# THE LOSS BOARD GAME: A GAME TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' PRONUNCIATION

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Abstract: This study aims to develop a board game as a medium of pedagogical instruction at junior high schools named LOSS (Learn abOut the Sound S) Board Game that helps students to improve their pronunciation of the ending sounds /s/, iz/, and /z/. This study uses Research and Development (R&D) research design that includes: 1) needs analysis; 2) product development; 3) formative evaluation; 4) revising instruction; 5) product revision; 6) try-out the product; and 7) final product. The try-out product was done by eight grade students. The elements of board game are to make them do instructions, do repetitive tasks unconsciously, and respond to their role. The LOSS board game implements the elements of board game by practicing pronunciation, pronouncing different words of the same ending sounds more than once, and checking players' pronunciation. The LOSS Board Game is expected to provide a medium for secondary school teachers to teach pronunciation and provide fun and enjoyable learning activities in English classrooms for students.

**Keywords:** Pronunciation, Board Game, Junior High School Students

Indonesia uses Indonesian language as the national language to communicate daily. In Indonesia, English is called as EFL (English as a Foreign Language) because students learn English to communicate with people from different countries – when there are tourists or business people (Harmer, 2015). According to Cahyono and Widiati (2011), Indonesians do not commonly use English for everyday life. It can safely be concluded that students rarely practice their English at home with their families or friends. Therefore, teaching English for EFL learners becomes a challenging task for some teachers.

In 2013, some schools implemented the 2013 Curriculum. The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, *Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan* (*Kemendikbud*, 2017), stated that the English lesson is scheduled to be given twice a week (two credit hours per meeting). One credit hour is usually about 45 minutes. For one basic competence in the 2013 Curriculum, teachers may need 2 to 4 meetings, and the usage of time is heavily dependent upon the difficulty of the material for the students to understand. Goh and Burns (2012) stated that students need to have sufficient input and output of the target language to improve their proficiency in the target language.

The current study was started with a needs analysis in the target school, by making some observations and some communication with the teacher. From the needs analysis, it was found that the students wanted to improve their speaking ability, especially their pronunciation. The students stated that they used to create some dialogues and perform them for their speaking activities. Then, they received some feedback for their pronunciation during the activities from their English teachers. The needs analysis also showed that the students had different learning styles. Thus, a more interesting instructional medium is needed to cater to their different learning styles. In addition, the teachers said that the students had difficulty in speaking and pronouncing some words, and they rarely used games while learning English.

The observation also showed that the students have issues in speaking and pronunciation because English teachers were focusing on English vocabulary and grammar in the classroom. Harmer (2015) states that some teachers make little attempt to teach pronunciation. Bai and Yuan (2018) found

EFL teachers had a lack of confidence in teaching pronunciation in their classes. The main reason for not teaching pronunciation is they are non-native English teachers. They thought that the students' skills in pronunciation and speaking could be better if the native English teachers teach them. The teachers' lack of confidence in teaching speaking or pronunciation was also reported by Couper (2016). He stated that teachers' confidence in teaching pronunciation is lacking because they have insufficient knowledge of phonology. Also, they are not sure how to teach the pronunciation and only correct students' mistakes during speaking activity when it is needed. To communicate understandably, students need not only vocabulary but also pronunciation.

Pronunciation is needed by students in order to deliver their thoughts orally. Without practicing pronunciation, they may mispronounce words and fail to communicate verbally, which discourage students' confidence in speaking activity (Sifakis & Sougari, 2005). A new sound and influences from their first language make it difficult to understand pronunciation (Levis, 2005). In teaching pronunciation, students might generalize the plural words with "s" ending pronounced /s/ and might not know how to pronounce the ending sounds /z/ or /iz/. The mistake of pronouncing the sound /s/ leads them to mispronounce the ending sounds /z/ and /iz/, which will eventually become a habit that is difficult to change. Thus, teachers have to allocate time for pronunciation, and students need lots of effort to pronounce accurately and make it a new habit. The right and appropriate techniques can help students to change their pronunciation.

