



Using ‘Connect Me’ Model To Construct Simple Sentences With Past Continuous Tense

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Abstract. This action research aimed to study simple sentence construction using past continuous tense in teaching year 4 pupils using the ‘Connect Me’ model. This action research attempted to address the following research objectives which were to determine whether the use of the ‘Connect Me’ model can help pupils in writing sentences with the past continuous tense and to demonstrate how the ‘Connect Me’ model helps in teaching constructing simple sentences with past continuous tense. A total of 30 research participants from Year 4 were selected for this research. Data was collected using pre-intervention tests and post-intervention tests, semi-structured interviews, and observational checklists. The results show that the implementation of the ‘Connect Me’ model helped the participants to improve their grammar knowledge of the past tense. However, some changes could be made to enhance the use of the ‘Connect Me’ model to teach pupils. The findings suggest the need for further research to add new action verbs and include pictures to define the meaning of new action verbs.

Keywords: simple sentences, past continuous tense, sentence construction. ‘connect me’

1. Introduction

The current level of English language in Malaysia is not used efficiently by the people, especially among youngsters [1]. There was less focus given to the use of the English language in schools [2]. During three phases of practicums in three different schools, the researcher identified that less focus was given to the English language. Pupils seemed not to be able to interrelate the concept of using tenses in constructing sentences. Pupils get confused about the concept of present continuous tense and past continuous tense. They do not know when to apply 'was' and 'were' in their past tense sentences. This problem probably arises because pupils use the present continuous tense in describing past events. The correct use of tenses will increase the level of readability and allow readers to comprehend accurately a piece of writing [3]. According to Fareed Siddiqui (2014) [3], the correct use of past continuous tense will deliver information clearly to others via writing. Hence, pupils need to be taught how to understand the correct concept of using 'was' and 'were' as past continuous tense in the pupils' sentence construction. Thus, the researcher focused on the correct use of past continuous tense in their sentences.

1.1. Research Objectives and Research Questions

Research Objectives:

This action research is carried out to answer the following research objectives:

- a. To determine whether the 'Connect Me' model can help pupils construct simple sentences with past continuous tenses. To demonstrate how the 'Connect me' model helps in teaching constructing simple sentences with past continuous tense.

Research Questions:

The following research questions are formulated in order to address the research objectives:

- a. How does the 'Connect Me' model help pupils construct simple sentences with past continuous tense?
- b. How does the 'Connect Me' model help in teaching constructing simple sentences with past continuous tense among Year 4 pupils?

2. Connect Me Model

Competition in a learning process will raise the level of interest and excitement while accomplishing essentially the same degree of content processing. Thus, the researcher designed a checklist to choose the winner of the competition. This checklist of the mark sheet was distributed to the research participants. The research participants were asked to write the constructed sentences with the marks in the columns provided. The 'Connect Me' model contains 100 boxes with marks at the bottom. Therefore, it will be easy for the participants to construct the sentences and calculate the marks.

Therefore, the researcher applied several criteria like manageability, applicability, and relevance to the school setting to evaluate the research through the 'Connect Me' model. The researcher focuses on the manageability of the 'Connect Me' model to solve the research problem. The 'Connect Me' model is made of word cards using colored papers which were laminated and aboard. The researcher created more word cards so that the participants can create more sentences. A4 colored papers were the best choice for the researcher to create more word cards which help to manage the intervention's cost. Furthermore, the researcher uses different colored papers to differentiate the subject, verb, and time indicator to help the research participants to understand the concept of past continuous tense. Therefore, the research participants can easily use the 'Connect Me' model without an instructor to explain every rule.

Besides, the controlled class was easily managed by the researcher with the help of the 'Connect Me' model. The 'Connect Me' model is focused more on the cognitive skill of the participants where the participants must think and construct the sentences. Thus, the research focus was easily managed by the 'Connect Me' model.

The color coding in each word card helped the research participants to understand the concept of constructing simple sentences using past continuous tense. The direction of constructing the sentences in a correct form of color coding will be provided in the 'Connect Me' model. The participants never got the chance to make mistakes in constructing the sentences because the example with color coding was given at the bottom of the 'Connect Me' model. Besides, this model gave a competitive experience to the participants. Therefore, the research participants constructed the sentences in the correct concept of past continuous tense to win the game. Additionally, a checklist where the participants have to write the sentences that each individual had constructed. This method helped the researcher to evaluate the research participants' ability in constructing simple sentences using past continuous tense.

The next criterion is applicability. The targeted grammar element is the past continuous tense, it is one of the important elements in grammar which had been emphasized in the Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (KSSR) syllabus. In the curriculum specification of KSSR, the Ministry of Education focused on grammar and mentioned that pupils have to use correct and appropriate rules of grammar in speech and writing [4]. Hence, the intervention applies to the research participants and teachers to fulfill the needs of the curriculum specification of KSSR. The researcher's focus was on the writing skill of the respondents to construct simple sentences using past continuous tense. The simplicity of the intervention helps the researcher to work without any problems with the intervention.

3. Research Participants

30 research participants were chosen for the research based on purposive sampling where the participants were chosen based on the research purpose [5]. Among these participants, there were three girls and five boys, who are very weak in constructing sentences in the past continuous tense. These 30 participants were chosen based on their scores in the pre-intervention test, problems in constructing sentences using past continuous tense, and academic achievements in the exams. In total, two research participants were lack of proper guidance in their studies from their parents. In addition, four participants had very low proficiency levels in English. This was noticed by the researcher from the observation of the teaching and learning process. The last two participants were average learners in the class. The problem among both participants was they had difficulties understanding the concept of past continuous tense.

