

## Article

# The Effectiveness of Emoji-Coded Bubbles in Enhancing Year 4 ESL Pupils' Placement of Subject, Verb and Object in a Sentence

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**Abstract:** In English as a second language (ESL) teaching, grammar is a crucial aspect in ensuring the other skills can be taught effectively. In my case, the skill concerned would be writing. Hence, I came up with an intervention that could address the core problem (grammar) and secondary problem (writing) faced by pupils learning ESL. This research aims to improve Year 4 pupils' correct placement of subject, verb and object in a sentence by using the Emoji-Coded Bubbles method as an intervention. The research participants are five Year 4 pupils from a primary school located in Taman Desa, Kuala Lumpur. The participants were of low proficiency. This study involved a deductive approach in teaching the functions of a subject, verb and object in a sentence. The instruments for the study consisted of a pre-test and a post-test, two interview sessions – one before introducing the intervention and one after-and reflective journal entries. The results of the study showed that the use of the Emoji-Coded Bubbles method was effective in enhancing Year 4 pupils to correctly place the subject, verb and object following the (S-V-O) sentence structure. All participants were able to successfully show improvement in constructing sentences of the (S-V-O) structure.

**Keyword:** Correct placement, Emoji-Coded Bubbles, Grammar, sentence structure, Writing

## 1. Introduction

The English language has always played a serious role in Malaysia's pursuit of becoming a developed nation (Ming, Ling & Jaafar 2011). In the Standard Curriculum for Primary School five modules are introduced, which are listening, speaking, reading, writing, and language arts and grammar has to be taught contextually through these modules in the English language subject (Ministry of Education, 2012). Grammar plays an

important role in language learning. Sentence patterns fall under grammar and are known as the arrangement of words (Norhazian & Yong, 2012). There are seven sentence patterns and the sentence pattern that will be focused on throughout this research is subject + verb + object (SVO). This pattern includes the usage of transitive verbs which must be followed by a direct object. (Norhazian Mat Sopian. & Yong, 2012). The subject receives the action at the beginning of the sentence, thereby stressing the verbs immediately after the subject.

I decided to venture in this aspect of the English language as I truly believe that accuracy and fluency comes hand in hand when learning to be a competent user of any language. Young students should recognize the correct word order and sentence structure in the English language (Kakaria, 2021). This is because when the students become older, it becomes progressively difficult for teachers to correct their syntax problems. This will just lead to neglect towards the language and possibly teachers neglecting students who have such problems. Therefore, coming up with interventions for small yet complicated problems through researches in the English language should be done and is encouraged.

This research is conducted to objectively examine and identify the strengths, weaknesses and the extent of effectiveness of using the emoji-coded bubbles method in teaching the correct placement of the SVO in a sentence among Year 4 pupils. As the COVID-19 pandemic has looms upon us, the education system had turned to online learning to continue schooling days and sessions for all students. This applies to kindergarteners up to tertiary education level. Online learning involves teaching through well-known platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet and others. The Emoji-Coded Bubbles method can be used during online learning. Teachers and educators who choose to use this intervention can still teach it through videos. This way, these educators get to personalize the intervention by using appropriate emojis with various kinds of animation.

