Using "Plural Window" to Improve Year 3 Pupils' Spelling of Countable Plural Nouns

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ABSTRACT

An interlanguage with Malay and English structures may arise among Malaysian English-speaking pupils who learn English. Acknowledging the interlanguage, the pupils had problems transforming singular nouns to plural nouns as the Malay and English languages have different noun systems. This research has been conducted to improve the Year 3 pupils' spelling of countable plural nouns. Besides, this research also aimed to study the effectiveness of using the Plural Window to improve Year 3 pupils' performance on their spelling of countable plural nouns and determine the impact of using the Plural Window on teaching and learning session in the classroom. The participants of the study were four Year 3 Merah pupils with beginner proficiency in the English language. In addition, the data collected for this study through observation, interview, and document analysis. Then, the quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods used to analyse the data gathered. Based on the findings, it is discovered that the Plural Window had produced good independent learners in the English classroom, increased the pupils' positive engagement in learning and created a meaningful learning environment. Besides, it is also discovered that the use of Plural Window had enhanced the teaching methods.

Keywords: "Plural Windows"; English language; Interlanguage; Plural Nouns; Pluralisation

1. Background

There is no connection between the spelling and articulation of the English language. Countable and uncountable nouns are the two sorts of nouns. Most plural nouns in English are formed by adding the suffix -s to the singular noun. On the other hand, irregular nouns do not follow the rules for converting plurals. The process of pluralisation is the change in the spelling of a countable noun by adding suffix -s, -es, -ves, and -ies to show the noun in a plural form. English teachers usually teach the rules of regular plural nouns by introducing nouns in general and giving some examples of nouns to the pupils. According to Sowell (2017), meaning is made precise through examples. This paper aimed to explore the effectiveness of using Plural Window in teaching the spelling of countable plural nouns to Year 3 pupils.

Problem Statement

- How does the use of 'Plural Window' help to improve Year 3 pupils' spelling of countable plural nouns?
- How does the use of 'Plural Window' help us to improve our teaching of countable plural nouns?

Research Objectives

- To study the effectiveness of using the 'Plural Window' to improve Year 3 pupils' spelling of countable plural nouns.
- To determine the impact of using the 'Plural Window' on our teaching and learning session in the classroom.

1.1 Reflection of Teaching and Learning

In the Malay language, numbers function as an adjective before a noun. Thus, there was no plural suffix combined with the nouns. However, the suffix is added to nouns after numbers as adjectives in the English language. When Malaysian English-speaking pupils learn English, they may evolve an interlanguage, with some structures from Malay and some forms from English. It has been noticed that the pupils were uncertain for the rules of turning singular nouns ending with s, x, ch, sh into plural nouns. The pupils tend to overgeneralise the rules as they think they only had to add suffix 's' to singular nouns to change them to plural. While learning the rules of transforming singular nouns into plural nouns, the pupils were very active under supervision but turned very nervous when asked to do the task themselves. Some pupils even relied on their friends to help them answer the task given.

2. Methods

This research used qualitative methods to improve Year 3 pupils' spelling of countable plural nouns. The emphasis is on solving the pupils' spelling of countable plural nouns by gathering data and taking action.

2.1 Population and Participants of Study

The participants of the study were chosen using the non-probability sampling method. The research participants had beginner proficiency in the English language. Two of them were Bidayuh, one of them was Iban, and one was Malay. They were not native speakers of the English language as they use their mother tongue languages at home and in their daily conversations. The research participants scored below-average marks on their diagnostic tests.

2.2 Instruments of Study

The data for this study was collected through three methods – observation, document analysis and interview. According to Wagner, Kawulich & Garner (2012), Kawulich (2012) social sciences use observation to collect data about people, processes, and cultures. Through the observation method, the pupils in terms of their attention span, engagement with the Plural Window, and the amount of time needed to complete their work. By using document analysis, the pre-test and post-test data on the spelling of countable plural nouns were used to measure the amount of learning obtained by pupils in a specific subject. The research participants were given the same set of tests before and after the intervention. Lastly, in the interview, we conducted a structured interview to collect information regarding the effectiveness of the Plural Window. Some open-ended and closed-ended questions were applied that enabled us to know the views of the participants regarding the intervention.

