

# BOARD GAME TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL IN USING CAPITALIZATION AND PUNCTUATION MARKS THAT END SENTENCES

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## ***Abstract***

*The purpose of this classroom action research was to improve the writing skills of the year-8 students of SMP Negeri 2 Sukadana in using capital letters and punctuation mark that end a sentence in academic year 2017/2018. The research was based on the findings that the students had badly habitual in using capital letter and punctuation marks that end sentences, as a part of writing mechanism, on their writing. To overcome these problems, the researcher employed Board Game as the teaching technique. The data of this research was collected through observation, questionnaire, and writing test. The results showed that the application of Board Game in teaching capitalization and punctuation marks that ends sentences could successfully improve the students' ability in writing mechanism. The findings also revealed that Board Game is effective in motivating students to work cooperatively in reminding about the use of capital letter, period mark, exclamation mark, and question mark in writing.*

***Keywords: Board Game, Capitalization, Punctuation Marks that End Sentences.***

## **INTRODUCTION**

A writer needs to have writing skill on how to present ideas through a mechanically correct written text. The impact of mechanically correct written text will clear up the writer's message to the readers easily and correctly. On the other hand, the bad written text may build misunderstanding between the writer and the readers because writing is a process of translating thoughts, from a writer to readers, into a written language. Therefore, a writer needs to pay attention in using correct scripts, spelling, and punctuation in order to avoid the mistakes and errors in writing (cited in Javed, Juan, & Nazli, 2013). This is because the goal of written language is to convey information accurately, effectively, and appropriately (Richards, 1990).

One of the standard competencies in teaching writing in Indonesia Junior High Schools is to enable the students in using a variety of written language accurately and

fluently. It means that the students need to know how to write words, clauses, phrases, and sentences with the correct written forms such as handwriting or typing, spelling, and punctuation (Ur, 1996). Related to the purpose of teaching writing, the first step in teaching writing skill is teaching capitalization and punctuation, as parts of the mechanics of writing, as well as recognition of whole sentences and paragraphs (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Harmer, 2004). It will help the students to write capital letters correctly, to recognize letters and to move from letters to words to meaningful sentences and larger units of discourse (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

In writing mechanism, a sentence has to begin with a capital letter and ends in a proper mark (Alexander, 1988; Teschner & Evans, 2007; West, 2008), such as a period in a declarative and an imperative sentence, a question mark in interrogative sentence, and exclamation mark in an exclamatory and an imperative sentence (Davidson, 2003). In

reference to the mechanics of writing a sentence, students need to know that capitalization and punctuation are important parts of the writing. A capital letter begins a new sentence and points out specific words within a sentence (Rozakis, 2003). Meanwhile, punctuation marks are little symbols used to make texts understandable and, sometimes, more interesting (Eckelberry, 2015). The role of punctuation marks within a sentence is not just to minimize the causes of possible misunderstanding (Hamilton, 2007) but also to clear the meaning of the writing (West, 2008), and to state intonation and style of speaking in a dialog (Stilman, 1997).

As an experienced teacher of a junior high school, the researcher noticed that the students faced difficulties in using a capital letter and a punctuation mark that end a sentence. In reference to the pre-observation in SMP Negeri 2 Sukadana, the students did not punctuate the end of the sentence. They also failed to start a new sentence with a capital letter. They also did not capitalize on the first initial letter of a proper noun. Some students did not capitalize on pronoun 'I' either.

Failure in applying capital letters and punctuation marks indicates that the students failed to reach the writing competence. Although this type of failure can be ignored in the survival English, serious problems can appear in academic writing as Sweba and Mujiyanto (2017) reported that the first year college students in Al – Merghib University Libya made errors in capitalization and punctuation.

To overcome such problems early, it was important for researcher to conduct a classroom action research to improve the skill of capitalizing and punctuating the sentences better through an appropriate technique, such as a game that creates contexts, in which written language is used, so that the students will get experience in using language repeatedly (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2006). A game is useful for a teacher to have the students pay more attention and to be more motivated to

improve the English ability (Chen cited in Wang, Shang, & Briody, 2011) and to provide motivation, lower students' stress, and give them an opportunity for real communication (Deesri, 2002). It means that games can increase students' self-confidence because of the relaxed environment during the activity.

