

GoRo Breakfree: Enhancing Motivation in Writing Skills

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ABSTRACT

Second language learners deem writing skills as a challenging skill to master. Language learners encounter problems in writing aspects, including mechanics, organization, and connecting sentences resulting in difficulty acquiring writing skills. Pupils are not motivated to join or participate in online writing classes. Teachers could not elicit much response due to pupils' reluctance to write; thus, pupils face problems in writing. The GoRo Breakfree is a game-based tool designed to motivate pupils and improve their writing skills through an online escape room that creates the opportunity for pupils to solve problems and decode mysteries whilst instigating pupils' interest in writing lessons. GoRo Breakfree suits diverse learners' language levels which help in improving pupils' confidence in writing skills as they gradually progress into different rooms of the game. This study aims to measure the effectiveness of GoRo BreakFree in improving pupils' writing skills. This tool aimed to help pupils be confident in writing and convince them that writing skill is easy while providing teachers and pupils with a platform to make online writing lessons easier and engaging. Based on the research findings, The intervention tool has helped pupils improve their writing skills and increase active participation during online classes.

Key Words: writing skills, motivation, game-based learning

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to Quvanch and Na (2020), writing is a fundamental component of language. When a child writes, thoughts and knowledge are blended to create meaning. Consequently, pupils identify writing skills as more complex than listening and reading (Durga and Rao, 2018). On top of that, their vocabulary is often limited, and writing proves to be frustrating because they must express their ideas without using any gestures and so forth. However, they could communicate orally and be understood clearly through gestures, facial expressions, and others. Additional work time is also a prerequisite for pupils who are processing two or more languages, and most of the time, they were not given such opportunities.

Furthermore, Kasper and Petrello in Jenny and Jay (2015) claimed teachers' responses are prone to be negative because of how difficult it is for ESL pupils to write as well as their English native-speaking peers. As a result, teachers become too familiar with the expectation of pupils' failure, subsequently causing anxiety in writing. Myhill, Jones, and Lines (2018) assert that writing is the skill most pupils are least proficient in. It also yields the least reward because they have little use for it in the immediate present. There were very few social uses for writing in English during the Malaysian primary schooling years. Nevertheless, to maximize the pupils' ability to think deeply, the teacher must first understand the technique and concept to stimulate pupils' thinking.

1.1 Problem Statement

The ability to write is a vital skill to acquire in learning a second language. It is commonly argued that encouraging learners' engagement is a significant impediment to writing skills. Concerns about writing skills being abandoned in English as a Second Language (ESL) learners have been raised for decades,

but little has changed recently. Primary pupils face trouble in writing simple sentences, phrases, and sentence structure. These difficulties hinder their progress in mastering writing skills.

As 21st-century learners, it is necessary to make writing attractive and fun because it satisfies the present needs. Most pupils have a tendency to be motivated through competitive game-based learning rather than just putting pen to paper. These are the features underlying the gamification theory that encourages pupils to learn using fun and interactive activities. Subsequently, the appearance of virtual escape rooms stirred the start of new ideas to bring folktales and fairytales to life. Hence, GoRo Breakfree was designed to help develop pupils' motivation and interest to write, especially for pupils who negatively perceive writing or underperform in this language skill. Therefore, this action research attempts to determine whether GoRo Breakfree will help to enhance and motivate the pupils' learning, especially in writing skills.

1.2 Research Objective

1. To enhance motivation level in writing lessons of Year Four pupils through the use of GoRo Breakfree innovation.
2. To improve the writing skills of Year Four pupils through the use of GoRo Breakfree innovation.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Writing skills in language learning

Writing skills is a challenging skill to master for second language learners. Embedding scaffolding techniques into digital materials is a way to build confidence in young learners to master a skill. Various forms of scaffolding techniques can be applied, such as notes, clues, pictures, and references, to extended resources to aid pupils during online classes (Chen, 2021). According to Câmara et al. (2021), scaffolding techniques support a more autonomous learning experience as the pupils become active knowledge seekers. The theory of scaffolding proposed by Lev Vygotsky highlights the importance of scaffolding to assist pupils in accomplishing their learning tasks and gradually progress in their learning goals (Du & Wu, 2019).

