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BOARD GAME IN THE LEARNING OF ACADEMIC ENGLISH WRITING

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Background

Making connections between learning and teaching in the classroom is crucial as it empowers learners to realise the purpose of education as a whole. It enables learners to put their learning into perspective, stimulate them to master the required skills and knowledge in a thoughtful manner, and encourages them to interact, collaborate and cooperate so as to learn from one another. Classroom teaching approaches thus, need to facilitate learners to learn by helping them to make connections in their learning. Making such connections is also important in an increasingly interconnected world of the 21st century particularly as the future of learning as envisioned in Education 4.0, is built around shared knowledge and aspiration (Fisk, 2017).

Literature Review

One approach in connecting classroom language learners in particular is through the use of board games. The use of board games in the English-as-a-second language (ESL) classroom offers much potential in enhancing the language learning experience. It not only makes learning enjoyable through play but also encourages interaction and supports learners to recall important salient learning points. Through the playing of board games, learners are supported to adapt to reality, and solve problems which are otherwise difficult to be tackled, in a collaborative manner with the help of others and unconsciously (Bettleheim, 1987; Hughes, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). Further, the use of board games enhances learning as it empowers learners to jointly construct their social experiences and become active agents of their own learning (Rama, Black, van Es, & Warschauer 2012; York & deHaan, 2018). Using board games also enables language learners to learn through tasks. a learning activity is considered a task when it emphasises meaning-focused language use, provides a gap, requires

learners to depend on their own resources to complete it, and presents a clearly defined outcome or goal to ensure that learners use language as a means for achievement (Ellis, 2003; Long 2014). The potential that board games offer to the ESL scenario thus supports socio constructivist learning principles and fulfil criteria for task-based learning.

Problem Statement

However, despite the potential that board games offer to language learning, research into its use is still lacking. While there are research studies investigating the use of board games in the language classroom, these are largely digital based (York & deHaan, 2018). York and deHaan (2018) observed that studies investigating the effect of table-top non-digital board games which is the focus of this research remain underexplored. While digital-based games offer learners an interactive attractive animated multimedia based environment that can promote language learning (Felicia, 2011), these types of games are limited in promoting face-to-face learner socialization and interaction that are crucial to the learning process as afforded by table-top non-digital board games (Kovačević & Opić, 2013; Lean, Illingworth, & Wake, 2018). Further, studies that investigate digital-based board games tend to largely focus on the context of high school ESL learners (Benoit, 2017; Cook, Gremo, & Morgan, 2017), low-proficiency ESL learners (Fung & Min, 2016; Sevy-Biloon, 2016; York & deHaan, 2018), and in enhancing oral skills and vocabulary development (Al-Bulushi & Al-Issa, 2017; Fung & Min, 2016). There is, therefore, a dearth in the board game research literature investigating undergraduates' reactions to using table-top non-digital board games and its effect on their learning of academic English writing.