In this research, the researcher used Board Game as the teaching technique that focused on improving students' ability in using capitalization and punctuation marks that end sentences which are sometimes ignored by the students. It is one of effective games to improve the students' English skills. This kind of game was noticeable by ESL/EFL teachers and researchers both from other countries (Phuong & Nguyen, 2017; Tengku Paris & Yussof, 2012) and Indonesia (Saraswati, 2015; Kusrini, 2012; Mawaddah et al., 2015).

A board game is a nonconcrete game with figures that can be placed, moved or hit on a board (Notebaert & Cornilly, 2001). It is a race game of which the objective of the game is to reach a target not to defeat the opponent. This game was different with usual Board Games because to reach the finish square, the players have to work cooperatively with their team by writing a sentence using a capital letter and a punctuation mark correctly. This game gives the students an opportunity to remind each other how to write a sentence correctly when they work in the team repeatedly during the game. In this game, the others team can give correction directly to their opponent team who did the mistake.

## **METHOD**

This research was designed to investigate how Board Game improved students' writing in using capitalization and punctuation marks that end sentences. It was a classroom action research that which provides people with the means of taking systematic action to resolve specific action (Stringer, 2007) in the classroom. Mettetal (2001) defines classroom action research as a method to find the best work of teaching so

that the teachers can improve their student learning. It provides teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their own practices and to bring about practical improvement, innovation, change or development of social practice, and the practitioners' better understanding of their practices.

The research was taken place in SMP Negeri 2 Sukadana in Kayong Utara Regency. It is on Jalan Raya Ketapang – Sukadana, Km. 63, Semanai. It is located in a rural area that far away from the city center. The subject of this research is 21 students of the year-8 students of SMP Negeri 2 Sukadana in academic year 2017/2018, which was in class VIIIB.

In this classroom action research, the researcher acted as a practitioner. The researcher collaborated with one of the English teachers of SMP Negeri 2 Sukadana as the collaborator. In collecting the data, the researcher used observation sheet, questionnaires, and writing test as the tools of data collection.

The criteria of success of this research is marked by a change to learning improvement after the action in writing sentences using correct capitalization and punctuation marks that end sentences. It can be seen in the students' writing test. The learning processes are successful when the result of observation sheet and questionnaire shows students respond positively to and are actively engaged in the teaching capitalization and punctuation marks that end sentences using Board game.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The data presented in this study were obtained from the implementation of the classroom action research which cover the students' involvement during the implementation of the action, students' individual writing test, and their responses toward their writing ability through the use of Board Game in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2.

### 1. Results of Students' Writing Test

From the writing test of the first and second meeting of Cycle 1, the teacher got data about the students' writing score. In the first meeting, the highest score was 71.25 and the lowest score was 28.75. The mean score of the students' score in the first meeting was 46.13. Based on aspects of writing, it found that the students were in a *very poor* category on using lowercase letters correctly through writing (14%). In using correct punctuation marks to end sentences, the students were in *very poor* category on using a question mark (8%), an exclamation mark (21%), and a period (44%). In the capitalizing beginning of a sentence (63%), they were in the *poor* category. They were in the *good* category in capitalizing pronoun *I* (77%). The researcher and the collaborator found that most students wrote with no difference in the shape of some letters for capital and small letter (see Chart 1). The sample of students' writing could be seen in Figure 1.

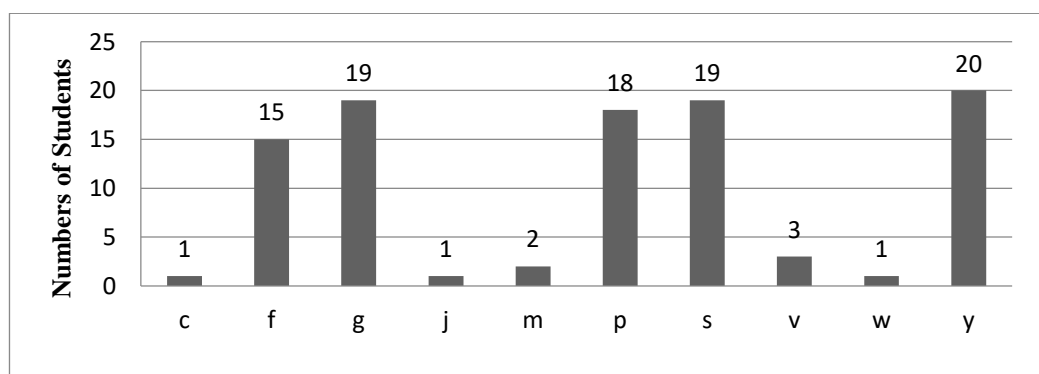
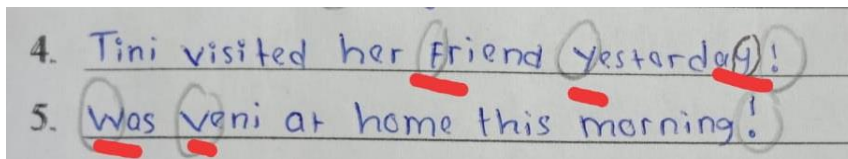


