Using Ive-Snap Card Game to Improve Year 4 Students' Memorisation of Past Simple Irregular Verbs

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ABSTRACT
The use of language games in grammar lessons to engage students is gaining popularity instead of using traditional teaching techniques to teach grammar. This action research sets out to investigate how using the Ive-Snap card game could help Year 4 students use simple past tense irregular verbs more effectively. The data collection methods used in this research included pre-

test, post-test, interviews and observation. Eight Year 4 students with varying levels of English language proficiency played the card game. The students were interviewed before and after the implementation of the intervention to share their responses regarding the Ive-Snap card game. They first took a pre-test before the card game was introduced, then subsequently sat for two post-tests — one after each cycle of the intervention. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and reported accordingly. The results demonstrated that the Ive-Snap card game successfully enhanced students' use of past simple irregular verbs because it maintained their interest in learning. Results also showed that Ive-Snap card game is an effective pedagogical approach in engaging participants in fun learning of grammar and increasing their mastery of irregular verbs. As a result, the study shows how language games can be used as an approach for facilitating ESL learners' grammar acquisition and creating a relevant context for language learning.

Keywords: language card game; language games; grammar; game-based learning; ESL; irregular verbs

INTRODUCTION

In the English language, verbs can be classified into either regular or irregular form when indicating the past tense. Due to this, many pupils usually encounter difficulties in forming simple past tense verbs because they are confused between the regular and irregular forms since they cannot memorise the change in all the verbs (Fasikh, 2020). As stated by Bybee (2007), many irregular past tense forms in English are isolated, for example, 'say-said'. This is supported by Blom and Paradis (2013) who state that irregular past tense acquisition in English is thus largely dependent on word frequency, in contrast to regular past tense acquisition, which relies on word frequency, type frequency and variability. Moreover, most ESL learners find lessons revolving around grammar instructions boring and difficult to learn as stated by Pawlak (2020). This is because most grammar lessons are dominated by teachers explaining the grammar rules followed by instructions for students to do practice exercises in an attempt to memorise the grammar rules explained. As explained by Emaliana (2017), when teachers become the most dominant source of information in teacher-centered learning, they will control every single learning experience without the students' involvement.

Most people agree that grammar should only be taught formally, inductively, or deductively—not implicitly. The conventional study of grammar is crucial to the eventual mastery of a foreign or second language when language learning is restricted to the classroom, according to a study by Uysal and Bardakci (2014) that examined English as a second language (ESL) instructors' beliefs in grammar teaching. Moreover, based on a study conducted by Yalcin and Spada (2016), grammar rules can be difficult to understand, particularly when taught in isolation. When language is learned in isolation, it is not available for use in communicative engagement. Therefore, it was recommended that games be included as a substitute method to enhance grammar instruction and, most significantly, help students improve their grammatical competency. According to Yie et al. (2023), to create an appropriate strategy, implement the proper game mechanisms, and gamify the learning process, educators must first identify the different types of learners. Hence, this study aims to examine the effects of the Ive-Snap card

game in improving the memorisation of irregular simple past tense verbs among Year 4 students. It also aims to explore how the Ive-Snap card game serves as a pedagogical approach to teaching irregular simple past tense verbs to Year 4 students. This study provides insights into the pertinence of language games as a teaching strategy to help enhance learners' English grammar acquisition.

Research Questions
The research questions of this study are:

1) How does the Ive-Snap game serve as a pedagogical approach to teaching irregular past tense verbs to Year 4 students?
2) How does the Ive-Snap card game assist in improving the memorisation of regular past tense verbs among Year 4 students?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the 21st-century, many different approaches have been tried and tested to relay grammar instructions, but few have proven to be effective. One that has proven to be especially effective in achieving the goal of language learning is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as stated in a study conducted by Dos Santos (2020). Numerous approaches have been taken to make CLT workable in the classroom setting but one that has arisen to make it feasible is task-based language teaching (TBLT) as stated by Somawati et al. (2018). TBLT provides an avenue for young English as Second Language (ESL) learners to interact and participate actively throughout a lesson. The role of grammar instructions has been regarded as crucial in the ability to use language. Thus, teachers must be aware of the various teaching approaches they can apply in their lessons and be aware of their strengths and weaknesses. As such, this research is based on CLT and TBLT approaches. This is where language games come in handy as English teachers can apply and adapt them in such a way that can accommodate all their learners' diversities as well as cater to their needs, while creating an enjoyable class with interactive and meaningful activities.