## 2. Methodology

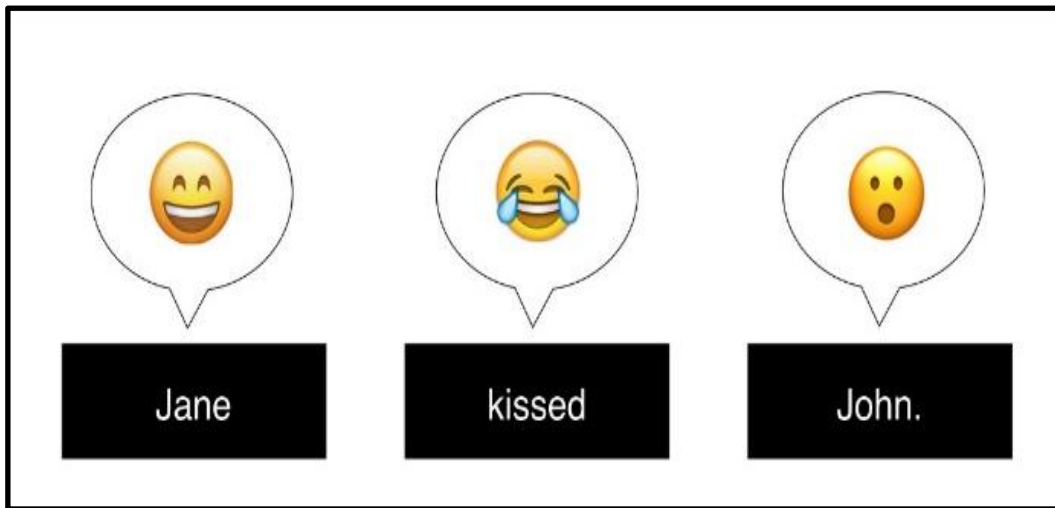
This intervention is called 'Emoji-Coded Bubbles' because the emojis used are in bubbles and it represents each component that we are focusing, which are subject, verb and object.

I chose to use emojis as they act as visual aids. The Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1981) claims that language learners have high possibility of bringing in emotional factors such as anxiety, confidence and motivation when learning. To ensure that these emotional factors are always in check, including distractors such as visuals and or sounds can help decrease the filter and increase the rate of learning (Ling & Mohamad, 2019). Based on this hypothesis, I chose emojis as they have visual relevance to the pupils of this generation. Pupils are very informed with what emojis are and bringing in this element will excite the pupils.

The sentences that were used to introduce the intervention were based on the topics that I was teaching during my lessons. Figure 2 shows sample sentences that were taught. The sentences are according to the topic. This is to make sure what I am teaching is in line with the scheme of work and The Framework for Standard-Based Curriculum for Primary Schools (DSKP).

The Emoji-Coded Bubbles method is a teaching resource, I implemented because of its relevance to the current generation. The pupils are exposed to chatting online and to express themselves they use emoticons or emojis (Mubarak Abdessalami, 2017). Yunus et al (2012) agreed that digital comics allow teachers to help low achieving pupils to write in English. These emojis of faces are like a happy face, sad face or any face that relates to our human emotions. Thus, the learning becomes fun, meaningful and purposeful.

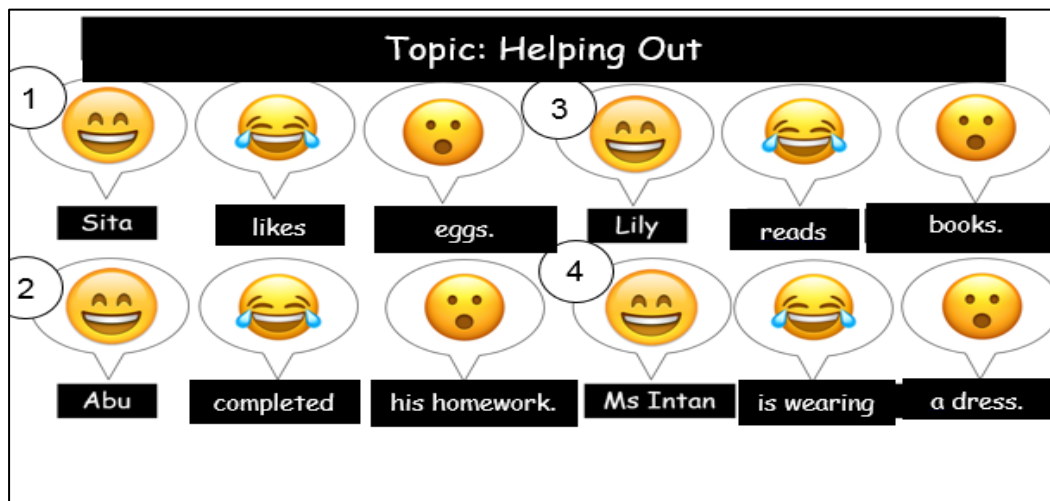
As seen in Figure 2, I chose the happy face emoji to represent the subject of the sentence to indicate a happy start. I chose the laughing emoji to represent the verb as laughing is an action thus it reflects the



**Figure 1: This is the intervention I am introducing.** The subject of the sentence is represented by a happy face emoji, the verb of the object is represented by a laughing emoji and the object of the sentence is represented by an ‘o-mouth’ face.

purpose of the verb in a sentence. Lastly, I chose the o-mouth emoji to represent the object of the sentence because the letter ‘O’ is the start of the word of object. These emojis will remind the pupils the type of word and where to place in order to construct a correct sentence.