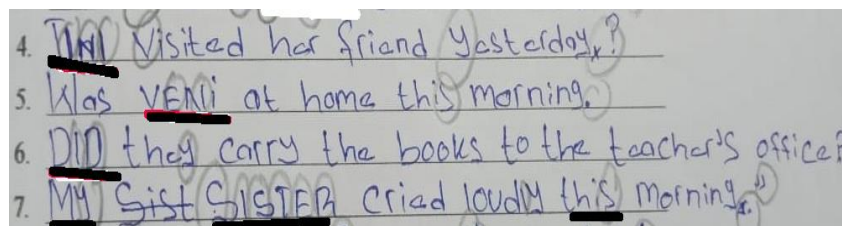
Chart 1. No Difference in Shape between Capital and Small Letter



**Figure 1. Sample of Students' Writing**

In this meeting, the researcher and the collaborator also found twelve students wrote pronoun 'I' in the small letter 'i'. Five

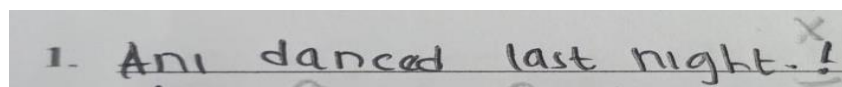
students did mistake by mixing capital and small letter within a word. It can be seen in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2. Sample of Student's Writing**

The use of double punctuation also found in the students' writing. There were three students made mistake by putting

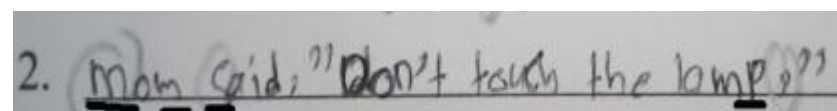
double punctuation at the end of the sentence, such as period and exclamation mark. It can be seen in Figure 3 below.



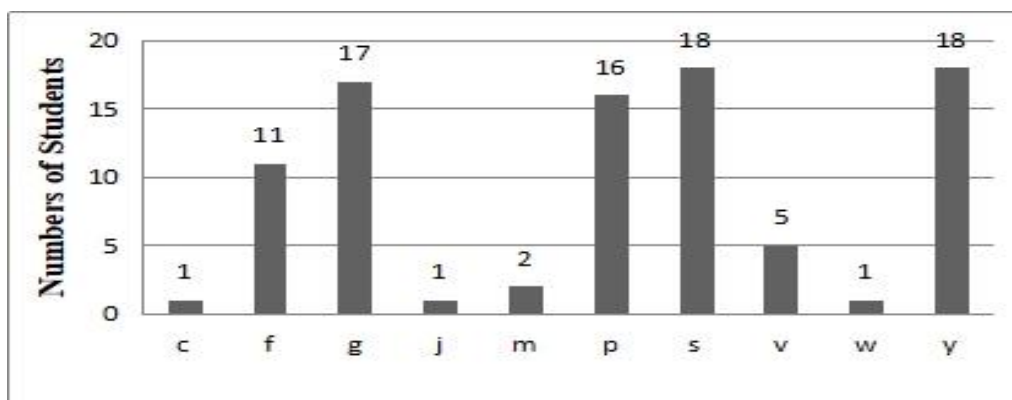
**Figure 3. Sample of Student's Writing**

In the second meeting, there were two students got the highest score that was 83.75. The lowest score was 38.75. The mean score was 60. The students were in the *very good* category on capitalizing the beginning of a sentence (98%) and using a correct period at the end of the sentence (85%). In using a question mark (62%) and exclamation mark (69%), the students were in the *fair* category. In capitalizing pronoun I (83%), the students were still in the *good* category. They were also still in the *very poor* category on using lowercase letters

correctly through writing (48%). The researcher also found the same letters that wrote in the same shape between capital and the small letter that was founded in the first meeting. But, the numbers of students who wrote the letters in the same shape were decreased in some letters such as *f*, *g*, *p*, *s*, and *y* (see Chart 2). It also can be seen in Picture 4. In writing the pronoun I, the researcher found that two students still wrote in the small letter (*i*). It meant that the numbers of students who did mistake in writing pronoun I was decrease.