2.3 Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis has been used to study the data from the observation's checklist and the pre-tests and post-test on the spelling of countable plural nouns conducted on the participants. The data has been analysed quantitatively and acquired from the observation checklist in a table form and illustrated it in the form of a bar graph, as in Figure 1 below. The Thematic analysis also has been used to analyse the collected qualitative data. According to Maguire & Delahunt (2017), the thematic analysis identified patterns or themes within the qualitative data. Braun & Clarke (2006), Alhojailan & Ibrahim (2012) stated that thematic analysis consists of data familiarisation, code generation, theme search, themes revision, and theme definition. The analysis generated several codes that formed several categories and themes. Table 1 shows the codes, categories, and themes identified.
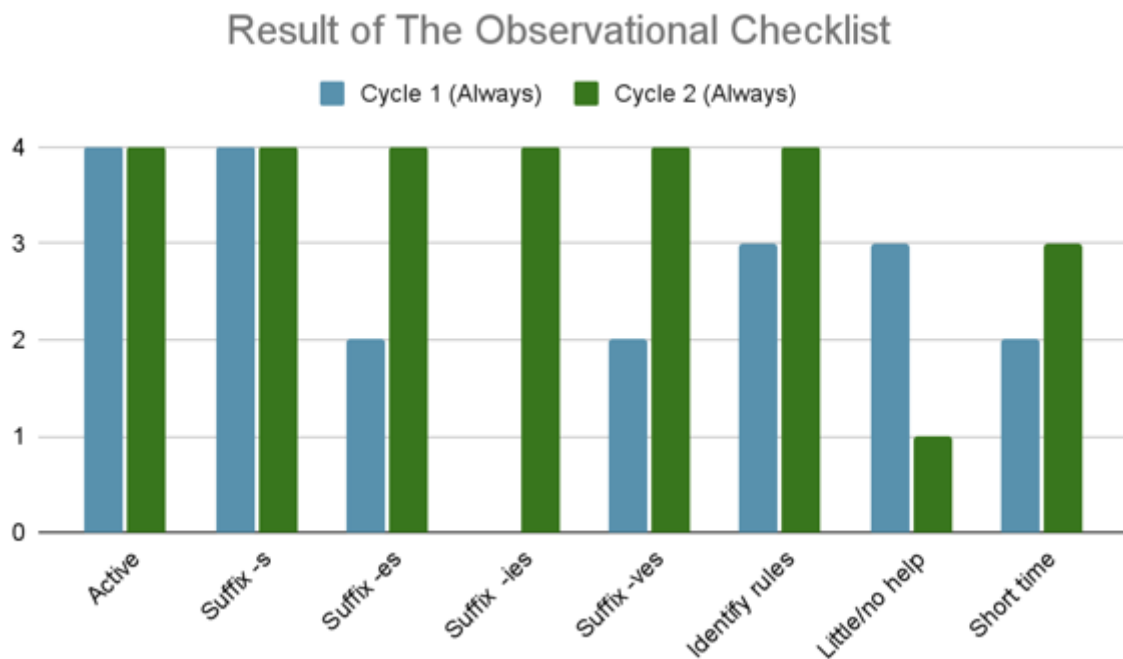

Figure 1: Bar Graph of The Comparisons of The Result of The Observation Checklist

Table 1: Identified and analysed codes, categories, and themes from all the data gathered.

