

USING DICTIONARY WITH AUDIO PRONUNCIATION TO IMPROVE PRONUNCIATION AMONGST YEAR 5 NILAM PUPILS

By:

AMIER HAMZAH BIN ZAINUL ABIDIN
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to ascertain that the use of dictionary with audio pronunciation has improved pupils' pronunciation and thus helping them to pronounce words correctly. A total of 5 pupils from Year 5 Nilam are involved in this research. The pupils' pronunciation test scores show that they have limited pronunciation that hinder them from pronouncing words correctly. The focus of this research is to help the pupils in improving pronunciation of the words. As such, the use of dictionary with audio pronunciation is designed to meet this purpose. A few sessions are conducted in the classroom which aim to improve their pronunciation. The data is collected from the pre-test and post-test, document analysis and interview before and after the intervention. The findings reveal that the use of dictionary with audio pronunciation has indeed improved the pupils pronunciation. Hence, this reinforces the fact that using dictionary with audio pronunciation is beneficial in improving primary school pupils' pronunciation.

Key terms: Dictionary with audio pronunciation, pronunciation

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Teaching pronunciation involves a variety of challenges. To begin with, teachers often find that they do not have enough time in class to give proper attention to this aspect of English instruction. There are psychological factors that affect the learning of pronunciation in ways that are not so true of studying grammar or vocabulary. For one thing, the most basic elements of speaking are deeply personal. Our sense of self and community are bound up in the speech-rhythms of our first language (L1). These rhythms were learned in the first year of life and are deeply rooted in the minds of students. Therefore, it is common for students to feel uneasy when they hear themselves speak with the rhythm of a second language (L2). They find that they "sound foreign" to themselves, and this is troubling for them. Although the uneasiness is usually unconscious, it can be a major barrier to improved intelligibility in the L2. A teacher can help overcome this psychological barrier and other challenges by thinking of the goal of pronunciation instruction not as helping students to sound like native speakers but as helping them to learn the core elements of spoken English so that they can be easily understood by others. In other words, teachers and students can overcome the frustrations, difficulties, and boredom often associated with pronunciation by focusing their attention on the development of pronunciation that is "listener friendly." Instead, it amounts to learning and practicing the specifically English way of making a speaker's thoughts easy to follow.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

During previous practicum, I was teaching Year 5 pupils in one of the schools located in Kuala Lumpur. My first lesson with them was on the reading skill. The topic on that day was 'Save Our Environment'. At the presentation stage, I introduced a few vocabulary that are quite unfamiliar to them. Then, I asked them to pronounce all the vocabulary. Then it came to the word 'wheel', | wi:l |. When I asked the meaning of the word 'wheel', one of the pupils gave the answer as 'ikan paus' which is 'whale', | weɪ/ | in English. I was quite surprised because they knew the word 'whale' and the meaning of 'whale' but they got confused with the pronunciation of both words. So, I wrote both words on the white board and showed them the difference in spelling of word 'wheel' and 'whale'. By doing so, they managed to identify the difference of the spelling and the pronunciation of both words. Most probably, I think the students do not have enough practices on pronunciation of vocabulary during their past years in learning English.

1.2 Related theory/literature

In order to figure out the best way to overcome the problem of this study, I used Edward Thorndike Behaviourism (1912) theory to support my intervention.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The focus of this research is to improve pronunciation among year 5 Nilam pupils. Pronunciation is one of the requirements for the pupils in order for them to speak well. English pronunciation has various components such as sounds, stress, and variation in pitch, and the learner needs to understand the function of these as well as their form. Once learners are aware that English words have a stress pattern, the words can be pronounced in slightly different ways. Learners also need to develop a concern for pronunciation. They must recognize that poor, unintelligible speech will make their attempts at conversing frustrating and unpleasant both for themselves and for their listeners (Kenworthy, 1987). Therefore I realize that pronunciation is very important in English language amongst the year 5 Nilam pupils because it had caused them to have problem when they required using English language verbally. Sometimes when the lesson involves speaking I have to spend more time on pronunciation and this has affected my time management. Improving pronunciation also can cater to the pupils' problem when they are given a task that involves verbal communication.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

3.1 General objective

To improve pupils' pronunciation using dictionary with audio pronunciation.

3.2 Specific objectives

- Pupils will be able to pronounce the sets of words given correctly.
- Ways that dictionary with audio pronunciation improve the pronunciation skill.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

Year 5 Nilam consists of 32 pupils. After the preliminary investigation been conducted, five Year 5 Nilam pupils were chosen and involved in this research. They were three boys and two girls and they were chosen based on the marks they got in the pronunciation test and also their pronunciation performance during reading lesson.

5.1 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The following actions were taken to conduct this research:

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

There are 3 different kinds of instruments that have been used in this research : Tests (pre-test, post-test, formative test), document analysis and interview to help me to collect the data. All the instruments were used due to its purpose and its effectiveness so that the intended data could be collected.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

In order to know the pupils' particular problem areas, I carried out an observation and pronunciation test. The data collected from both methods proved that the pupils faced pronunciation problem.

5.3 Action

After preliminary investigation had been conducted, I continued with the intervention where I taught the pupils about marking the stress and syllable of words with the use of dictionary with audio

pronunciation in Cycle 1. There were 3 sessions of intervention conducted and each session was about 30 minutes.