Coded Bubbles. As seen in Figure 2, the Emoji-Coded Bubbles will be above each component of the sentence. This way the pupils will familiarize themselves with the usage of emojis when trying to come up with a sentence. This will also help them remember the proper sequencing of the components.



**Figure 2: Sample sentences according to the topic in the year 4 KSSR textbook**

The pupils were given a pre-test before implementing the intervention. The pupils were introduced to the components of a sentence which are the subject, verb and object. Then, the pupils learned how to correctly place the components in a sentence. Next, the pupils were exposed to the Emoji-

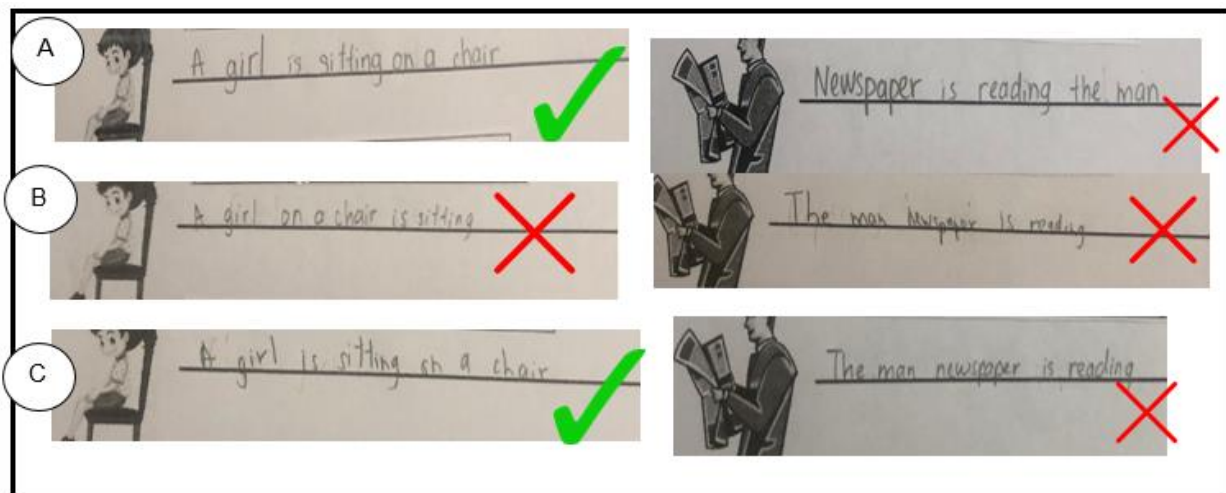
Next, the pupils were introduced to worksheets to allow the pupils to practice what they have learned. Then, I conducted a post-test to assess the pupils whether they were able to construct sentences with the correct placement of the SVO.

### 3. Result and Discussion

I have included some items from my pre and post-test that I have conducted with my participants. Data collection and analysis is crucial when it comes to understanding the effectiveness of an intervention for research purposes. Fraenkel et al., (2012) explained that a test measures the quality of a performance. According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), a test is a systematic process that is used to collect information of pupils' knowledge. The tests were conducted before and after introducing the intervention. The pre and post-tests were of the same level of difficulty but different questions were given so that a consistency is present and the progress can be seen clearly.

acquiring the English language. For instance, the word order in Tamil or Hindi language is subject+ object+ verb (SOV) instead of SVO in English. This interference makes the pupils confused with the rules in English sentences.

