcomes.

Tengku Nazatul Shima and Rahmah (2012) used the board game to teach grammar tenses. They found that students feel less stressed when learning grammatical structures via games. Hence, they are able to comprehend the grammatical concept better. In another study, Tengku Nazatul Shima and Rahmah (2013) used the ‘Time Trap’ board game and they discovered that the students will learn grammar better in a stress-free environment. They suggest that educators should come up with games that are fun and meaningful to benefit the students.

Among the board games commonly used in the classroom is the snake and ladder board game. Meipina (2014) conducted a study on using the snake and ladder game in teaching vocabulary. She concluded that the snake and ladder game usage in teaching vocabulary in the speaking class is a good method.

### **Noun-it-Right Snake and Ladder Board Game: Learning about Nouns**

Looking at the numerous benefits of using games in teaching and learning prompted the writers to come up with their own version of snake and ladder game called Noun-it-Right Snake and Ladder Board Game: Learning about Nouns. The topic Nouns was chosen because students have difficulties using Nouns (Singular vs. Plural Nouns, Countable vs. Uncountable Nouns). This game focuses on these two areas. This game can be used after the teacher has finished explaining about the topic Nouns to the students. The students’ understanding on the topic Nouns can be further enhanced using this game. Using this game, the teacher can evaluate whether the students are able to grasp the knowledge regarding Nouns that was imparted to them.

The Noun-It-Right game pack consists of 3 sets of board games; each set focusing on the level of difficulty of the questions. This enables the teacher to choose the set that corresponds to the students’ level of proficiency. The first set has more easy level questions compared to other levels (more blue colour boxes). The second set has more moderate level questions (more green colour boxes) and the third set has more difficult level questions (more orange colour boxes). This enables the teacher to choose the set that corresponds to the students’ level of proficiency. The Noun-it-right game pack consists of a dice, 3 sets of board games, 5 markers of different colours and colour coded cue cards containing the questions and answers. This Noun-it-right game pack can be played by individuals (maximum of 5 persons) or if it is a class, the class can be divided into 5 groups (maximum number of players per group is 8). Each player is represented by a marker of a different colour. If a player rolls the dice and the dice displays a 6, the player can roll the dice again. If a player lands on a box with a ladder attached to it, the player is able to move upward to the box that the ladder ends. If the player lands on a box that has a snake attached to it, the player has to follow the body of the snake and move downward. If a player lands on a box with the colour blue, green or orange, the player has to answer a question. If the player is unable to give the correct answer to the question, the player will lose a turn. The player that reaches the finishing box first is declared the winner. Figure 1 shows the pictures of the board game.

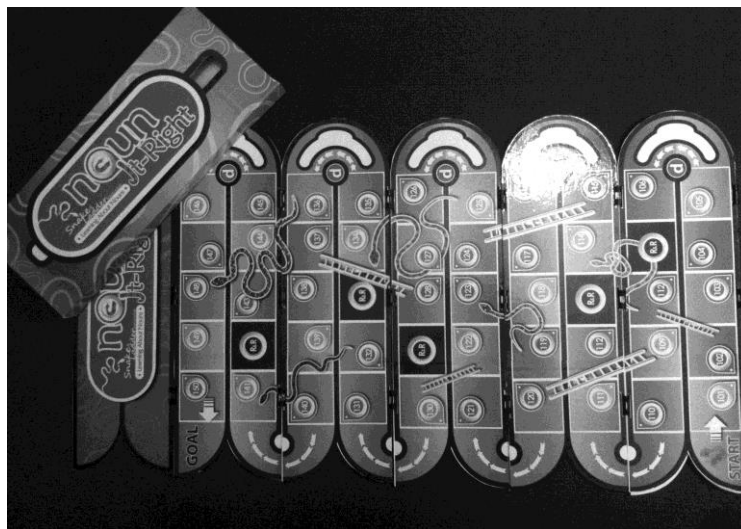


Figure 1. The Noun-it-Right Snake and Ladder board game

## METHODOLOGY, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Instrument

In this study, the researchers used pre-test and post-test grammar questions. The pre-test and post-test grammar questions contain fifteen questions on countable and uncountable nouns, and singular and plural nouns. The structure of the questions constructed was similar to the ones in the board game. The questions were divided into three different levels of difficulty; easy, moderate and difficult. For easy level questions, the items are in two forms which are filling in the blank and underlining the correct answer. For medium level questions, the respondents have to choose the correct answer from the options given and for the difficult level, respondents have to identify the error in the sentence given and provide the correct answer. The pre-test was administered to the respondents before they play the game and the post-test was administered

after the respondents were introduced to the board game.

### The Board Game

The board game is an adaptation of the snake and ladder board game. The board game boxes come in four different colours, i.e. blue, green, orange and black. If the player lands on a blue, green or orange box, the player has to answer a question. The three colours represent the difficulty levels of the questions i.e. blue represents easy level questions, green represents moderate level questions and orange represents difficult level questions. For easy level questions, the player has to identify whether the noun given is a countable or an uncountable noun or give the singular or plural form of the noun given. For moderate level questions, the player has to choose the correct answer from the options provided. As for the difficult level questions, the player has to identify the error in the given sentence and provide the correct answer. The examples of the questions are as follows:

<b>Level of difficulties</b>	<b>Sample question</b>
Easy	Give the plural form of the noun given Wolf : _____
Moderate	Fill in the blank with the correct noun/quantifier Kedah has only _____ (much, little, few) interesting places.
Difficult	Find and correct the error in the sentence below. The lady cooked three dish for lunch.