One of the common teaching strategies in the 21st-century is incorporating language games during the lesson to engage learners by stimulating their higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) as stated by Nur Syafiqah and Melor (2019). The selection and usage of interesting and suitable teaching aids as well as teaching approaches when teaching and learning grammar in context are vital to cater to learners' diverse needs. Language games encourage ESL learners to use language creatively and communicatively besides offering relaxation and enjoyment. Antonaci et al. (2015), Chambers and Yunus (2017), Gozcu and Caganaga (2016), Yiltanlilar and Caganaga (2015) and Nur Syafiqah and Melor (2019) point out that applying games to learning could help learners become more active and motivated. This is supported by Kanimozhi and Jayakumar (2015), who stated that games can introduce topics in exciting ways in which students can participate and learn good learning methods. Hamari et al. (2016) corroborates this statement with their study wherein the findings concluded students who have learned via games had higher motivation levels and greater self-efficacy when they perceived themselves to be more competent and familiarised with the topic taught.

Learners frequently believe that they must be proficient in the target language during language classes, which increases their anxiety and consequently their fear of receiving negative feedback and punishment from the teacher when they make mistakes (Hashemi, 2011). As a result, this makes it harder for them to learn because they will be excessively cautious while using the target language and will instead be focused on attempting to avoid making mistakes rather than learning the language. This is where game-based learning comes in because games can assist in decreasing the students' anxiety and may make them want to learn more since they are in a relaxed state and having fun competing against each other. This is supported by a study conducted by Alim et al. (2022) in which pupils who were exposed to game-based learning performed better in their tests than those who received traditional instruction. The group of pupils who were exposed to game-based learning also had an increased level of motivation and reduced level of anxiety as shown in the results of the study.

To help Year 4 students learn how to apply irregular past tense verbs correctly, the Ive-Snap card game is presented in this study as a teaching and learning intervention. According to Su et al. (2014), card games are the best for improving student learning because they are demanding, creative, and have clear rules, all of which provide the ideal environment for learning and engagement. Card games are not only convenient and well-structured, but they also provide a simulated environment in which students can get fully engaged in actively manipulating different tactics to build knowledge and solve issues (Baker et al., 2005). Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of the Ive-Snap card game in mastering the memorisation of simple past tense irregular verbs among Year 4 students. It also explores how the Ive-Snap card game serves as a pedagogical approach to teaching simple past tense irregular verbs to Year 4 students.

METHODOLOGY

Participants of the study
The participants of this action research were eight Year 4 ESL students with varied English language proficiency levels. The eight participants were chosen due to their differing proficiency levels in English (answered less than 10 questions correctly) as compared to their peers who all managed to answer more than half the questions correctly. Besides that, the participants were also chosen due to their differing ethnic backgrounds wherein all eight participants did not have English as their mother tongue. The rest of the students in the class answered more than 10 questions correctly in the pre-test hence they were excluded from the study in the opinion that the intervention might not benefit them as much since they already had quite a good grasp of the grammar aspect of simple past tense irregular verbs.

Of the eight students chosen to participate in the study, four spoke the Malay language at home, two spoke the Iban language, and the remaining two spoke the Bidayuh language. They were only exposed to English formally at school during class. These eight students were weak in their mastery of present tense and past tense, which in turn affected their use of verb tenses, especially irregular verbs. This was further proven through their scores on the pre-test before being exposed to the Ive-Snap card game. Therefore, the researcher handpicked them to participate in this study to improve their use of simple past tense irregular verbs through the

implementation of the Ive-Snap card game.