The technique of repeating sounds is one of the ways of improving pronunciation. This technique requires teachers to say new or difficult sounds, and then learners need to listen and repeat the sounds. The teachers can also explain how to produce the sounds, show examples of the use of sounds, or help learners pronounce the correct sounds (Nation & Newton, 2009). Another technique in teaching pronunciation is minimal pairs. This technique allows teachers to introduce one new sound which has a different phoneme. Focusing on one sound in teaching is more useful for students' learning objectives. They can show different words and play audio, and students choose the correct words based on the audio (Kelly, 2001).

Repeating sounds and minimal pairs are two simple techniques for teaching pronunciation because they do not need teachers to integrate or use any instructional media when teaching. From our observation, rarely could we find exciting ways of teaching pronunciation as well as finding interesting instructional media for teaching speaking or pronunciation. Smaldino, Russell, and Heinich, (2004) stated that instructional media provide teachers with the tools to engage students in learning. Indeed, the teachers must prepare to choose the best tools to engage students in learning. This study believes that developing a medium for teaching pronunciation that is interactive, accessible, and interesting for students is essential for English teachers when they are teaching pronunciation.

A board game can be modified into students' needs, for auditory, kinesthetic, and visual learners. Incorporating board games into the curriculum has uniformly positive effects (Hinebaugh, 2009). The competitive element makes students try not to make any mistakes so they can win the game. Also, they can learn by checking other players' answers. According to Lewis and Bedson (1999), students need an essential tool to gain the experience of using a foreign language. Having the board game in the classroom make students learn materials, practice it, and develop their skill in English without even realizing that they are learning.

In recent years, there has been some research on the use of board games for teaching English. However, ELT board games are limited and more focused on grammar (Paris & Yussof 2012; Phuong & Nguyen, 2017). There are board games for speaking activities but they are rarely focused on pronunciation (Fung & Min, 2016; León & Cely, 2010; Łodzikowski & Jekiel, 2019). Łodzikowski and Jekiel (2019) developed a board game for teaching English prosody. The result showed that students would like to play the board game rather than doing the exercises. Teachers can use familiar media such as the board game, and adapt it to teach pronunciation. By having the board game in the classroom, students got a better result than before. The relaxed atmosphere made them enjoy it.

Repeating sounds and minimal pairs are simple techniques to help students to improve pronunciation. However, these techniques have not integrated any instructional media, and the instructional media were not focused on pronunciation. Drawing upon the discussion, this study aims to develop a printed board game which applies the techniques for junior high school students. The topic is the use of ending sounds /s/, /iz/, and /z/ in the simple present tense, and the board game aims to help teachers to introduce the new sounds that students need to learn for communicating well and clearly.

The board game is chosen because it is easy to apply in classes and is also suitable for auditory, visual, and tactile learners (touching something or doing role-play). In other words, the board game is a supplementary medium to improve the speaking skill, especially pronunciation. During the game, the students are expected to practice different sounds in one round and do a repetitious activity because of the modified instruction. The activities aim to support students in pronouncing the ending sounds correctly in a fun speaking activity.

#### **METHOD**

This study uses Research and Development (R&D) to develop a medium for students adopted model from Latief (2017). The steps are: 1) needs analysis; 2) product development; 3) conducting a formative evaluation of instruction; 4) revising instructions; 5) expert validation; 6) first product revision; 7) trying out the product; 8) revising and publishing the product.

Table 1. Research Timeline

#### Research Procedure

#### **Needs Analysis**

Collecting the data through:

- · Interviewing the teacher
- Distributing questionnaires to students

## **Product Development**

- · Deciding the objectives
- · Selecting the materials
- · Designing the board game
- · Creating the equipment

# **Conducting Formative Evaluation of Instruction**

Evaluating the product to know the effectiveness before further development

#### **Revising Instructions**

· Revising the instruction based on the formative evaluation

#### **Expert Validation**

Validated by the English lecturer

#### **First Product Revision**

· Revising the product based on the validator

# **Try Out the Product**

· Trying out the product to students

#### Revising and Publishing the Product

- Revising the product based on students' comments
- Publishing the product

The needs analysis is the first step of the research procedure. It aims to investigate students' problems in the classroom. The subjects of this study are eighth-grade students, and two English teachers of eight-grade. The researcher uses a convenience sampling technique to find suitable and easy samples to reach. There are two kinds of requirement for the participants; the first one required students who learn simple present tense in the eighth grade, and the second kind of participants need to be English teachers who are currently teaching English for eight grade. The researcher takes two classes from different teachers to be identified as the representatives for the needs analysis. The subjects of the study are thus class 8A with their female English teacher, and the class of 8F with their male teacher.

