Using language games to improve the spelling ability of primary four pupils of Kormantse Methodist Primary 'A'

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Abstract

This study was intended to find out how effective and efficient the use of games are in teaching spelling in order to develop the spelling abilities of pupils in primary four of Kormanstse Methodist primary 'A'. This study aimed at highlighting the benefits of using spelling games as strategies for teaching spelling. The collection of data was done using the instruments teacher made tests and an interview. The research design comprised of two pre – test, four intervention and post – tests as an action research study. The pre – tests was administered to diagnose and assess the knowledge level of pupils on the topic (spelling). The intervention consisting of various spelling games was conducted to develop pupils' ability to spell new words without struggle. After the intervention, a post – test followed. This post – test proved that the use of spelling games had a positive impact on the pupils thereby contributing significantly to pupils' spelling abilities. Intervention applied made a great difference in the pupils' spelling ability. The study was also recommended that teachers should be encouraged to use different games and strategies to teach spelling so that it will enhance interactive and interesting spelling lessons for better performance.

Keywords: action research, games, Ghana, Kormantse, spellings

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1. Introduction

According to Gerber (1984), spelling is more than a role memorization process. Pei and Gaynor (1954) also state that spelling is the conventional way of representation in writing of a spoken word. The term, spelling, is used with references to alphabetic writing only. Ian (1970) also states that to spell is to name all the letters of a word, divide them into distinct syllables and then join them together in order to read or pronounce them alright. From the point of view of the researchers, spelling can be explained as one's ability to combine any of the twenty-six alphabets together to form a meaningful word. Jones (2009) wrote that spelling helps in reading. That is learning to spell helps to cement the connection between the letters and their sounds. Learning high-frequency "sight words" to mastery level improves both reading and writing. Jones also states that understanding the rules and patterns helps the student who does not intuitively pick them up and enables the teacher to clear up confusion.

Spelling poses problems to students all over the world. This spelling problem of the pupils in primary 4 of Kormantse Methodist, primary 'A' was identified during the researchers' English lesson with them. The study made the researcher realize that three quarter of the class could not spell some simple words after an oral test with them, which compelled the researchers to conduct 20 minutes dictation on the following simple nouns words: Easter, Pillow, Christmas market, January, Monday, Radio, stubborn, Kenkey, River. Surprisingly, three quarter of the class got below 5 (five) out of ten. This, indeed, dearly indicated that the pupils have a spelling difficulty. The problem of the primary 4 pupils of Kormantse Methodist primary 'A' is that they find serious difficulty to spell and write correctly. In view of this problem, the researchers used spelling games to improve students spelling abilities through action research.

The findings of this research will help pupils to significantly enhance their ability to spell and write words correctly and again benefit immensely from using language games in their spelling activities. The motive for employing games will go a long way to help pupils acquire the basic skills in spelling certain number of words with ease, as students enjoy playing games (Nim et al., 2013). The study will help bring out the appropriate way of teaching spelling among pupils at all levels in the basic school. In the teaching of English, teachers as a whole will adapt to the appropriate and effective method of teaching spelling to improve pupils' spelling ability irrespective of their background in their various schools and at all levels. The research will help embrace the importance of using games as a method of teaching, not only in English language but other subjects as well.

According to Wit (2012), games have a great educational value and they can be used in the classroom to make learners use the language instead of just thinking about the correct forms. Games encourage learners to interact, cooperate, to be reactive and spontaneous in using the language in a meaningful way. Learners want to take part in activities; to play games are generally quite competitive. In order for them to take part, they must be able to understand and communicate in the target language. Games also encourage leaners to keep interested in the work and a teacher can use them to create contexts in which the language is useful.