Pre-test
The pre-test was conducted on a class of 30 Year 4 students to test their mastery of irregular simple past tense verbs. The worksheet included 20 close-ended fill-in-the-blank questions incorporating 20 different verbs that were selected from the Year 4 syllabus that the students were familiar with. The 20 verbs chosen were high-frequency verbs that were prevalent throughout the students' syllabus and it was taken from the glossary in the Curriculum and Assessment Document more commonly known as *Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran (DSKP)* for the corresponding year. The students were not yet exposed to the Ive-Snap card game at this stage but had already learned about regular and irregular verbs as well as the different tenses during earlier lessons with their English teacher. The students' pre-test scores were recorded, and the action research participants were determined. Eight students who scored within the range of 0-10 marks on the pre-test were selected as participants for this study. Since their marks were the lowest in the pre-test, it was concluded that they were the ones who would benefit most from the intervention of Ive-Snap card game. Since their regular English teacher's instructional methods which focused on face-to-face teacher-centered instruction and teacher-led discussions were not benefitting them nor aiding them in the process of mastering the irregular simple past tense verbs, the researchers decided to select them as participants for this study and implement the Ive-Snap card game to determine if an alternative method to teaching English such as game-based learning would be able to captivate their attention on the topic and help them grasp the language focus faster instead of through further reinforcement and doing extra tasks.

Intervention and post-tests
The main reason for considering the implementation of an intervention in the form of a card game in aiding the students' understanding of simple past tense irregular verbs is that games are commonly viewed as effective learning aids as they spur motivation and motivate students to participate actively during the lesson (Gozcu & Caganaga, 2016). During elementary school years, flashcards are often used to aid the understanding of concepts and aid in the retention of memory. Hence, it was decided to create a matching card game that would aid students in understanding and memorising simple past tense irregular verbs easily. Hsiao and Oxford (2002) provided a thorough explanation of memory strategies and tactics. They claimed that the memory approach, which is divided into four subsets: 1) building mental associations, 2) using visuals and sounds, 3) doing thorough reviews, and 4) using action, is widely used to improve language retention. According to Razali et al. (2017), by grouping, associating, or elaborating and using context, mental links can be formed. Furthermore, through mixing and emphasising the similarities between these words, linkages can be built that may aid in word retention.

Taking into consideration the Ive-Snap card game, the simple past tense of the regular verb is listed on one pair of the cards, while the other pair has the irregular verb counterparts listed on them. The verbs and their corresponding match can aid the students in memorising the pairs of verbs because of the similarity. For example, buy–bought and build–built. When the students play the Ive-Snap card game, they will come to learn these pairs and eventually memorise them because of the sounds of the words will help them so they can recall the meaning as well. As for verb pairs such as go–went, which sound remotely different from each other, there are images pasted onto the card as well, such as someone going into a house and then coming out

of it to aid the students in associating the images with the corresponding pair of verbs that will help them memorise the correct pair. Brown (2000) who argued in favour of the proposition that grouping items or associating them with outside stimuli will improve recall, the recall of a word may be significantly improved when it is learnt by connecting it to its intended meaning with the memorisation of images in a cooperative game. Therefore, the Ive-Snap card game was established as a way to encourage students to remember simple past tense irregular verbs and implemented to see if it was effective as a pedagogical approach and whether it was practical.

During the first cycle, participants were introduced to Ive-Snap. The card game consisted of 20 cards (ten yellow cards and ten blue cards). Each yellow card had a regular verb in the present tense base form while each blue card had an irregular verb in the simple past tense form. For the first cycle, the cards were separated into two piles with the blue cards placed facing down in the middle of the table, and the yellow cards distributed equally among the players. To start the game, one blue card was turned over and players began to respond by identifying a matching yellow card. If the word on the blue card was the past tense of the irregular verb on the yellow card, players put their right hand on the pile of cards and shouted "SNAP!" The player who finished matching all their yellow cards first would be declared the winner. In pairs, players were required to play four rounds before being assigned the first post-test worksheet to evaluate the effectiveness of the Ive-Snap card game. Their scores were then recorded. The participants were also interviewed about what they would add to the cards to enhance their grammar acquisition.