In the needs analysis, the information is obtained by giving a questionnaire to the students and interviewing the English teachers. The questionnaires use an online form containing closed-ended questions for students to collect data for the needs analysis. Afterwards, the results are analyzed to yield frequencies and percentages of each item on particular closed-ended questions (Borg & Gall, 2003). An interview guide is also used in the needs analysis in order to collect data from the English teachers. The interview uses retrospective interviews and gets a respondent to recall from memory (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011). The results were then analyzed descriptive-qualitatively, and the answers were translated into English by the researchers.

After conducting the needs analysis, the next step is product development. The product development consists of several stages. The first step of product development is to decide the objective of the product. From the students' problem, the objective is to improve students' pronunciation focusing on the ending sounds /s/, /z/, and /z/.

The second step of product development is to choose the techniques for the board game. Repeating technique and minimal pairs are applied for this board game. They are used because both of them require students to practice pronunciation more than once and to practice different ending sounds in one sentence. Later, they pick one card at every stage and pronounce them four times. On the first, second, and third chances, the students only pronounce the underlined words. Then, on the fourth chance, they need to perform their pronunciation by reading the sentence aloud, which will be scored by observing their pronunciations of the underlined words. If they mispronounce it, they will get a minus card. Thus, these techniques are integrated with the board game to make them learn unconsciously.

The third step is to select the materials based on the syllabus. The material was selected based on the 2013 Curriculum of eight grade for the Basic Competence 3.7, simple present tense. It is selected because students often overgeneralize their pronunciation and omit the ending sounds when they speak. Simple present tense is also used to discuss the plural nouns and the verbs with ending sounds /s/, /z/, and /iz/ to improve the students' pronunciation.

The next stage is to select the sentences for the board game. The sentences should at least have one or two words with the ending sounds /s/, /z/, or /iz/. Each sentence is designed in a card that is called as a V-Card.

Table 2. The Blueprint of Sentences Based on Ending Sounds

No.	Variable	Sub-variable	Indicator	Total of Sentences
	Words with ending sound /s/	Positive sentences	Verbs ending sound /s/	3
			Nouns ending sound /s/	4
1.		Negative sentences	Nouns ending sound /s/	2
		Interrogative sentences	Noun ending sound /s/	1
2.	Words with ending sound /iz/	Positive sentences	Verbs ending sound /iz/	10
	Words with ending sound /z/	Positive sentences	Verbs ending sound /z/	4
3.		Negative sentences	Nouns ending sound /z/	2
		Interrogative sentences	Nouns ending sound /z/	4
4.	Words with ending sound /s/, /iz/, and /z/	Positive sentences	Nouns and verbs ending /s/, /iz/, and /z/	5
		Interrogative sentences	Nouns and verbs ending /s/, /iz/, and /z/	5
Total				40

The fifth stage is to select the technique on how to give feedback for students. This board game uses two applications, tophonetic and voice notepad. Tophonetic helps students to know how to pronounce correctly after listening to the audio, and voice notepad is an application that converts speech into words or sentences by recognizing students' pronunciation, so students do not need to type the sentence. There are QR codes to be scanned and go directly to the tophonetic and voice notepad applications.

The sixth step is to decide how many players can play the board game in a round and how long it should take them. The board game can be used to play in a group of 4 players. Then every player gets a chance to practice all the ending sounds, and the duration of playing is 60 minutes.

The last step of product development is to design the appearance of the board game. The layout is adapted from the Amabua board game. The researchers then chose interesting pictures and icons for the board game and cards based on the students' age.

The next stage of R&D is to conduct a formative evaluation. It is done while the product is under development to support the process of improving its effectiveness. The formative evaluation findings lead to a decision for further development so that resources are not wasted and become an effective product (Borg & Gall, 2003). Then, the product is revised based on the formative evaluation.

Next stage, the developed product is evaluated by an expert validator using a rubric. The aim of this phase is to know whether the LOSS board game is suitable for the students' needs and ready to be tested. The rubric contains the criteria to evaluate the product. The use of closed-ended questions is to simplify the indicators. Then, the answer 'Yes' with or without comment means that the validator agrees, and an item does not need to be revised. Meanwhile, the answer 'No' means that the validator disagrees, and an item needs to be revised.