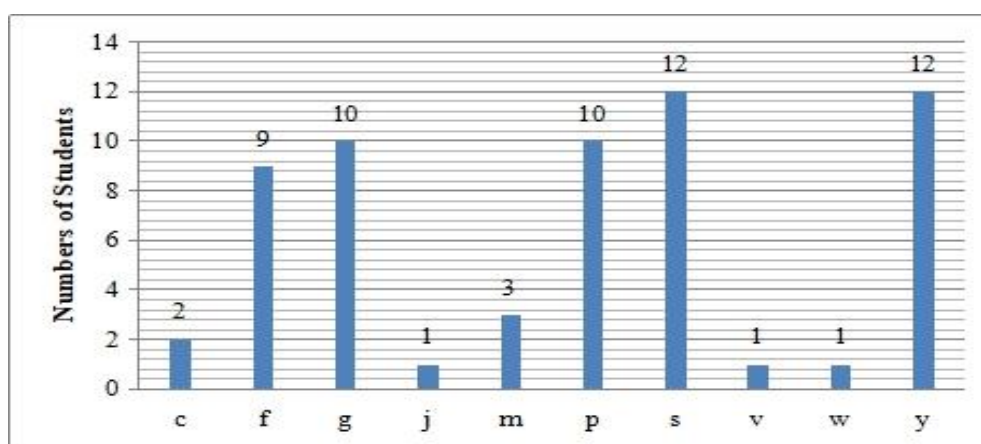
**Figure 4. Sample of Student's Writing**



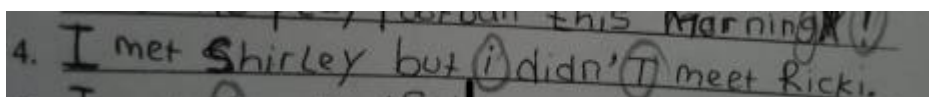
**Chart 2. No Difference in Shape between Small and Capital Letter**

In the first meeting of cycle 2, the highest score was 92.5 and the lowest score was 46.25. The mean score of the students' score in the first meeting was 70.29. Students were still in *very poor* category of using lowercase letters (48%). They were in *poor* category of using a period (57%) and an exclamation mark (50%). In using a question mark, they were in *good* category (74%). Then, they were in *very good* category of using capital letter at the

beginning of sentence and using capital letter for pronoun 'I' (86%) and proper nouns (85%). The writing of capital and small letter in the same shape were also found in this meeting. But, the number of students who did this mistake was decrease from Cycle 1, such as in writing *f*, *g*, *p*, *s*, *v*, and *y* (see Chart 3). The numbers of students who did mistake in writing pronoun 'I' increased from two to three (see Figure 5).