Pupils become more engaged in their learning if the pupils make meaning of their learning. Scaffolding invites the pupils to become active in their learning as they are able to connect their previous knowledge through meaning-making. The knowledge construction that happens with that experience is aligned with the cognitive development theory. This theory acknowledges the importance of pupils becoming active learners in making meaning of the classroom content rather than passively receiving the knowledge (Sjøberg, 2010). Jean Piaget, the proponent of cognitive development, emphasizes the importance of learning through game elements that focus on concepts in concrete situations (Waite-Stupiansky, 2017). The meaning-making process occurs when the pupil plays the game, which allows them to master cognitive transformations through the images and clues provided.

Subsequently, the GoRo Breakfree applies the scaffolding techniques to help pupils construct knowledge and make meaning of their learning.

2.2 MOTIVATION LEVEL IN ENHANCING WRITING SKILLS

The gamification term coined by Nick Pelling (2002) and redefined by Gartner (2014) has emerged as one of the significant technological advancements in terms of human involvement (Liu et al., 2017). As a result, it's evident that gamification has been implemented extensively in the realm of education. Koivisto and Hamari (2019) opined that gamification had garnered considerable attention, particularly in the educational setting. According to Alsawaier (2017), gamification integrates fundamental gameplay mechanisms such as rules, level advancement, challenges, and rewards. It often increases engagement and involvement in many areas of activity to which it applies.

Alsawaier added, gamification facilitates autonomous learning, motivating pupils extrinsically and intrinsically to achieve rewards. Smiderle et al. (2020) emphasized that gamification in education can increase students' interest similarly to how games do, therefore improving their specific abilities and optimising their learning. Bai et al. (2020), stated that most gamification systems include reinforcement

features such as points, levels, badges, and leaderboards to boost engagement and motivation. According to Sailer et al. (2020), gamification can be an effective strategy for solving motivational issues in the classroom or working environment since gamification has been shown to stimulate a number of brain functions, including those important for eliciting positive emotions, thus enhancing motivation.

In line with this, GoRo Breakfree is feasible to enhance motivation in writing skills as it consists of fundamental gameplay mechanisms such as rules, level advancement, challenges, and rewards.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Möttus, et al. (2020) Stated That Descriptive Research Is Well Suited To Examine The Relationship Between Variables Occurring In Real-Life Contexts. The Qualitative Research Method Was Applied To Explain How One Variable Affects Another Or Explain The Relationship Between The Variables (Creswell, 2012). This Research Used Action Research Conducted Using The Administration Of The Triangulation Of Data That Includes Pre And Post Test, Interviews, And Questionnaires That Have Been Developed For Data Collection. The Data Collection For The Actual Study Was Carried Out Through The Online Collection Method During English Online Lessons.

10 respondents were selected using the simple random sampling method from Year 4 pupils in a rural school. Selected respondents were informed regarding the instrument distribution method and briefed on the purpose of this study. Respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was assured. The respondents’ parents filled in a written consent using an online form as part of their agreement for their child’s participation. The data collected were analyzed, and the findings were interpreted into graphical form to determine whether the objectives of the study were achieved.

4.0 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The first research instrument used was the pre and post test to examine the respondents and showed that the pupils had an average increase in the mean for Level 1 (spelling). Level 2 (phrases) and Level 3 (sentence structure). The results obtained are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Pre and Post test data

Respondents’ data (N=10)	Pre test (Before GoRo Breakfree lesson)		Post test (GoRo Breakfree lesson)	
	Mean	Percentage (%)	Mean	Percentage
Level 1	13	52	24	96
Level 2	27.5	55	42	84
Level 3	13.5	46	23.5	78
Total mean	54	-	90.5	-

There is a significant increase in the mean for Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 post tests. In the pre test, the respondents scored a mean of 13, whereas the post test of Level 1 indicates a mean of 24. The difference in mean of Level 2 is 14.5, which implies that the respondents have improved their writing skills. Level 3 denotes the sentencing structures of writing aspects, and the results of the tests show a significant increase of 10 mean when comparing pre and post test results. The overall mean of the test for all the levels also exhibits an improvement in the results. According to Alsawaier (2018), gamification has raised students’ motivation and improved their writing skills. Thus, the increase in mean indicated that respondents had improved their writing abilities.