Afterwards, the product is revised again by the expert validator before it is going to be used in a tryout. After revising, the product is tried out to the subjects. The try-out product process was done by

reviewing the material of simple present tense, introducing the purpose of the board game, and explaining how to play the board game. Then, students play the board game and read the sentences to check their pronunciation. After playing the game, they give responses and feedbacks to the product using questionnaires. The questionnaires use an online form containing closed-ended questions for students to collect responses of try-out product. The results will be analyzed to yield frequencies and percentages of each item on particular closed-ended questions (Borg & Gall, 2003). The product will be revised based on the suggestions and ready to publish the final product.

# FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

# **Findings**

The needs analysis is conducted to understand students' problems in English. They were asked a skill which was difficult and needed to be improved through a questionnaire. The results of the students' questionnaire are presented in the following tables.

Table 3. Students' English Skill

Item	Writing (%)	Speaking (%)
What skill do you think you want to improve?	18	82

The finding from Table 3 shows that 82% of students would like to improve their speaking ability rather than their writing ability. They need more time to practice speaking English, and someone who responds to them and gives feedback. The following table is about students' problems in speaking.

Table 4. Students' Problem in Speaking

Item	Don't know how to pronounce (%)	Don't know vocabulary (%)	Grammatical difficulties (%)
What do you think are the problems with speaking in English?	39	28	33
Item	Discussion (%)	Dialog (%)	Interview (%)
What activities do you like during speaking lessons?	28	56	16
Item	I am afraid to make mistakes (%)	I am afraid to be laughed (%)	No Problem (%)
What do you think are the difficulties, so you do not want to speak using English?	83	14	3

The first one shows the students' difficulty in speaking. The biggest problem they have is "Do not know how to pronounce" with 39% of the total. It proves that students need to learn and practice their pronunciation to enhance their ability in speaking. Furthermore, the common activity that they do is performing dialogues. If they do it with friends, they rarely get any feedback from their partners for their pronunciation. They will only get feedback when they perform it and make mistakes in front of their teachers. Additionally, the learners are lacking in confidence while speaking because "I am afraid to make mistakes" could impede their performance. Then, a medium can encourage students in a speaking activity.

Regarding the students' learning style which fulfills the students' needs, it is essential to have a medium which caters to students' needs (see Table 5).

Table 5. Students' Learning Style

Item	Auditory (%)	Visual (%)	Tactile (%)
How do you learn English?	49	38	13

From the results, it can be concluded that students need a medium which requires them to listen, look, and do a small activity. Although only 13% of students are tactile learners, it is important to cater to their needs.

From interviewing both teachers, it can be concluded that speaking is the most difficult skill that they have in the classrooms. For the media, they commonly use videos and Powerpoint presentations, and they rarely use games in the teaching process, so it can be concluded that they only have limited games for teaching English.

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After conducting needs analysis, the product was developed based on the results. Then, the formative evaluation was done by the ELT (English Language Teaching) students 2019 of Universitas Negeri Malang. They tried the product and gave some suggestions for the improvement of the product. Based on their comments, the product was suitable to practice pronunciation. Then the product needed revisions, such as changing the position of the card, adding punishments to make the game more exciting, and changing the design to suit the students' age better.

After conducting the formative evaluation and revising the product, the product was validated by the expert validator. The results of the expert validation focused on some aspects regarding the grammatical errors, instruction, and the font color. Meanwhile, the material, pictures, objective, and vocabulary were suitable and interesting for their age and ready to be tried out.

When conducting the tryout, the researchers reviewed shortly about simple present tense that the students have learned. Later, they made a group of 3-4 students. They were required to read the instructions on how to play the game. Then they started to play and are permitted to ask questions during the play, and the researchers estimated that 40 minutes are to play the game, but it was not enough. Subsequently, it takes 60 minutes to finish 1 round of the game and does the punishment. The punishment is given to the player who gets lowest point.

After playing, the students were asked to fill the questionnaire. The questionnaire is used to get the students' opinions about the product and to improve it before becoming the final product. Table 6 is about the LOSS Board Game.