**Chart 3. No Difference in Shape between Small and Capital Letter**

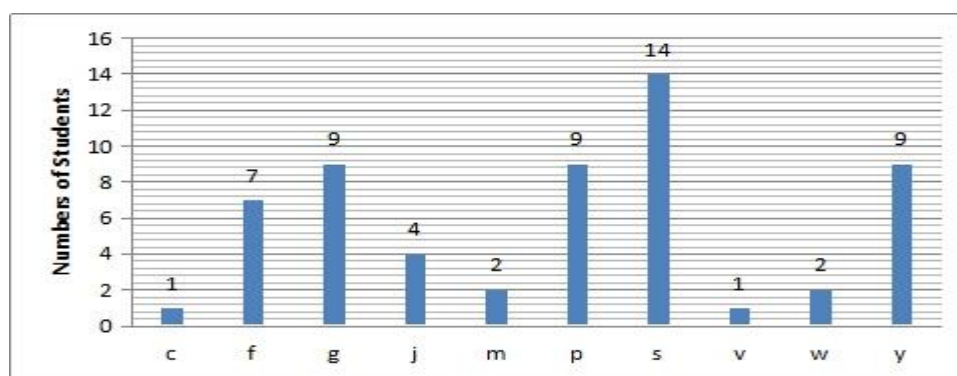


**Figure 5. Sample of Student's Writing**

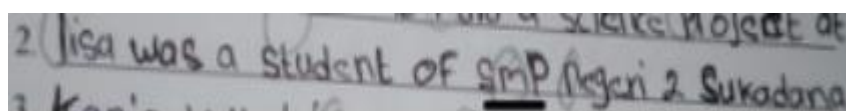
In the second meeting of the second cycle, the researcher found 12 students increased their writing. One of the students got maximum score that was 100. The lowest score was 38.75. The mean score was 60. The result of the second meeting test showed the students were in very poor category of using question mark (40%). They were poor in using lowercase letters. Moreover, it was found that they were in fair category of using period and exclamation mark (70%). They were good in using capital letter at beginning of the sentence (80%) and very good in capitalizing pronoun 'I' and proper nouns (81%). The writing of capital and small

letter in the same shape were also found in the second meeting. The numbers of students who did this mistake were decrease, such as in writing f, g, p, s, v, and y (see Chart 4). The numbers of students who did mistake in writing pronoun 'I' decreased from three to one. While, the mix writing of capital and small letter (see Figure 6) were found on one student in this meeting. It decreased from the last meeting.

From above findings, it means that there was an improvement of students' ability in writing using capitalization and punctuation marks that end sentences based on students' writing test.



**Chart 4. No Difference in Shape between Small and Capital Letter**



**Figure 6. Sample of Students' Writing**

## 2. Results of Observation Sheet

In the first meeting of Cycle 1, scale 1 was given to the students' activity in which few students can answer the questions during the game, means that this activity belongs to the *poor* category. It happened because most of the students made mistake in capitalized the letter and gave the end marks of the sentence. Next scale, that was 2, was given to the students' activity in resuming the lesson by themselves. It was in the *fair* category. It showed that half of the students needed help from the teacher to summarize the lesson. In addition, scale 2 also was given to students' activity in responding to the teacher's question about capitalization and punctuation marks that end the sentences. Some of them did not know the function of end marks

punctuation. Moreover, scale 3 was given to students' enthusiasm for playing Board Game. Few students seemed that they did not want to join the game. Scale 3 was also given to the last activity that most of them showed a desire to play the game in the next meeting. They also mentioned that they did not want to finish playing the game. The scale 4 was given to students' activity in listening to the teacher explanation about the scenario of Board Game. It was a *very good* category in which all students listen to the teacher. Then, they understood how to play the game easily. In general, the percentage of the students' involvement during the teaching and learning process in the first meeting was 62.5%.

In the second meeting of Cycle 1, there were some changes in the students' activity

during the teaching and learning process. In listening to the teacher explanation about the scenario of Board Game, showing enthusiasm in playing Board Game, and showing a desire to play the Board Game in the next meeting, there was improvement into the *very good* category. It meant that all students got involved in those activities. In resuming the lesson, most of them did by themselves. It categorized as *good* activity. Then, in responding to the teachers' question about capitalization and punctuation marks that end sentences and in answering the questions correctly during the game, it was categorized as *fair* activity too. Some students could answer the questions during the game. The percentage of students' involvement in the second meeting also showed improvement that was from 62.5% to 79%.

In the first meeting of the Cycle 2, the scale 3 was given to the students' activity in which more than half students answered and responded the questions during the game, resumed the lesson by themselves, and listened about the scenario of the game. It meant that this activity belongs to the *good* category. Moreover, scale 4 was also given to the last activity that most of them showed a desire and enthusiasm to play the game in the next meeting. It was very good category in which all students did it. In general, the percentage of the students' involvement during the teaching and learning process in the 1st meeting was 83%. Then, the students' involvement during the teaching and learning process in the second meeting showed the percentage of students' involvement in the 2nd meeting also showed improvement that was from 85% to 87.5%.

### 3. Results of Questionnaire

Based on the result of the questionnaire in Cycle 1, the researcher found that in using capital letters there were few students who believed that they had used a capital letter correctly in the sentence. More than a half of the students believed that they did not use a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence (53%), in writing pronoun 'I' (57%), and in writing the first letter of the name of days and months (53%). But, students were more confidence that they used the correct a

capital letter in writing the first letter of the name of a person (62%), and in writing the name of an address(48%).