Games are used as methods to involve students in learning. Well-chosen and designed games are invaluable as they give students a break at the same time allow learners to practice language skills. The benefits of games range from congestive aspect of language learning to more cooperative, group dynamics and as a result, games are highly motivating since they are amusing and at the same time challenging. Ersoz (200) states that games can be used to practice all language skills and many types of communication. Huyen (2003) identifies advantages of using games to learn spelling in the classroom. Games add relaxation and fun, so the learners retain words more easily. It involves friendly composition so it keep learners interested and motivated. Vocabulary games bring real

world context to the classroom. Mei (2000) emphasizes similar points by saying that it encourages active learning as well as collaboration and interactivity. Interactive learning technique also holds memory, performance and social benefits. Kopecky (2009) states that adult students look for structure in lessons and by keeping a game clearly tied to the work, it helps maintain their confidence in the teacher.

Games should be taught in a way that will be fun based on the level of intellectuality and age groups. Before games can be used in the classroom, there is the need to consider the following factors.

> Choose suitable games (depending on the number of students, proficiency level, cultural context timing learning topic and the classroom settings)

> The way students perceive a game depends on the actual design and implementation of the games.

> Give clear instructions, give clear rules and give clear time limits.

> Rather demonstrate the game that explain

> There must be a clear purpose and achievable goals.

> Clear objectives and goals must match the difficulty level of the game and ability level of the students

> Ensure that shy or quiet students are not alienated and have an opportunity to take part.

> Debriefing or the evaluation of results/events in the game is crucial to the game's success.

> It must still be fun, but still help the students to learn.
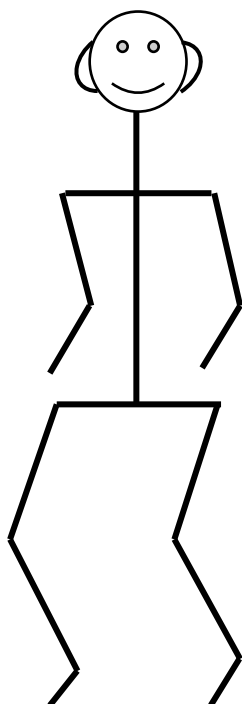
2. **Types of Spelling Games**

Treasure Letter Hunt - Set up a learning station to practice spelling with his highly sensory activity. Fill a container with coloured scented rice and hide letters in the mix for pupils to find. Then put a list of spelling words at the station or on the chalkboard. Pupils must search for the letters they need to spell the words on the list. After they spell a word, they can return the letters to the bin and spell another word. The process continues in that order. This will enable pupils to know how to spell.

Sensory Spelling - Young learners in particular learn better when their senses are involved. Play to this advantage by letting them spell in a sensory environment. Set up a sand spelling Tracy as a learning station in your classroom. Using a shallow box, put a colourful piece of paper on the bottom and cover it with a thin layer of salt/sand. Then have spelling words at the station for pupils to copy a try to spell independently (from pictures with the right spelling on the back so they can check). Students use their finger to write the words in the sand revealing the colorful paper below. Sand trays and spelling words should be given to pupils on individual basis.
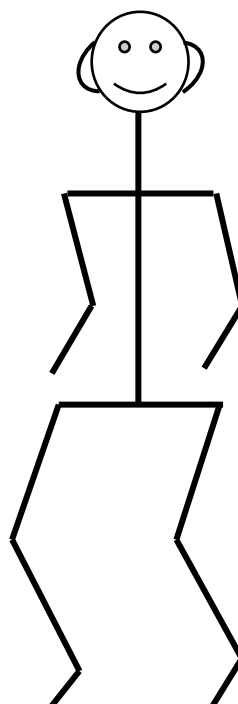
Scrabble Slam - The game consists of a simple set of playing cards with one letter printed on the front and back of each card starting with any four letter word example cook, students or pupils add one letter at a time on top of one of type original 4 letters to create a new word. Modify the rules slightly and take turns going around the table to see if each person can create and new word with each of his turns.

Invisible Man - For a team spelling game, draw two stick figures on the clapboard. Each figure should have the same number of parts. The goals is to make your team's stick man invisible before the other team does. Give each team a word to spell. If they spell it correctly, erase one piece or part of the stick figure. If they do not spell the word correctly, leave the stick figure unchanged. Then repeat with other new words. The first team to make his man invisible emerges the winner.