During the second cycle, the design of the cards was improved after receiving feedback from the participants. Each set of cards was printed on cardboard paper and laminated to ease the shuffling of cards. Pictures were also added under each verb to help participants visualize the meaning of words and match each irregular verb to its regular pair. Similar to the first cycle, participants also played the game for a total of four rounds using the same rules as per the first cycle in pairs. The second post-test was administered to the participants after they completed four rounds of the game. From the second post-test, it could be calculated from the test scores that all the participants had scored better compared to the first post-test.

Interviews
The participants were interviewed one-on-one using semi-structured questions to learn about their thoughts on the usefulness of the Ive-Snap card game. In addition, questions concerning the participants' enjoyment in the card game and its efficacy in enhancing their comprehension of simple past irregular verbs were also posed to promote their sharing of opinions.

Observation
The participants' ongoing behaviour during the implementation of the Ive-Snap game was observed and jotted down in the form of field notes throughout both cycles of the intervention in order to determine how they felt about the game.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: How does the Ive-Snap game serve as a pedagogical approach to teaching irregular past tense verbs among Year 4 students?

The implementation of the Ive-Snap card game was found to be an effective pedagogical approach in engaging students in fun learning of grammar and increasing their memorisation of irregular verbs. Findings of the field notes (Figure 1) taken during the classroom observations and responses from interviews with the participants (Figure 2) showed that most of the students were excited and motivated to play the Ive-Snap card game during English lessons to help them remember irregular simple past tense verbs better and retain the information obtained. Figure 3 displays the matching pairs of some of the verbs during the Ive-Snap card game.

Figure 1: Field notes of the classroom observation

Interview Transcript

Interview with Mia (4H pupil)

Me: Good morning, Mia. Are you ready for the interview?

Mia: Yes.

Me: Firstly, did you like the card game you played earlier?

Mia: Yes, I liked the *gambar* and colour.

Me: Good to hear! Did you find it easier to learn present tense and past tense using the card game?

Mia: Yes, it was easy because of the *gambar* too.

Me: Great, and what did you learn from playing the card game?

Mia: That I can *ingat* irregular verbs.

Me: Good, you can actually memorise the simple past tense of irregular verbs. Last question, do you think learning about present and past tense verbs are important?

Mia: Yes, because all verbs and tenses are important.

Me: Great. That is all for today Mia, thank you.

Figure 2: Interview transcript taken from interview with a student

Figure 3: Sample matching pairs of some verbs during the Ive-Snap card game

The Ive-Snap card game can be employed as a teaching tool in the TBLT approach to teach irregular past tense verbs to Year 4 students. According to Chambers and Yunus (2017), using a variety of instructional techniques and classroom activities is essential for helping students with a range of needs since they can motivate students to actively participate in grammar classes.

"Games can offer an immersive environment in which extensive use is made of the target language," according to Godwin-Jones (2014, p. 10). Digital and conventional (non-digital) games pique the interest of ESL students in otherwise dull grammar courses that only use the "chalk-and-talk" approach. Since games can be used in classrooms without access to contemporary technology, it gives students a productive way to study. Language games are a component of the CLT approach because they emphasise learner-centeredness and are meaningful as well as collaborative, the Ive-Snap card game can also be utilised as a pedagogical strategy to teaching irregular past tense verbs.