In the result of the questionnaire, the students felt that they did not use punctuation marks such as a period, a question mark, and an exclamation mark correctly on the test given. Most of the students (81%) felt that they still could not differentiate the use of a period, an exclamation mark, and a question mark in a sentence. 81% of the students also felt that they did not use an exclamation mark and a question mark correctly in the sentences given in the writing tests. But, in using a period, more than a half of students (67%) showed that they used it correctly in the sentence.

Based on the result of questionnaire given in Cycle 2, in general, students' attitude toward English lesson and the use of Board Game was more positive. In understanding the use of capitalization and punctuation marks that end sentences, most of them also believed they were understand the functions and could use them correctly.

### Discussion

Based on the findings above, it proved that Board Game could improve the students' ability in using capital letter in the beginning of a sentence. There was an improvement from *poor* to *very good* category from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. In general, the students' ability was in *very good* category. The results of questionnaire also showed the improvement of students' confidence in starting a sentence with a capital letter. In capitalizing pronoun 'I' and proper nouns, there was also an improvement from *good* category in Cycle 1 to *very good* category in Cycle 2. From the questionnaire also showed that the students' confidence improved from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. Then, in using lowercase letters, even they were in very poor category in both cycle, however, there was improvement of the students' score in every meeting. This findings means Board Game improved the students' skills in using capital letter and small letter correctly in writing. It proved that a game has positive effect on students' ability in learning (Chirandon, Laohawiriyanon, & Rakthong, 2010; Klimova) and focuses the students' attention

on specific structures and grammatical patterns of language (McCallum cited in Yolageldili & Arikan, 2011)

In Cycle 1, there was an improvement of students' ability in using period at the end of a sentence from the first meeting to the second meeting. It was from very poor to very good category. But, in Cycle 2, the students' ability in using period was in poor category even there was an improvement of students' score in this aspect. Then, in using exclamation mark there was an improvement in both cycles. Moreover, in using question mark, there was an improvement in Cycle 1. In contrary, in Cycle 2, the results decreased from the first to the second meeting. Even in the questionnaire showed the students' confidence in using punctuation marks that end sentences was improve, the researcher found that Board Game could not help the students to recognize a kind of sentence immediately such as interrogative sentence.

The use of Board Game and its practicality for the teaching learning activities had given positive effects to the students' motivation in increasing academic skills. This fact is supported by Saraswati (2015) who found that Board Game give positive effect on students learning in her research. The cooperative learning appeared in Board Game. It was shown during the activities. All students were participating in discussion in solving the tasks. As stated by Jolliffe (2007) that the students more interested in learning by using cooperative learning and it helped them to increase their personal skill and academic skill.

The research findings showed the improvement on students' respond on the teacher questions about capital letters and punctuation marks that end sentences. It proves that Board Game can stimulates the students' memory as stated by Gobet, Voogt, and Retschitzki (2004). From observation, it found that Board Game could also be used to evaluate the language aspects taught in class and the teacher could immediately give the feedback such as explanations or corrections to students' answer as stated by Cerqueiro and Castro (2015).

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it could be concluded that the result of the implementation of Board Game showed that the students' ability in writing a capital letter and a punctuation mark that end a sentence had improved during the cycles. It can be concluded that Board Game helped the students in writing a capital letter and punctuation marks that end sentences correctly. The students had improvement in using the right function of capital letter especially in the beginning of sentence, name of person, place, country, and the use of punctuation marks such as period and question marks. The implementation of Board Game gave the students chances to produce a piece of writing both cooperatively and independently through the writing process. Moreover, the students' attitude towards writing activities also improved from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. The students were more confidence in writing and felt that they need to be more careful in writing.

### **Suggestion**

The aim of this research is to elevate the quality of the practice of teaching and learning, particularly the practice of teaching writing. For this reason, the researcher propounds some suggestions for English teachers, they should give chances to have writing task since it will encourage the students to write. The teachers also have to pay attention to the students writing especially in capitalization and punctuation marks. The teachers may modify the teaching and learning activities to be adjusted to their students' characteristics and condition especially for the time management that should be arranged properly during the teaching learning. The researcher also suggest for forthcoming researchers to conduct a case study on how Board game helps the students' difficulty in differentiate the use of exclamation and question mark in a sentence, due to the findings of this research found that most of the students still had difficulty in using a question mark in writing a sentence and some of them had difficulty in using an exclamation mark.



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