TEAM 'A'   TEAM 'B'

Spell Hopscotch - Is a children's game that can be played with several players or alone lead upon a boarded floor or any area divided into oblong figures like a board. It is an old traditional game that still brings loads of fun and laughter in school yards everywhere. For an outside spelling game, have students draw a hopscotch board on the playground. Give each pupil a word to spell as he or she jumps and say the letters of the words through the boxes. If he or she spells the word wrong, he or she must repeat that word a next turn. The first person to get through the entire board wins.

	P			Q	
C	T	A	R	U	Z
	O	Y	D	R	
F	E	I	M	X	B
	X	L	H	O	
G	K	E	S	A	R
	N	M	V	T	
K	U	J	A	W	I
	S	U	N	A	
B	F	G	H	J	o

Musical Words - Arrange chairs in a circular form for pupils to sit. Write spelling words on flashcard and put them into a box. Pupils pass the box rand (that is from one person to and another person) as the music plays. When the music stops playing anyone who has the box must pick a word from the box with his or she eyes closed. The word is given to the teacher to pronounce for pupils to spell it out loud. If he or she does not spell the word correctly, he or she is out anyone who will be able to spell all word correctly that is the last person wins.

Word of the Day - Write a new word on a and a chalkboard every day for pupils to learn the spelling. Pronounce words as pupils pronounce after you. At the end of every week, conduct a spelling test.

3. Methodology

The design used for this study is an action research design. This is because it is an approach which aims at improving a problem-related situation through change. It is concerned with immediate solutions to local problems that is to say to enable the researcher look into how best the spelling ability of primary 'A' can be improved using language games. This action research was conducted at Kormantse Methodist Primary. The school is a double-stream school with a total population five hundred and seventy pupils. This study took into consideration all primary four pupils of Kormantse Methodist Primary School. In all, fifty-three pupils were selected for this study. The researchers used some few weeks for the research. The breakdown of the activities carried out for the period are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Weekly activities for the research

Week	Activity	Description
1	Observation	The researcher observed the class teacher during spelling and dictation lessons
2	Pre-test	Two pre-test exercises were conducted/administrated to pupils in order to find out their problem and bring out the correct intervention strategies to address the situation
3	Intervention 1	Effective strategies for spelling and spelling games used. Treasure letter Hunt was used in this week
4	Intervention 2	The game used in this week was word of the day
5	Intervention 3	Invisible man was a spelling game used during this week
6	Intervention 4	This was the last week used for intervention and the spell Hopscotch
7	Post-test	A test was conducted after the intervention to check the progress or impact it has made on the pupils' spelling

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

In the collection of data, the researchers tried to find out from teachers how spelling can be effectively done so an interview was conducted on the teachers at the school of the research. Some of those interviewed said that games and other exciting activities can be used to teach and improve spelling. Others also said that the traditional method can be used to bring out effective spelling. Table 2 below shows the distribution of the suggestions of the respondents.

Table 2

Use of Games and traditional Method to teach Spellings

Methods	Number Of Respondents	Percentages (%)
Games	7	70
Traditional	3	30
Total	10	100

From Table 2, seven teachers, representing 70%, said that the use of spelling game is very essential in developing the spelling of pupils and three teachers, representing 30%, also said that the traditional method can be used to improve spelling. Above all, it is seen that use of games to teach spelling is the best approach that can be used to help improve pupils' spelling. Interestingly, these teachers agreed with Huyen (2003) that using games to learn spelling in the classroom adds relaxation and fun, so the learners can retain words more easily. Kopecky (2009) states that adult student looks for structure in lessons and using games clearly helps maintain their confidence in the teacher.