The responses from these participants (Figure 4) are not accurate in the sense of constructing a full sentence. Nevertheless, they are able to correctly place the subject, verb and object in a sentence without any guided words or indications and that is the objective of this intervention. The participants are able to place the subject, verb and object according to the SVO structure. They are also able to name their subjects. This is definitely a progress as it can be clearly seen that the participants understand



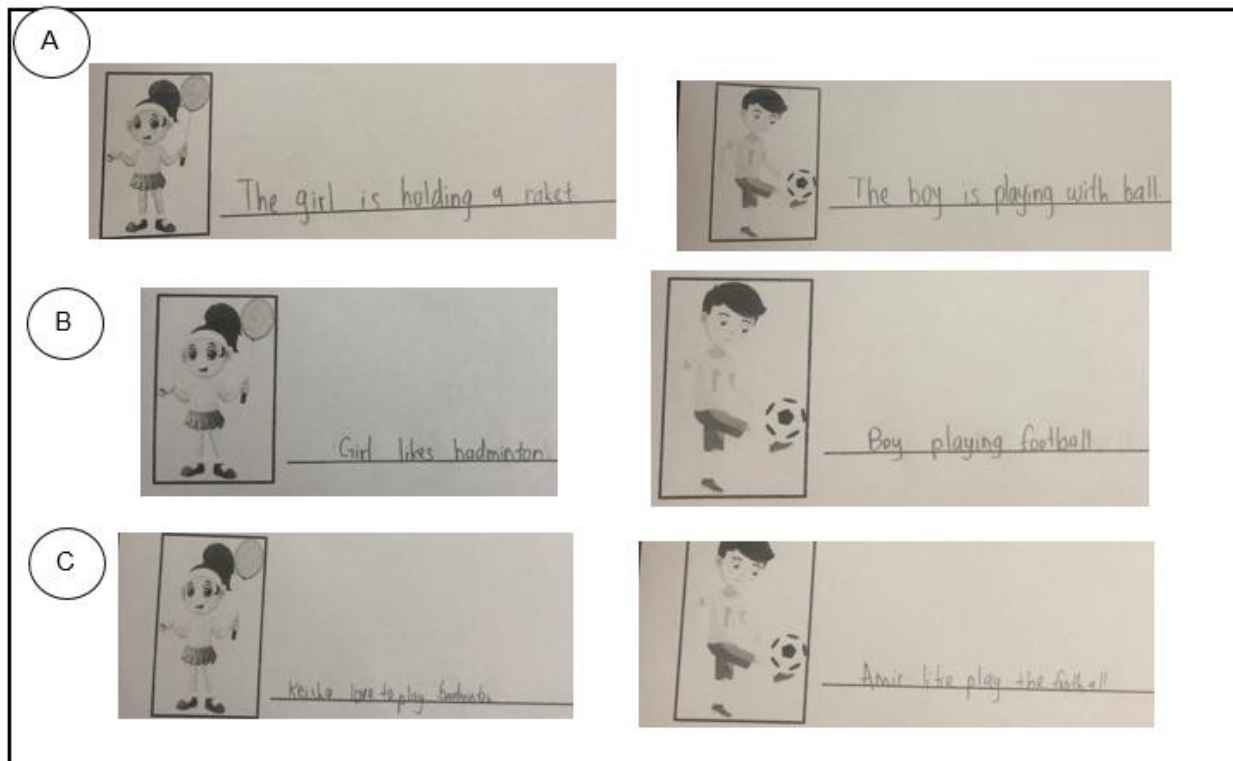
**Figure 3: These are responses from 3 different participants for the pre-test**

As seen in Figure 3, these participants have trouble in placing the subject, verb and object correctly. Participant A and Participant C answered the first question correctly but the second question was wrong. Participant B answered both the questions wrong. This is because they are unable to place the subject, verb and object correctly according to the SVO structure. The word order either becomes SOV and OVS. When examining these errors, it dawned on me that there is a slight chance these errors were caused by the interference from their mother tongue. Atkinson (1987) stated that mother tongue gives a big influence for an individual in

the functions of subject, verb and object in a sentence.

### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, I can firmly say that Emoji-Coded Bubbles is a successful intervention that addresses the issue of correctly placing subject, verb and object in a sentence. Although some changes can be made to make it more efficient and reliable, I think these changes should be done by the educators who want to use this intervention. This will allow the educators to specialize and tailor this intervention to



**Figure 4:** These are responses from 3 different participants for the post-test

their group of pupils. It has benefited as a teaching resource in the classroom as well as online learning environment.

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