

Interactive Email Writing Game: A Gamified Pedagogy for Enhancing ESL Proficiency

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ABSTRACT - The Interactive Email Writing Game is an innovation designed to address challenges faced in teaching writing among Year 6 ESL pupils. Many pupils struggle with structuring emails, applying appropriate tone, and developing ideas in writing. Traditional methods often rely heavily on rote learning and exam drills, leading to disengagement and low motivation. This innovation adopts gamification principles to make writing engaging and purposeful. Pupils progress through scaffolded stages: rearranging scrambled emails, rewriting a model email, and composing an original response. The innovation not only enhances writing proficiency but also fosters motivation, collaboration, and digital literacy. Teachers benefit from increased student participation, improved classroom management, and better opportunities for formative assessment.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers often encounter difficulties when teaching writing in ESL classrooms. Specific challenges include:

- **Disengagement in Writing Tasks:** Pupils perceive writing as monotonous, exam- driven, and irrelevant to real-life communication.
- **Lack of Writing Proficiency:** Many pupils face problems with organisation, grammar, tone, and creativity.
- **Exam-Centric Approach:** Writing instruction in Malaysian primary classrooms is focused on memorising model essays, which limits opportunities for authentic communication.
- **Mixed-Ability Classrooms:** Teachers struggle to differentiate tasks for learners with varied proficiency levels.
- **Limited Use of Digital Tools:** Writing pedagogy often overlooks the integration of technology, leaving pupils unprepared for digital communication contexts.

Classroom observations revealed that students frequently misplaced greetings and closings in emails, while interviews showed that they lacked confidence in writing independently. These findings highlighted the need for a scaffolded, interactive, and engaging solution.

OBJECTIVES OF INNOVATION

- To enhance Year 6 pupils' CEFR-aligned writing proficiency, particularly in email composition.
- To improve pupils' ability to organise ideas, use accurate grammar, and adopt appropriate tone.
- To increase motivation, engagement, and confidence in writing tasks through gamified learning.
- To integrate digital literacy into writing pedagogy, preparing pupils for real-world communication.
- To provide teachers with a flexible, user-friendly tool for differentiated writing instruction.

DESCRIPTION OF INNOVATION

Name of Innovation:

Interactive Email Writing Game

Type of Innovation:

Digital Pedagogical Tool (Gamified Writing Activity)

Brief Description:

The Interactive Email Writing Game is a classroom innovation developed using Canva. It was conceptualised to overcome exam-oriented, rote-based approaches to writing by embedding authentic, interactive, and scaffolded tasks. Pupils engage with three stages:

1. Rearrange the Email: Pupils reconstruct scrambled email sentences into a coherent structure.
2. Rewrite the Model Email: Pupils practice rewriting a guided sample, focusing on tone and sentence accuracy.
3. Compose an Original Email: Pupils independently write a short email of around 50 words.

How It Works:

The teacher facilitates the lesson by first introducing key concepts such as greetings, structure, and tone. This is done through short explanations, examples of real-life emails, and quick questioning to activate prior knowledge. Pupils then play the Canva-based interactive game, progressing through scaffolded tasks that gradually increase in complexity. During the game phase, the teacher circulates, monitors, and provides timely support or prompts to guide weaker learners, while encouraging stronger pupils to assist peers. The interactive design also allows for moments of healthy competition, as pupils compare their sequencing accuracy and creative rewriting. The final stage allows them to independently apply what they have learned by composing their own email, which is later shared with peers. This stage is followed by reflection and peer feedback, where pupils present their drafts, discuss challenges, and suggest improvements, creating a collaborative learning environment that extends beyond individual practice.

Key Features:

- Teacher-friendly and adaptable for mixed-ability groups.
- Uses free, accessible digital tools.
- Supports collaboration through pair and group work.
- Encourages creativity and problem-solving in writing.
- Aligns with CEFR writing descriptors

TARGET & USERS

Main Target:

- Year 6 English subject teachers.

- Teachers seeking innovative strategies for writing instruction.

Involved Student Groups:

- Year 6 pupils in a Malaysian primary school (pilot cohort: 12 students across six weeks).

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

Implementation Steps:

1. Design of Innovation: The game was designed using Canva to ensure accessibility and ease of use.
2. Initial Testing: Conducted with a small group of Year 6 pupils to refine mechanics and usability.
3. Implementation: A six-week intervention, with weekly 60-minute lessons where pupils engaged in the game.
4. Data Collection: Writing samples, classroom observations, student feedback forms, and teacher reflections were gathered.
5. Refinement: Adjustments were made weekly based on observations and pupil responses.

Tools / Platforms Used:

- Canva: Game design and presentation.
- Google Forms: Feedback collection.
- Microsoft Word: Analysis of writing samples.
- Observation checklists and teacher reflection logs.

Classroom Procedure:

- Introduction Phase: Teacher introduces the lesson focus with real-life examples of emails.
- Interactive Phase: Pupils engage in the game (rearranging, rewriting, composing).
- Reflection Phase: Pupils share drafts, receive feedback, and reflect on their learning.

IMPACT / FINDINGS

The innovation generated positive results in multiple areas:

Writing Organisation and Structure:

Over the six-week implementation, pupils showed significant progress in organising their email writing according to CEFR-aligned conventions. At the beginning, many pupils misplaced greetings and closings, and some omitted key parts such as the subject line or sign-off. By Week 6, however, the majority were able to structure emails logically, placing greetings at the start, arranging body paragraphs coherently, and ending with appropriate closings. The “Rearrange the Email” stage played a pivotal role, as it required pupils to critically analyse scrambled sentences and rebuild them into a cohesive sequence. This task not only reinforced their understanding of the structural components of an email but also improved their awareness of logical flow in writing. Teachers observed that this foundational stage reduced confusion and prepared pupils for more complex rewriting and composing tasks.