Table 6. The Board Game				
Item	Yes (%)	No (%)		
Is the design attractive?	98	2		
Do you understand the language used in the board game?		16		
Is the board game easy to play?		5		
Is the instruction easy to understand?	77	23		

Table 6. The Board Game

Based on the results showed in table 6, it can be concluded that the design of the board game is suitable for their age who are around 13 to 14 years old. About 84% of students understand the language used, and the rest do not understand the language because they do not familiarize themselves with the meaning of some words. Regarding the practicality of the board game, 95% of participants agree that the operation of the board game is easy to play. However, 23% of them think that the instruction is difficult to understand before playing. From this, the instructions need to be revised.

Item Yes (%) No (%) Do you understand how to pronounce the sound /s/ after playing the LOSS 84 16 board game? Do you learn something else from the LOSS board game except 93 7 pronunciation? Do you feel afraid to make mistakes during playing? 75 25 Do you want to learn English using the LOSS board game again without 87 13

Table 7. Students' Personal Experience

The table above is about students' personal experience after playing the LOSS Board Game. 84% of the total, they understand enough to pronounce the sound /s/, /z/, and /iz/. Then, almost 93% of them learn something else from the board game, not only pronunciation but also vocabulary and structure of sentences. Only 25% of them do not feel afraid to make mistakes because they do not care to pronounce whether it is correct or not, and the rest of them gets confused when they do not pronounce it correctly. Furthermore, 87% of them would like to play it again with their friends outside the classroom.

The first issue is the instruction. Students felt that the instruction to get the V-Cards is not easy at first, and they would rather ask the teacher rather than reading the instruction. After playing the first turn, they knew how to play the game and played again after finishing the first round. The second issue is the internet connection. The voice notepad cannot recognize students' speech quickly, so they have to say the words slowly.

From the teachers, they agreed that the product is appropriate for junior high school students to practice pronunciation. From their comments, there is no need to revise the product, and they hope that there will be another medium to teach grammar.

guidance from the teachers?

Overall, almost all aspects of this product attract the students. The materials and techniques help students to improve their pronunciation. After conducting the tryout, the product of the LOSS board game needs revisions, especially on the instruction.

The LOSS Board Game is a medium of improving pronunciation where the players listen to the audios and practice the ending sounds /s/, iz/, and /z/ of plural nouns and singular verbs. The duration for playing is 60 minutes. The final product consists of 4 characters, the guidelines, 40 V-Cards, 20 M-Cards, 30 Minus Cards, and 5 C-Cards. To play this game, students collect the V-Cards which have four different colors of ending sounds, /s/, /z/, or /iz/, and they say the sentences out loud. For every correct pronunciation, they get 5 points from every sentence and get a minus card when mispronouncing the underlined word. If they stop at the cauldron icon, they get one M-Card that gives elements of fortunes or misfortunes to the players. To end the game, they need to collect 2 cards in every color. The player who gets highest point wins the game, and the player who gets lowest point does the punishment from the C-Card.

#### Discussion

This study aims to develop The LOSS Board Game, which helps to fill the lack of medium for practicing pronunciation. The product is developed to practice the ending sounds /s/, iz/, and /z/ and is based on the basic competence of the 2013 Curriculum. The results indicate that the repeating technique and using minimal pairs are appropriate to be applied for pronunciation and integrated with the board game. It showed that students pronounced the ending sounds /s/, iz/, and /z/ clearly and were active to practice it.

After implementing the board game, students show positive responses to the product. The responses from the expert validator and teachers also show that the product is eligible for pronunciation. Furthermore, students' positive responses indicate that the board game helps them to understand to pronounce not only the ending sounds /s/, iz/, and /z/ but also new words. León and Cely (2010) stated that instructional media help students to improve students' ability in speaking. In a nutshell, the teachers' and students' responses show that the board game meets the criteria of acceptability for practicing pronunciation.

In this study, the researcher chose the techniques, media, and materials to achieve the objectives of learning while playing. The students feel interested in playing the game, and they want to improve their pronunciation using the LOSS board game again independently. These findings are comparable to the previous study conducted by Łodzikowski and Jekiel (2019). The findings show that students showed a good engagement in learning and understood the topics better. Because of learning in a fun way, the students prefer to practice using the board game rather than doing the exercises.