If the player succeeds in answering the question, he/she is allowed to continue the game but if the player fails, the player will lose a turn. The process continues until a team / an individual succeeds to reach the finishing box.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The administration of the test and board game took place at a rural primary school in the district of Baling. There are only two classes of Standard 5 students in the school and only one class was selected. Before the board game was introduced to the students, the students had learnt the grammar items; nouns and quantifiers. They also had completed other exercises on nouns and quantifiers in the textbook to increase their understanding of the subject matter. Then the pre-test was administered to the students. The students' responses were marked and recorded.

Then the teacher introduced the Noun-it-right board game to the students. The class was divided into five groups randomly segregated by the teachers to ensure each group consists of students with different levels of competency. The students did not manage to play the Noun-it-right board game until the last box due to time constraint. The teacher conducted the game during an English lesson which is only 40 minutes. The time is not sufficient to accommodate all 30 students to play the game. However, the winning group was identified based on the group that managed to climb up the board to the highest. According to the teacher, the students were

motivated and encouraged to participate in the game and cooperate with the other group members to get the correct answers.

The post-test was administered to the students in the next English lesson. Similar questions were used and the item arrangement was reorganized. The students' test papers were marked and the results were recorded. The students' pre and post test result were analysed using the t-test to identify the mean, the correlation and the significance of relationship between the pre-test and post-test.

### Findings and Discussion

Table 1  
 Paired Samples Statistics

Pair	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test	30	8.13	.94	.171
Pre-test	30	4.53	.90	.164

The table above illustrates the result for pre-test and post-test which have been analysed using the t-test. The test was used to identify the relationship between the results of the pre-test and the post test, after the noun it right board game was introduced to the students. In the test, the strength of the relationship was also measured. For the pre-test, the result shows that the mean is recorded at 4.53 while for the post test is 8.13. The result suggests that there is a difference in the means for pre-test and post-test.

Table 2  
 Paired Samples Correlations

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 (Post-test & pre-test)	30	.608	.000

From the table above, we will be able to see the correlation and significance level of the result recorded. The pre and post-test is recorded to have a strong correlation which is .608 as the range of a strong correlation level is 0.6-1.0. In addition, the table also presents that the relationship between the pre-test and post-test is significant with  $p < .000$ . This signifies that this study yielded a strong relationship as for a relationship to be significant the result between a pre-test and post –test should be  $p < .005$ .

Table 3  
 Paired Samples Test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig.( 2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Post-test – pre-test	3.60	.81	.149	3.296	3.904	24.233	29	.000

Table 4  
 Increase of marks for pre-test and post-test

Increase of marks	Number of students
2	1
3	13
4	13
5	2
6	1

Results from the paired samples test above show that the mean for post-test – pre-test is 3.60. The mean recorded is significant and it suggests that the gap for pre-test and post test result is fairly high. The paired samples test also recorded the t result as 24.233 and the df as 29.

Table 4 shows that a majority of students (26 students) have an increase in marks from 3-4. The other three students show an impressive increase of marks from the pre-test to the post-test which are 5 and 6. The remaining one student recorded the least increased mark which is only 1. Despite the small gap, it shows that the students managed to answer more questions correctly in the post-test.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from the paired sample test showed that there is a gap in the students’ average scores for the pre-test and post-test. The mean score for the post-test is higher than the pre-test with the mean gap of 3.6. This finding suggests that students’ understanding on the grammar lessons taught by the teacher improved with the exposure and integration of the grammar board game. This is because while students play the grammar board game, learning process occurs and it helps strengthens students’ understanding. This is supported by Vernon (2006) as he also agreed that students learn while playing games in the classroom.

In addition, the result from the paired samples correlation suggests that the gap between the post-test marks and pre-test marks have significance differences thus it remarkably shows the students understand nouns better with the help of the introduction and integration of the Noun-it-

right board game. This strong correlation suggests that the introduction and integration of the Noun-it-right board game has helped the students understand 'nouns' better, thus enabling them to answer the questions in the post-test.

From Table 4, it can be concluded that all respondents have an increase of marks in the test given despite the variation in the marks. This shows that the learning process occurs to all respondents from the introduction of the grammar lesson and until the integration of the grammar board game. Students' engagement in the game also contributed to the learning process as when they try to identify the correct answer, they need to recall the lesson they have learnt. The variation of marks from the tests could be the result of students' different proficiency levels. Therefore, it can be concluded that, the integration of the grammar board game offers numerous benefits in the teaching and learning of grammar. This is also supported by Tengku Nazatul Shima and Rahmah (2012) who also found that using board games in classroom will benefit the teaching process.

## CONCLUSION

The findings show that there is an increase in the students' results after they use the board game. Hence, the Noun-it-right board game is a useful teaching assistant a teacher can use in teaching Nouns as it has been proven to aid students in enhancing their understanding of grammar after a formal lesson. With this board game, teachers are able to create a fun learning environment to motivate the students to learn. This study is significant since it provides another alternative in teaching grammar to teachers and educators apart from using the traditional method of teaching grammar.

The limitation of this study is that it only focuses on a small sample of primary 5 students in one of the schools in Kedah. It is recommended that future study be conducted on a larger sample from schools and other institutions to obtain a more comprehensive finding.

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