Codes	Category	Themes
• Excited • Fun • Engaging • Colourful and big	Pupils' positive response	**Pupils' positive engagement**
• Pupils like it • Pupils love it. • Can touch it. • Can play with it	Interesting teaching aids	**Teaching Strategies**
• Change singular nouns to plurals step by step. • Don't need to ask teacher or friends anymore	Effective teaching	
• Easy to use. • Can refer to the rules easily. • Can spell plurals easily	Easy and manageable activities	**Meaningful Learning**
• Can identify the rules of pluralisation. • Can add suffix -s, -es, -ves, -ies better	Understanding	**Good Independent Learner**
• Focus on answering the questions without looking at friends or flipping the worksheet. • Hands-on activity	Independent Learner	

2.4 Stringer's Action Research Interacting Spiral Model

The Stringer's Action Research Interacting Spiral Model (2007) is used in this research. Stringer (2007) described action research as a simple yet strong structure of a "look, think, and act" cycle. In the first cycle of this model, the information gathered on the problem of correctly spelling plural nouns was faced by the pupils and observed (**LOOK**). Based on the observations, the pupils could not figure out when to add the suffix -s, -es, -ves, and -ies. After that, outlined all the probable reasons for the participants' struggles and looked for ways to help the pupils with their problems (**THINK**). A demonstration explained on applying the 'Plural Window' to the pupils. Then, the pupils were allowed to do more exercises on the countable plural nouns by using the Plural Window (**ACT**).

In the second cycle, the light reflected on the issues raised in the first cycle and looked for modifications to the research (**LOOK**). The data collected on the first cycle has been analysed and evaluated (**THINK**). After that, the modified version of Plural Window was implemented and evaluated the pupils' performance (**ACT**). **T**he cycle of this model repeated until the participants could pluralise singular nouns without making mistakes. At the end of the cycle two - the participants had mastered the pluralisation cycle. Before the end of the session, the participants were interviewed based on the interventions they had done.
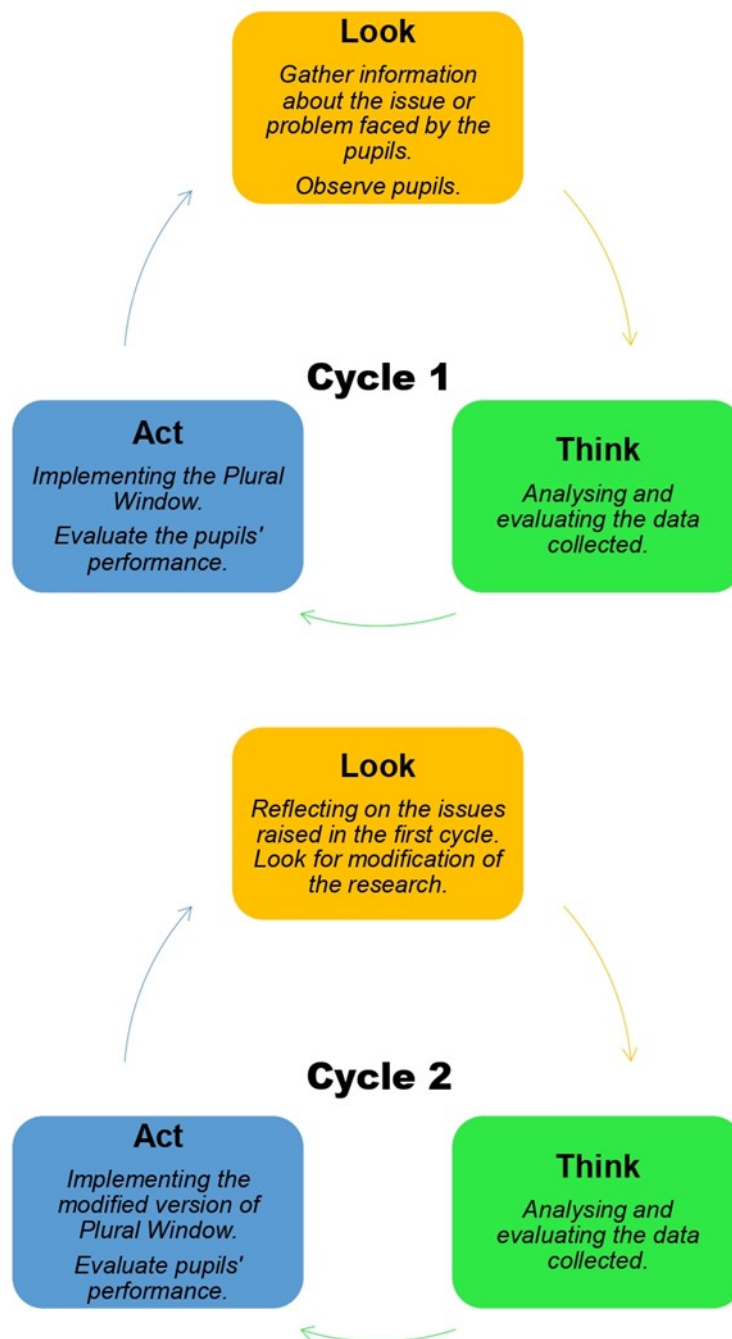
Figure 2: Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 of the action research