Nevertheless, one male participant lost focus midway through the implementation of the intervention and ended up matching the wrong pairs of verbs multiple times during the second cycle. An interview with him discovered that he was not a visual learner but preferred auditory teaching and learning materials instead. Therefore, he lost focus and did not pay attention during the implementation of the intervention. According to Munir (2022), students who are not able to recognize their learning styles are less interested in absorbing the teaching materials that have been provided and this can affect their learning outcomes. Hence, it can be said that perhaps this participant was disinterested in the Ive-Snap card game because it did not retain his interest which led to him not performing well in post-test 2. That being so, the weakness of the intervention lies in the fact that it is not well-suited for all learners and does not take all their unique strengths into account which could affect their attitude toward learning.

The participants' opinions as gathered from the interview sessions regarding the effectiveness of the card game ranged from "Yes, it was effective because the pictures on the cards helped me remember" to "*Ya, tapi mungkin lebih seronok kalau main kat phone.*" (Yes, maybe it would have been more fun and effective if the game can be played using smartphone). They were also asked a question regarding how they could improve the Ive-Snap card game after evaluation and were encouraged to leave their honest comments. Most participants answered that having pictures on the cards would make them remember the pair of verbs better and they would be able to memorise them faster. Hence, their suggestions were taken into account to improve the cards for the second cycle of the intervention.

Research Question 2: How does the Ive-Snap card game assist in improving the memorisation of irregular past tense verbs among Year 4 students?

Results from the comparison of scores in the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2 showed that after the participants were exposed to the Ive-Snap card game, they improved their use of irregular simple past tense verbs throughout the course of two cycles. Table 1 shows a comparison of the participants' pre-test and post-tests scores upon completion of 20 fill-in-the-blank worksheets.

Table 1
Comparison of students' marks for pre-test, post-test 1 and post-test 2

Student	Pre-test marks	Post-Test 1 marks	Post-Test 2 marks
Student A	3/20	5/20	12/20
Student B	2/20	4/20	15/20
Student C	2/20	7/20	8/20
Student D	0/20	10/20	16/20
Student E	0/20	16/20	19/20
Student F	2/20	9/20	12/20
Student G	2/20	5/20	14/20
Student H	9/20	17/20	18/20

Based on the above table, most of the students showed improvement in their marks from the first pre-test implemented before the intervention was introduced to them, to the first post-test and lastly the second post-test. As can be seen from the results displayed above, student B is one of those that showed huge improvement considering he scored 2/20 in the pre-test, then 4/20 during the first post-test and his final score on the second post-test was 15/20. Aside from that, student D and E both scored zero marks on their pre-test before coming into contact with the intervention. However, after they were exposed to the Ive-Snap card game, student D got half the questions right (10/20) in pre-test 1 and further scored 16/20 in the second post-test. Student E on the other hand scored 16/20 on his first post-test and only got one question wrong in the second post-test (19/20). Student H's progress is also commendable because she barely managed to answer half the questions correctly (9/20). However, she showed huge improvement in the first post-test by scoring 17/20 and then scoring 18/20 on the second post-test.

For the pre-test as shown in Table 2, the mean value was 13.13, while the standard deviation was 13.21. Next, for the first post-test that was implemented after the first cycle of the intervention was completed, the mean value was 45.63, and the standard deviation was 23.38. As for the second post-test that was assigned to the participants after they completed the second cycle of the intervention, the mean value was 71.25, and the standard deviation was 16.72.

Table 2
Mean and standard deviation of participants' test scores

Types of Tests	Mean value	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	13.13	13.21
Post-test 1	45.63	23.38
Post-test 2	71.25	16.72