The researcher conducted series of tests before the intervention. In Table 3 below are the scores obtained by the pupils in the pre-test one (1):

Table 3

Frequency distribution table on pre-test one (1) results

Marks	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below Average (0 -4)	43	86
Average (5-6)	5	10
Above Average (7-10)	2	4
Totals	50	100

Taking a critical look at Table 3, it is realised that those who had below average are 43 pupils, representing 86% of the population. Average pupils who scored 5 and 6 were only five. Above average pupils (that is, who scored between mark 7 - 10) were only two, representing 4%. The performance of the pupils in pre-test 1 was bad. This gives a clear picture of what Jones (2009) stated that spelling is not simple but when people understand its structure, it is perfectly decodable and not limited to people "born to spell" to understand. The researchers, after the first pre-test, conducted another test which includes some of the words that had already appeared in the previous or first pre-test. Table 3 shows the level of performance of the pupils after their works have been marked and scored.

Table 4

Frequency distribution table showing pre-test two (2) Results

Marks	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below average (0 - 4)	26	84
Average (5-6)	1	3
Above average (7-10)	4	13
Total	31	100

From Table 4, it can again be realised that altogether, pupils who scored below average mark (0 - 4) were 26, representing 84%. Average mark which is from 5 – 6 was also scored by only one pupil, representing 3% and pupils who scored above average (7 - 10) were four, representing 13%. These tests compelled the researchers to use games and include activities to help the pupils to spell well. Jones (2009) had already said that others might acknowledge the value of learning to spell, but think that learning the rules and patterns is the stuff of drudgery but fun can be included to help pupils. The researchers gave pupils a test after each interventional strategy. The table below shows the results of pupils' test after using the first intervention activity which is called Treasure letter Hunt.

Table 5

Pre–test and post–test results of pupils using the intervention 1 (Treasure Letter Hunt)

PRE- TEST			POST- TEST		
marks	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Marks	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below average (0 - 4)	26	84	Below average (0-4)	11	34
Average (5-6)	1	3	Average (5-6)	2	6
Above average (7 -10)	4	13	Above average	18	60
Total	31	100	Total	31	100

From the ranges above, it was evident that twenty-six (26) pupils (84%) in the pre – test had below average marks of 50. After the intervention was administered and a post-test conducted, the number of pupils who scored below average reduced from 26 to 11 pupils (34%). This shows that there has been an increase significantly. Also, considering the number of pupils who had the average in the pre-test, one pupil (3%) but in the post-test two pupils scored the average mark, which is represented in percentages as 6%. It implies that there has been an improvement in their spelling ability.

Moreso, pupils who scored above average in the pre-test were four which is 13% and after the intervention, those who scored above average were 18 pupils (60%). Pupils who had below average (34%) after the post-test

were given remedial lessons and made to do series of exercise which made them improve upon their spelling. This emphasises what Mei (2000) said that games encourage active leaning as well as collaboration and interactivity. Interactive learning techniques also hold memory, performance and social benefits. Ersoz (2000) states that games can be used to practice in all language skills and they can be used to practice many types of communication. Kopecky (2009) also states that adult students look for structure in lessons and by keeping a game clearly look to the works, it helps maintain their confidence in the teacher. Another intervention was conducted to help improve pupils' spelling ability using different games. Table 6 shows the results of the post-test using the second intervention.

Table 6

Frequency distribution table showing the results of post test using intervention 2 (Word of the Day)

Marks	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below average (0-4)	16	44.2
Average (5-6)	7	19.3
Above average (7-10)	13	36
Total	36	100

In Table 6, pupils who scored the below average which ranges from 0 – 4 were 16 (44.1%), average mark (5 - 6) were 7 pupils (19%) and above average (7 - 10) were 13 (36%). These marks clearly showed the performance of the pupils when the intervention two was administered. When compared to their 1st pre – test, it becomes clear that pupils have improved on their spelling ability. According to Tompkins (2014), the best known way to teach spelling is through weekly spelling tests but tests should never be considered a complete spelling program. To become good spellers, students need to learn about the English orthographic system and move through the stages of spelling development. Jung (2005) also added that the benefits of using games include it being learner centered encourages creative and spontaneous use of language and foster participatory attitudes of the learners. The researchers chose another game to help pupils in their spelling. Table 7 shows the results after their works had been marked and scored.