3.   Results and Discussion

3.1 Good Independent Learners

The Plural Window has produced good independent learners in the English classroom, according to a review of the results of two cycles of action research. In the first cycle, the pupils overgeneralised the addition of the suffix -s to singular nouns to pluralise them. However, in the second cycle, all the participants managed to get 'excellent' for their mastery level. Figure 3 shows the comparison of the pre-test and post-test results for the first and second cycles of the research. This proved that Plural Window helps to improve the pupils' knowledge of converting singular nouns to plurals. The participants could use it without asking for help as their facilitator of learning.
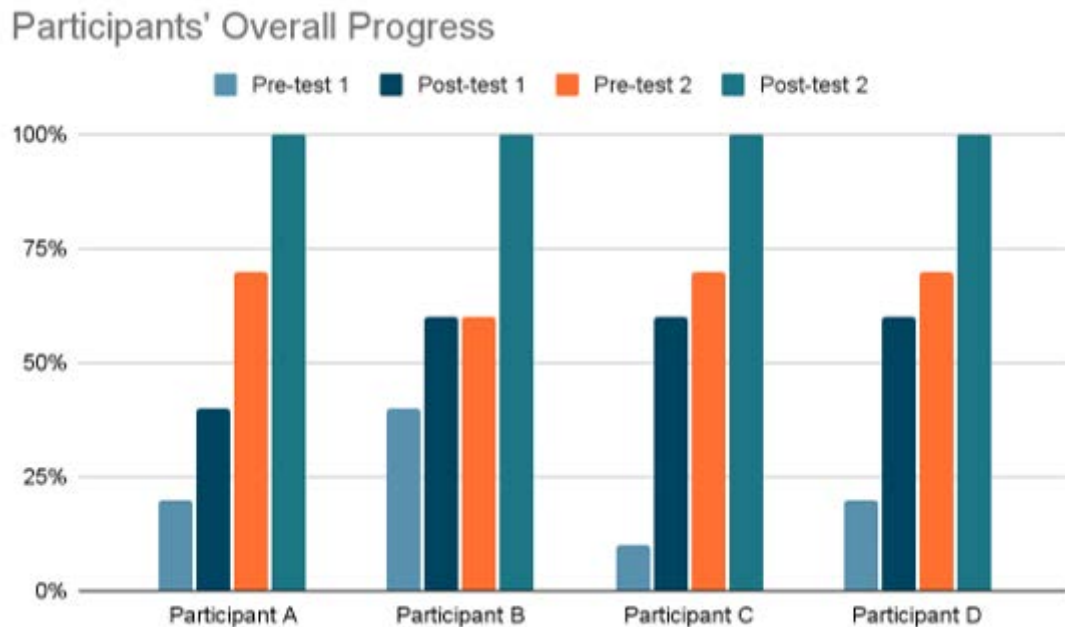
Figure 3: Participants' overall progress in the first cycle and the second cycle

3.2 Increased the Pupils' Positive Engagement in Learning

Using Plural Window to convert singular nouns to plurals was fun, engaging, and colourful. The pupils' engagement refers to the extent of concentration, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion they exhibit during the lesson. Pupils' engagement in class could improve their satisfaction, lower the feeling of isolation, and improve their academic performances. When the pupils are engaged and motivated in the lessons, the learning process can happen smoothly.