In terms of developing a medium for pronunciation, there is considerable support found in the literature. The previous study revealed that a medium for pronunciation is needed to fill the lack of media (Bai and Yuan, 2018 and Couper, 2016). Teachers need a lot of media to teach pronunciation in their classrooms by delivering materials or practicing different sounds as a lot of media have not been integrated with the teaching pronunciation techniques.

The board game only focuses on the pronunciation for the ending sounds /s/, iz/, and /z/ of plural nouns and singular verbs, and the board game is successful as it was able to improve students' pronunciation. However, the study did not evaluate the intonation and fluency. Although the V-Cards can also be used to practice intonation and fluency, they may feel afraid to practice pronunciation, intonation, and fluency at the same time. Furthermore, teachers can ask them to practice their intonation and fluency in the future.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

#### Conclusions

The LOSS board game has an essential part in learning pronunciation. Rather than using the repeating and using minimal pair techniques all the time and no games for pronunciation, the innovative LOSS board game improves students' pronunciation in a pleasing and enjoyable way. Besides, the board game helps the students to believe in themselves in pronouncing English words.

Through this innovative board game, students do the repetitive steps willingly. They tried to pronounce the words more than once to correct their mistakes, and they played it again because of their own desire. Also, during the process of playing, some of them dealt with their fear of making mistakes to pronounce whether the pronunciation was wrong or not.

In this research, the students felt comfortable in playing the board game and learned more vocabulary and structure of sentences. They managed to get the knowledge of pronouncing the ending sounds while playing, although they used Indonesian expressions to communicate their ideas or feelings during the game.

On the other hand, this study looks for a new alternative to encourage students to practice pronunciation with their friends through the board game. Before, there was a problem with the lack of English interactions which made the students not want to use English. With the LOSS board game, every player has the opportunity to practice all the ending sounds. At the time students played games, they listened to every player, thus correcting other players' mistakes.

Finally, the LOSS board game encourages students to improve their pronunciation and has positive impacts on students, boost students' motivation to learn independently, give them courage to make mistakes, and attempt to master correct pronunciation.

The developed product will be promoted by doing a seminar with English teachers as the participants, so they can use the product as a new way of practicing pronunciation. In the future, the product will be developed further in an online form to make students practice more sounds at home intensively at their own pace.

# Suggestions

This part contains some recommendations which can be used as considerations for the English teachers who are going to use the product as well as future researchers who are interested in conducting a similar study.

For English teachers, the LOSS board game can be used as an alternative way to teach pronunciation in school. They can use the applications to help them to give feedback for students, so it is suggested that there is a better internet connection in every classroom. Since phones are used to check the correct pronunciations and whether or not the students' pronunciation is correct, teachers will be able to figure out the pronunciation problems of the students after they send their texts, voice notes, and the points they got. Also, it is encouraged for teachers to develop different materials and objectives using the LOSS board game as a reference.

For other researchers, they can develop board games for different sounds based on Basic Competences. Moreover, future researchers should carefully select the sentences which are easy to understand for students' level and needs for the game, because English is a foreign language in Indonesia which is not used for students' daily communication.

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# APPENDIX 1: THE LOSS BOARD GAME



# APPENDIX 2: THE EXAMPLE OF C-CARDS

1. The Green Cards have the ending sounds /s/, /z/, or /iz/

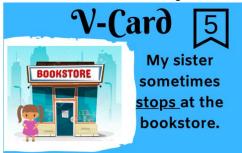


Front of the C-Card

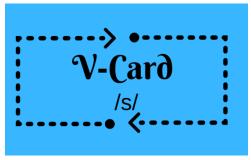


Back of the C-Card

2. The Blue Cards have the ending sound /s/



Front of the C-Card

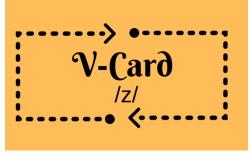


Back of the C-Card

3. The Orange Cards have the ending sound /z/



Front of the C-Card



Back of the C-Card

4. The Yellow Cards have the ending sound /s/



Front of the C-Card



Back of the C-Card

## APPENDIX 3: THE EXAMPLES OF M-CARDS

1. The examples of fortune M-Cards







2. The examples of misfortune M-Cards