Table 7

Frequency distribution table showing the post-test scores after administering intervention 3 (Invisible Man)

Marks	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below average (0 - 4)	6	21.2
Average (5 - 6)	3	10.7
Above average (7 - 10)	19	67.6
Total	28	99.55 = 100

Data in Table 7 show scores for the pots-test for the 3rd intervention. The table shows that those who scored below average (0 - 4) are six (6) pupils representing (21.2%). Three (3) pupils (10.7%) scored the average mark which is (5 - 6) and those who scored above average (7 - 10) were 19 pupils (67.6%). It was realised that pupils have improved on their spelling ability. Ersoz (2000) states that games can be used to practice in all language skills and they can be used to practice many types of communication. Mei (2000) emphasizes similar points by saying that games encourage active learning as well as collaboration and interactivity. Interactive learning techniques also hold memory, performance and social benefit. Kopecky (2009) states that adult students' looks for structure in lesson and by keeping a game clearly tied to the work, it helps maintain their confidence in the teacher. Table 8 shows the post-test results of the last intervention which is the spell Hopscotch.

Table 8

Frequency distribution table showing the post-test results of intervention (4) spell Hopscotch

Pre – Test	Post – Test
Below average (0-4) = 26 (83.7%)	Below average (0-4) = 4(12.8%)
Average (5-6) = 1(3.2%)	Average (5-6) = 9 (29%)
Above average (7-10) = 4(12.8%)	Above average (7-10) = 18(57.9%)

Data in Table 8 show the results of scores in both pre-test and post-tests. In the pre-test, it is seen pupils who secured below average (0-4) were 26(83.7%), average (5-6) were 1(3.2%) and above average (7-10) were only 4(12.8%). Again, the same procedure was used for the post-test where 4 pupils (12.8%) scored below the average mark, 9 pupil (29%) had the average mark and 18 pupils (57.9%) above the average (7-10). The data shows an improvement in pupils' spelling abilities.

This is in line with Jung's (2005) assertion that the benefit of using games include it being learner-centered which encourages creative and spontaneous use of language and foster participatory attitudes of the learners. Wit (2012) said that games have a great educational value and it can be used in the classroom to make learners use the language instead of just thinking about the correct forms. After the whole study, the researchers conducted a last post-test, the results of which have been spelt out in the Table 9 below:

Table 9

Frequency distribution table showing the overall post – test result

Marks	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below average (0-4)	0	0
Average (5-6)	10	23
Above average (7-10)	33	77
Total	43	100

Table 9 shows the scores of the overall post-test. The table shows that none of the 43 pupils scored below average which is from 0 – 4. Ten pupils scored the average marks (5-6), representing (23%), and those who scored above average were 33 pupils (77%). Data in all the four interventional strategies put in place reveals that all the post-test yielded positive results. This was due to the fact that the appropriate, adequate and effective learning aid was supplied to pupils to enhance their performance with right supervision and tasks assigned to them. Games stimulate learning; therefore, enough alphabet cards and word cards were supplied to pupils. This made pupils to listen to specific instruction and maintained their interest in the spelling lessons. With all the research questions spelt out earlier on the researcher was compelled to direct focus so as to achieve a better result. The use of language games in teaching spelling made a difference in pupils in primary performance of Kormantse Methodist primary 'A'.

Wit (2012) said that games encourage learners to interact, cooperate, to be creative and spontaneous in using the language in meaningful ways. Learners want to take part in activities, to play games, are generally quite competitive. In order for them to take part, they must be able to understand and communicate in the target language. Games also encourage learners to be interested in the work and a teacher can use them to create contexts in which the language is useful. Games are used as methods to involve students in learning. The benefits of games range from cognitive aspects of language learning to more cooperative, group dynamics and as a result, games are highly motivating since they care amusing and at the same time challenging.

5. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to find out the effectiveness of using spelling games and strategies to teach spelling in Kormantse Methodist primary 'A'. the research work focused on the historical background of spelling, importance of spellings, difficulties in spelling, the process of learning spelling, types of spelling games, how to teach spelling an strategies for teaching spelling. These processes can be used to solve the problem of spelling disability among the primary four pupils of Kormantse Methodist primary 'A'. After a week of observation, of spelling lessons taught by the class teacher who used the traditional approach, it was revealed that the teaching of spelling was not really dominating. And most of the teachers do not pay much attention to this aspect of English language which has really affected the pupils' speaking and reading skills as well as spelling. The researcher therefore devised effective strategies to diagnose and find suitable solutions to the problem of spelling disability among the pupils of the school of the research.

Modern games such as treasure letter Hunt, word of the Day, invisible man and spell hopscotch as intervention after which tests were conducted. A pre – test was administered and it brought the extreme problem of spelling disability among the pupils. These games mentioned above saluted the problems of pupils' inability to spell certain words correctly. A post-test was conducted after each intervention procedure to check progress of the study. A general post -test was also given to pupils to ascertain whether there has been a positive improvement in the pupils' spelling. The post-test scores reflected the significant improvement in the pupils' performance as a result of the intervention.

This study was not restricted solely on the pupils but also teachers, parents and co-mentees. Interviews were also conducted on these said people to select their opinions. This information collected was analysed and discussed in a table form in chapter four (4). The following become evident as a result of the study. The concept of spelling is well understood by pupils when there is the involvement of games because the spelling rules were relaised learn to spell is not rote. The use of effective strategies and spelling games in teaching spelling made of a significant difference in pupils' performance because children love to learn when they are playing and indulging them is spelling games because it cooperative, interactive and involving. Many pupils who cannot spell words correctly were due to their background where nobody speaks or teaches them how to read and write the English language outside the school, vision problem and other contributing factors.

It became evident that without games and activities, pupils cannot understand very well the concept of spelling. The teacher was introduced to new techniques of teaching spelling using games which stimulated pupils' interest in teaching effective ways of spelling. The introduction of the spelling games by the researcher helped the teacher of the class of the study to embrace these spelling games and use it during teaching. At the onset of the study, some of the research question was "what are some of the language and spelling games that can help improve primary (4) pupils of Kormantse Methodist primary 'A' English spelling?" To this question it was hypothesized that the number of words that the pupils called spell correctly would increase dramatically after the study. Statistical analysis after the researcher revealed that there was a significant improvement in the performance of all the fifty – four pupils used in the study. Possibly, if teachers use modern spelling games affectivity and efficiently in the teaching of spelling, it will boost up pupils interest in spelling.

Therefore, it is conducted that the intervention the researcher used made a difference in the pupils' spelling ability and so involving games and activities in teaching English language especially spelling should be taken seriously by all standards. Stakeholder of education should consider ways of imbedding the use of spelling games in the English syllabus and course books. This will enhance effective speaking, reading and most importantly spelling and writing language correctly and fluently.

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are worth noting. Basic school teachers should be encouraged to use as many language or spelling games as possible since they have a positive impact on pupils' performance. Again, Ghana Education service in collaboration with nongovernmental organisation and other stakeholder should organize in-service training course for all language arts teachers with special emphasis on the use of language or spelling games in teaching spelling. Games should be made and sent to school where pupils can get access to the practice their hand on which all help them in their studies of the English language. This should involve variety of games both for English language and other subjects.

Specification of courses in colleges of education on some course in colleges of education on some subjects like mathematics and a well-equipped training in the making and preparation of teaching and learning materials for specific topics will also eradicate the present poor performance of pupils in the primary schools. Also, spelling should be incorporated into the English language syllabus as an aspect of language study at the all levels that is from kindergarten to J. H. S. Furthermore, teachers should make extensive use of teaching and learning aids like flash cards, pictures, alphabet cards and chalkboard illustrations to facilitate effective spelling proves.

The researcher has tried to exhaust all the prominent points for the solution of the problem at stake. It is the researcher's hope that if necessary, attention will be given to the issues discussed about the strategies of spelling

using games will enhance an interesting interaction and fulfilled spelling lessons.

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