Thus, based on the data, it can be said that the Ive-Snap card game helped participants become more proficient with irregular simple past tense verbs. This is corroborated by Yiltanlilar and Caganaga (2015), who claimed that by providing a flexible and welcoming learning environment, games can be used as a means of encouraging language learners and helping them overcome negative emotions like fear, hesitation, and anxiety. The study also covered how

teaching English to students through games creates a positive learning atmosphere, exposes them to relevant material, and gives them lots of chances to practice and improve their skills. Through a study on the significance of using games in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes, Gozcu and Caganaga (2016) reinforced this argument. In addition to increasing motivation for language acquisition, using games in the classroom frequently fosters a positive and enjoyable atmosphere where students feel less nervous about making mistakes. These results were further corroborated by Nur Syafiqah and Melor (2019), who demonstrated the value of using language games as a teaching tool to improve students' acquisition of English grammar. As a result, engaging students in learner-centered activities like games is enjoyable for them, piques their interest, and motivates them to continue picking up and utilising the language as they learn.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations include the bias effect under which comes novelty bias. In a study conducted by Rodrigues et al. (2022), it was found that gamification suffers from the novelty effect, which leads to positive outcomes when introduced. Sanchez et al. (2020) discussed similar findings regarding cases where gamification's impact on students' behaviour changed after an initial positive effect, and as such, the question arises whether gamification can lead to long-lasting benefits. Based on the results of this study, it would not be wrong to assume that novelty bias may have been at play which led the students to consequently perform better in the two post-tests that were assigned after they had been exposed to the Ive-Snap card game. However, as stated by Rodrigues et al. (2022), gamification likely suffers from the novelty effect but benefits from the familiarisation effect, which contributes to an overall positive impact. The results from the corresponding study revealed that gamification was used effectively and had a beneficial impact on learner behaviour, suggesting that it was negatively impacted by the novelty effect and that it was later strengthened by the familiarisation effect. So, practically speaking, even if a gamified intervention appears to lose effectiveness or stop working after some time, it is likely to regain effectiveness in the future, even though the effect might not return to its initial values.

Therefore, it can be derived that the novelty effect might have hindered the validity of this research and the implications of its results, but it must also be said that the intervention would not have had the same effect on all the students, hence the differing results. This is supported by Van Roy and Zaman (2018), who stated that the gamification design is unlikely to work for all users because one size does not fit all. People have different preferences, perceptions, and experiences even under the same condition, and the Ive-Snap card game may have proved exceptionally effective to certain students, while the remaining students may not have been as interested in it, and it did not prove to be beneficial to them. The students who benefitted from the intervention probably became familiar with the pairs of simple past tense irregular verbs after three cycles and managed to memorise them, which led to them excelling in the post-test assigned after the implementation of the Ive-Snap card game. Thus, it can be said that the novelty effect hurts gamification's influence on students' behaviour, but the familiarisation effect helps, providing a counterbalance that is probably to blame for the overall beneficial impact gamification frequently shows in maximising behavioural learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings suggest that the Ive-Snap card game helped participants become more proficient with irregular simple past tense verbs and had a favourable impact on them. Even with the limited sample size and minor scale of the game's implementation, the results appear promising and could be further refined in future research. The Ive-Snap card game is a useful pedagogical tool for teaching ESL students to improve their comprehension and acquisition of grammar, particularly irregular simple past tense verbs, according to the study's findings. Using language games in the classroom allows teachers to design engaging teaching and learning resources that boost students' motivation to learn, improve their fluency, and pique their interest. Language games support and motivate ESL students as they retain interest, which makes it easy for them to acquire and pick up new skills. Some games can also be highly educational and insightful. In turn, despite its limitations, the Ive-Snap card game intervention was created with the intention of giving students an effective and enjoyable way to learn English.

In addition, the Ive-Snap card game is quite versatile in the sense of usability and practicality since it can be designed to cater to other topics, the template for the cards can be edited and used to teach other topics. For example, it could be used to teach vocabulary in science and the other set of cards could contain the definition of the science vocabulary words. These cards could be used as flashcards to help assist the students' understanding of the science vocabulary words before being used to conduct the card game. The cards could also be modified to teach mathematics such as to drill students on the multiplication tables. Alternatively, it could also be used to teach word meaning and other grammar aspects in English, such as word classes and past participle forms of verbs.

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Conflict of Interest

All authors have no conflict of interest.

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All authors have equal contributions.

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