Language Accuracy and Style:

Progress was also evident in pupils’ use of grammar, vocabulary, and tone. Early drafts were often riddled with grammatical mistakes, such as incorrect verb forms (e.g., “I want to tell you about my hobby play football”). By the end of the intervention, many pupils produced more accurate and stylistically appropriate sentences (e.g., “I would like to share with you about my hobby, which is playing football.”). This improvement demonstrated better mastery of connectors, verb agreement, and formal tone. The

rewriting stage provided structured practice where pupils refined sentence construction and experimented with polite expressions. Peer corrections during this stage further supported accuracy, as pupils pointed out errors and suggested alternatives. This iterative cycle of rewriting, feedback, and application fostered a stronger awareness of audience and purpose.

Motivation and Engagement:

Gamification significantly enhanced students' enthusiasm for writing. Pupils described the activities as "fun," "like solving a puzzle," and "different from normal English class." The competitive yet collaborative aspects of the game encouraged even reluctant writers to participate. Teachers reported that learners who usually avoided writing tasks showed excitement in completing the email stages. The scaffolded design allowed students to experience success early (through rearranging), which built confidence to tackle more demanding stages. The interactive visuals in Canva and the progressive challenge structure maintained attention and reduced task fatigue compared to traditional essay drills.

Collaboration and Peer Support:

Although writing is often an individual skill, this innovation encouraged collaborative learning. Pupils frequently worked in pairs or small groups to complete tasks, debating sentence order, correcting grammar, and brainstorming suitable expressions. Classroom observations recorded instances where stronger students scaffolded weaker peers, reminding them to use connectors or suggesting polite phrases. This collaborative process not only improved writing outcomes but also fostered interpersonal communication skills, mutual respect, and teamwork. Teachers noted that pupils were more willing to share their work and accept constructive criticism, which contributed to a positive learning environment.

Teacher Reflections:

Teachers' reflective logs highlighted the innovation's adaptability and effectiveness. The staged structure offered natural scaffolding, making it suitable for mixed-ability classrooms. Classroom management improved as pupils were highly engaged, reducing disruptive behaviour. Teachers appreciated the digital format, which allowed for differentiated instruction and quick formative feedback. They also noted that the innovation aligned well with curriculum requirements while simultaneously addressing 21st-century learning goals such as digital literacy and collaboration. Importantly, teachers felt empowered to shift their role from a transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator of learning.

Evidence Collected:

- Writing samples before and after intervention.
- Student feedback forms and focus group interviews.
- Observation checklists.
- Teacher reflection logs.

ADVANTAGES & LIMITATIONS

Advantages:

The Interactive Email Writing Game offers several notable advantages. It makes writing lessons more enjoyable and purposeful by incorporating fun, gamified elements that sustain pupils' interest. Its scaffolded design supports mixed-ability learning, allowing weaker pupils to progress step by step while providing stronger pupils with sufficient challenges. Another strength is its clear alignment with the CEFR writing framework, ensuring that the tasks remain relevant to curriculum standards. The game also encourages collaboration and creativity, as pupils often work together to solve problems, exchange ideas, and review each other's work.

In addition, the integration of digital tools helps pupils develop essential digital literacy skills, preparing them for authentic communication in the 21st century. Finally, the innovation is both low-cost and accessible, as it makes use of free platforms such as Canva that require minimal ICT expertise.

Limitations:

Despite its many strengths, the innovation has some limitations. Reliable internet access is required to run Canva-based activities smoothly, which may pose challenges in schools with poor connectivity. Time constraints also present difficulties, as completing all three stages within a single 60-minute session can be demanding, particularly when pupils engage in extended discussions or face technical issues. In some cases, teachers may need to assign certain stages, such as independent email writing, as homework to ensure full completion. Additionally, a number of pupils initially struggled with navigating digital tools, requiring extra teacher support and guidance. While this challenge lessened as pupils became more familiar with the platform, it highlights the importance of providing a short introduction or orientation before beginning the activity.

FUTURE POTENTIAL

The Interactive Email Writing Game holds strong potential for further development and wider application. One promising direction is the expansion of the innovation beyond email writing into other genres, such as narrative and descriptive writing. By adapting the scaffolded game format, teachers can engage pupils in different text types while maintaining the same level of interactivity and motivation. The innovation could also be developed into a standalone mobile or web application, making it more accessible for both classroom and independent learning.

Additionally, the approach is highly scalable and could be implemented in secondary school ESL instruction, where learners face more complex writing tasks. Its adaptability also makes it suitable for presentation at district, state, and even national-level innovation platforms, showcasing its relevance across various educational contexts. Finally, the game can be integrated into blended or fully online learning environments, ensuring that pupils continue to benefit from engaging and purposeful writing instruction regardless of learning mode.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper. All stages of the research, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation, were conducted objectively and independently, without any external influence.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. This includes financial, political, personal, or professional relationships that could be perceived as influencing the content or conclusions of this manuscript.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

All listed authors have made a significant scientific contribution to the research in the manuscript, approved its claims, and agreed to be an author.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to enhance the clarity and readability of the manuscript. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

ETHIC STATEMENTS

Not applicable.

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