The results were also reflected in the questionnaire data collected. The respondents (N=10) answered a 5 point Likert scale questionnaire using smiley faces to aid understanding for young learners. The questionnaire data are illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Questionnaire data

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
0	1		1	2	6
0	0		1	5	4
0	1		1	1	7
Answer questions confidently	0	1	2	2	5
Enjoyed the lesson	0	0	2	4	4
Total	0	3	7	14	26

The questionnaire data also showed a positive response based on the lesson. The highest frequency based on the item spell better is six, indicating that this innovation has improved their spelling ability. Four of the respondents strongly agreed that they could write better after the innovation lesson. Seven respondents have indicated that they could write better sentences which implies that their sentence structuring skills have improved significantly. The respondents' confidence level has also improved because five respondents strongly agree with the questionnaire item. Equivalently, four respondents agreed, while four respondents strongly agreed with the questionnaire item of enjoying the lesson, which reveals that the respondents have had fun during the innovation lesson. These findings affirm that the respondents developed more motivation for writing lessons. Lam et al. (2018) asserted that game-based learning enhanced motivation to the writing process and helped them improve their writing skills. Hence, the questionnaire data shows that there are 26 strongly agreed responses with all of the questionnaire items. These results summarized the improvement in the respondents' writing skills and increased motivation level in writing lessons.

Overall, the questionnaire findings are also in line with the interview data in Table 3, which reveals positive feedback from the respondents. All of the respondents agreed on the notion that the lesson conducted was fun and interesting.

“yes.. Goro is fun.. I like to play so much...” (Respondent 1)
 “yaa, I feel excited...” (Respondent 5)

Similarly, five of the respondents mentioned that the innovation lesson was exciting. The respondents said, “enjoyed” and “best” when describing the innovation lesson signalling that the lesson has enhanced their motivation level to acquire writing skills.

Furthermore, the outcomes of improved writing skills resulted from an enhanced motivation level based on the interview data. Respondents claimed that this lesson boosted their confidence resulting in improved writing performance. Quvanch et al. (2020), concur that gamification-based lesson helps students develop their confidence and creativity in writing. Based on the interview data, five responses disclose the respondents' opinion of the lesson, which is “confident” and “helpful” in improving their writing skills;

“I feel good when write...” (Respondent 4)
 “GoRo help me write lot...” (Respondent 5)

These findings clearly show that this gamification-based lesson has helped them improve their writing skills. Thus, it synchronized with Sailer et al. (2020) findings that gamification is an effective method for resolving classroom motivating concerns, including eliciting positive emotions in acquiring knowledge. These responses imply that the respondents have a more positive attitude towards acquiring writing skills through the innovation lesson.

Table 3 Interview data

Themes	Categories of factors	Frequency (N=6)
Enhance motivation level	The lesson is fun and interesting.	6
	The lesson is exciting	5
Improve writing skills	The lesson helps pupils to write better	4
	The lesson boost pupils' confidence in writing	5

5.0 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

Gamification in education combines game design ideas into the classroom environment to motivate and engage students. The necessity of maintaining students' motivation has long been a source of contention in education. According to the study's findings, it can be concluded that gamification strategy enhances pupils' motivation and improves their writing skills. Additionally, the findings also support that incorporating gamification strategies successfully engages pupils' in the lesson. Thus, the use of GoRo Breakfree as a gamification strategy can enhance students' motivation in writing skills. It is recommended for future research to work together with the stakeholders in order to create an editable template and tutorial video for GoRo Breakfree with wide-ranging themes or stories from the CEFR textbooks. This will help in expanding the potential of this innovation and reach further possibilities by involving other teachers and sharing ideas. However, future study needs to be done on the innovation based on teachers' beliefs and practices to teach writing skills or other language skills.

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