3.3 Create A Meaningful Learning Environment

The intervention enhanced the pupils' knowledge of pluralisation and helped them be good independent learners. Plural Window was a hands-on activity that required the pupils to open and close the 'window' to match the pluralisation rules correctly. It has also resulted in creating a meaningful learning environment. The intervention is an effective teaching strategy in improving Year 3 pupils' spelling of countable plural nouns. The implementation of the Plural Window enabled the teacher to improve her teaching of pluralisation. The intervention integrated hands-on activity and colour-coded elements in a bid to motivate the pupils to be more engaged in the lesson. Al Aqad, Al-Saggaf & Muthmainnah (2021), Maria (2012), Shyamlee & Phil (2012) stated that visual aids can help improve outcomes in the language classroom.

3.4 Improved the Teaching Strategy

The implementation of Plural Window improved the teaching strategy as the pupils could be independent learners in learning the pluralisation rules. The intervention helped to improve the teaching of countable plural nouns among Year 3 pupils. The use of the intervention shifted from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred learning strategy. It also made the pupils more assertive in lessons related to pluralisation.

Interview Transcriptions	Codes

Question 1:	Do you like Plural Window?	
Participant A	Yes, I do.	
Participant B	Yes, I like.	
Participant C	Yes, teacher.	
Participant D	Yes, I love it	
Question 2:	Why do you like/dislike the Plural Window?	
Participant A	Because I can touch it.	
Participant B	Because I can play with it. It is fun.	
Participant C	Because I can spell plural nouns easily now.	
Participant D	Because I can change singular nouns to plurals step by step.	
Question 3:	Is the Plural Window easy to use?	
Participant A	Yes, it is.	
Participant B	Yes, it is easy to use.	
Participant C	Yes, teacher.	
Participant D	Yes.	
Question 4:	Is the Plural Window engaging?	
Participant A	Yes, teacher.	
Participant B	Yes.	
Participant C	Yes, it is engaging.	
Participant D	Absolutely.	
Question 5:	Why do you think the Plural Window is interesting/not interesting?	
Participant A	Now I can spell plural nouns easily.	
Participant B	I can refer to the rules easily.	
Participant C	It is colourful and big.	
Participant D	I don't need to ask the teacher or my friend how to do the exercise anymore.	

Codes:
- Pupils like it
- Pupils love it
- Can touch
- Can play
- Fun
- Excited
- Can spell plural nouns easily
- Can change singular nouns to plurals step by step
- Easy to use
- Engaging
- Can spell plural nouns easily
- Can refer to the rules easily
- Colourful and big
- Don't need to ask the teacher or friends how to do the exercise anymore

Figure 4: Interview extract from the research

4. Limitations

During the implementation of the Plural Window, some weaknesses or limitations were encountered that needed to be addressed. Firstly, the template for the Plural Window sheet was made of A4 paper. The soft property had caused the template to crumple easily. Since the participants were still kids, they tended to cut the document or fold it into origami. It could cause sore eyesight in the school environment. In addition, the colours have been set for each rule of the pluralisation for the template. Some of the participants complained that they should be the ones who chose the colour.

The research derived a short time interval between the two cycles. Further validation is crucial to ensuring and distinguishing the quality of the study. It also guarantees readers that the research findings are credible and trustworthy. Lastly, the study was done on specific pupils only. Therefore, the result of the study was not delivered.

5. CONCLUSION

This action research project of using Plural Window has improved the pupils' spelling of countable plural nouns. Hopefully this research could contribute to the field of education in terms of the teaching and learning of pluralization rules. Lastly, Hopefully the efforts in this research could inspire English teachers to be more innovative and creative in their teaching.

6. Declarations

6.1 Ethics approval and consent to participate: In the data collection process, electronically informed consent was obtained from the participants.

6.2 Conflict of interests: Not applicable

6.3 Acknowledgement: The author would like to express his gratitude to supervisor & Deputy Dean Dr, Lubna Ali Mohammad for the immense support extended by her throughout the preparation of this manuscript.

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