4. Implementation of Action Plan

The researcher focused on implementing a comprehensive intervention aimed at improving the participants' understanding and usage of past continuous tense through the 'Connect Me' model. This intervention spanned a duration of six weeks, with sessions conducted twice a week. The model was developed based on three key concepts of writing past continuous tense, as outlined by Beare (2017) [6]. These concepts involved identifying the sentence type (singular or plural) to determine the appropriate verb tense, adding "-ing" to action verbs, and incorporating a period to indicate the past occurrence.

To facilitate the learning process, the 'Connect Me' model consisted of five different word cards, each color-coded. The researcher devised two color coding methods to differentiate between singular and plural sentences in the past continuous tense. During the initial stage, the participants familiarized themselves with the model by engaging in play and exploration, enabling them to grasp the concept of constructing sentences using past continuous tense.

Upon gaining proficiency in constructing sentences, the intervention progressed to the second stage,

where the participants actively competed with one another to earn marks for their constructed sentences. Marks were recorded on the boxes within the 'Connect Me' model, and each participant received a mark sheet for personal tracking. This competitive element motivated the pupils to construct a greater number of sentences compared to the initial stage. Additionally, participants were required to keep the word cards to enable the construction of additional sentences. This combination of competition and limited resources enhanced the participants' attention and focus, effectively addressing the identified problem [7].

Data collection for this research involved three methods: Pre-Intervention Test and Post-Intervention Test, Semi-structured Interview, and Observational Checklist. The pre-and post-intervention tests assessed the participants' performance. The semi-structured interviews were conducted individually and analyzed through thematic analysis, resulting in the generation of specific codes for tabulation [8]. Lastly, the observational checklist employed a table format, utilizing 'Yes' or 'No' coding.

The results of the post-intervention test indicated significant improvement in the participants' performance compared to the pre-intervention test. Notably, 30 participants achieved the maximum score in the post-intervention test, showcasing the effectiveness of the 'Connect Me' model. While 10 participants obtained the lowest score in the post-intervention test, a 37% increment was observed, signifying progress across all participants. Overall, the implementation of the 'Connect Me' model resulted in positive responses and higher marks in the post-intervention test for all research participants.

Furthermore, the research participants provided valuable feedback on the 'Connect Me' model. In response to open-ended questions (Item 1 and Item 4), they expressed their enjoyment of the lesson, finding it fun, enjoyable, and interesting. The model also contributed to building their confidence levels, as exemplified by the examples provided on the board, the color-coding system, and the opportunity to learn with friends.

The findings from the semi-structured interviews revealed that both interviewees found the 'Connect Me' model interesting and user-friendly, allowing the participants to distinguish between different sentence types. Both interviewees expressed a desire to utilize the model as a teaching tool due to its user-friendly nature and engaging characteristics. Furthermore, they agreed that the model significantly aided pupils in constructing sentences, promoting group learning, providing clear examples, and facilitating comprehension using colors.

In assessing the observers' perspectives, Figure 1 depicted their agreement (indicated as "Yes") with most items across the six elements. However, there were certain elements where the observers expressed disagreement ("No") with the model. They found the model lacking in colorfulness, absence of technology integration, time constraints, and a lack of platform for fostering critical thinking skills.

No		No			
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Validity				
	a. Content Validity	////	/	///	/
	b. Face validity	///	/	///	/
2	Practicality	//	/	//	/
3	Effectiveness	///	/	////	
4	Usefulness	//	/	//	/
5	Utilization of senses	//		//	
6	21st Century Learning	///	/	///	/

Fig 1. Summary of Observational Checklist

5. Conclusion

During the process of this action research, the researcher happened to know the difficulties and challenges in teaching and learning in mastering certain skills for pupils. This research helped the researcher to design her pedagogical strategies for the pupils. Based on the data gathered throughout the research, all the research participants were able to understand the topic better. This was shown in the finding of pre and post-intervention tests. The knowledge that the participants gained was closely linked with constructivism theory where new information is linked to prior knowledge. Constructivism asserts that individuals actively construct knowledge and meaning through their own experiences, interactions, and reflections, emphasizing the importance of learner-centered and experiential approaches to education [9]. The prior knowledge acquired by the participants was constructing sentences using simple past. Therefore, with the help of simple past, the new knowledge of past continuous tense was acquired by the participants.

6. Suggestions for Future Action

The findings of the overall action research suggested two reasonable suggestions to further improve the intervention. After analyzing the data, the researcher identified the need to expand the range of action verbs used in the 'Connect Me' model. By incorporating different action verbs, the intervention could offer a more comprehensive learning experience, enabling participants or learners to acquire a broader vocabulary and gain new knowledge in the process.

Furthermore, during the observation phase, both observers noted that the 'Connect Me' model lacked visual appeal. To address this concern, the researcher proposed enhancing the visual aspect of the model by incorporating colorful pictures depicting the action verbs. These vibrant images would serve the purpose of not only adding a visual appeal but also effectively conveying the meaning and context of the action verbs utilized in the intervention.

By incorporating these additional elements, the improved 'Connect Me' model would aim to create a more engaging and visually stimulating learning environment for the participants. The inclusion of a wider range of action verbs and the use of colorful pictures would contribute to enhancing the overall effectiveness and attractiveness of the intervention.

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