For Cycle 2, I had made a little adjustment by adding another 15 more words to the list of words. Previously in cycle 1, 15 words given to the pupils. The intervention was similar to the one in Cycle 1 where there were also 3 sessions of intervention which took 30 minutes each.

5.4 Findings

Pre-test and post-test

Table 1

Comparison of scores in Cycle 1 obtained by students in the pre-test and post-test

Comparison of scores in Cycle 1 obtained by students in the pre-test and post-test						
Pupils	Pre-test		Post-test		Difference	
	Cycle 1		Cycle 1			
	Marks	%	Marks	%	Marks	%
P1	7	47	12	80	+5	33
P2	10	67	15	100	+5	33
P3	11	73	15	100	+4	27
P4	13	87	15	100	+2	13
P5	9	60	15	100	+6	40

The table above shows the comparison of students' pre-test and post-test marks for Cycle 1. In order to get the marks, the students need to do the test by marking the stress and syllable of words they listened to in the pre-test and intervention session. During the intervention session, the dictionary with audio pronunciation was being used. For the post-test, the students need to read sets of sentences which include the words they listened to. In the pre-test, the maximum score obtained is 13 out of 15 questions and the lowest score is 7 out of 15 questions. In the post-test, the maximum score gathered by the students is 15 and the lowest score is 12.

Table 2

Comparison of scores in Cycle 2 obtained by students in the pre-test and post-test

Comparison of scores in Cycle 2 obtained by students in the pre-test and post-test						
Pupils	Pre-test		Post-test		Differences	
	Cycle 1		Cycle 1			
	Marks	%	Marks	%	Marks	%
P1	21	70	27	90	+6	20
P2	23	77	30	100	+7	23
P3	25	83	30	100	+5	17
P4	24	80	28	100	+4	20
P5	24	80	30	93	+6	13

The table above shows the comparison of students' pre-test and post-test marks for Cycle 2. In order to get the marks, the students need to do the test by marking the stress and syllable of words they listened to in the pre-test and intervention session. This time the number of words they listened to, increased to 30 words. For the post-test, the students need to read sets of sentences which include the words they listened to. In the pre-test, the maximum score obtained is 25 out of 30 questions and the lowest score is 21 out of 30 questions. In the post-test, the maximum score gathered by the students is 30 and the lowest score is 27.

Formative assessment

Table 3

Formative assessment result in Cycle 1

Pupils	Cycle 1			Difference in scores
	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	
P1	2	3	4	+2
P2	3	4	4	+1
P3	3	3	5	+2
P4	3	4	4	+1
P5	2	3	4	+2

The table shows the difference in marks of the pupils in Session 1, Session 2 and Session 3 during Cycle 1. The total scores of the formative test is 5. The highest scores is +2 and the lowest score is +1. Based on the scores, it shows that all 5 pupils show progress in the three sessions.

Table 4

Formative assessment result in Cycle 2

Pupils	Cycle 2			Difference in scores
	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	
P1	5	6	7	+2
P2	6	6	8	+2
P3	7	7	9	+2
P4	5	6	8	+3
P5	6	6	7	+1

The table above shows the difference in students' scores in the formative assessment during Cycle 2. This time the words had been added to 10 for each session. The total scores of the formative assessment are 10. Based on the data, it shows that the students have improved as the scores in Session 1, Session 2 and Session 3 were increased in numbers. The highest score is +3 and the lowest score is +1. Overall, all the students show good progress in Cycle 2.

5.5 Conclusion

The intervention aimed to improve pupils' pronunciation. By referring to the findings gathered and analyzed, the strategy used was effective and the objective of the study was achieved. The findings have answered Research Question 1 and Research Question 2.

5.6 Reflection

From the result gathered in this research, using dictionary with audio pronunciation appears to have been effective in improving pupils' pronunciation. After conducting this action research, I think my intervention would be applicable to any teaching practices. This is because the use of dictionary with audio pronunciation enables the teacher to help improve pupils' pronunciation skill. I think this intervention will enable the pupils to mark the stress and syllable of words accordingly which will help them to pronounce the words correctly. The intervention is suitable for any level of students like weak, intermediate or advance pupils as it offers an enjoyment and excitement in learning pronunciation. I think that this action research would be purposeful and meaningful for the pupils as well as the teachers. It is meaningful for me as a future teacher because it can assist me to help the pupils in their pronunciation of words which can help them later in communicating verbally in the English language.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It has been proven that the use of dictionary with audio pronunciation is effective to improve pupils' pronunciation. However there is also limitation that need to be addressed to further improve research practice in the future. For instance, a teacher should allocate at least 10 minutes for the pupils to use the dictionary with audio pronunciation especially during the listening and speaking lessons. By doing this consistently will help to improve the pupils pronunciation skill in the long term.

In addition, it would be beneficial to further research the use of the dictionary with audio pronunciation on a larger scale of pupils both in the urban and rural areas. To materialize this, schools should be equipped with appropriate facilities that can support the use of dictionary with audio pronunciation. Eventhough this will incur a lot of expenses, the authority should take this into consideration as this will help to improve the pronunciation problem among the primary school pupils.

REFERENCES

- Carson, V. (2009, February 6). Common mistakes. The Stars Online. Retrieved on May 20, 2014 from: <http://thestar.com.my/lifestyle/story.asp?file=/2009/2/6/lifefocus/3001765&sec=lifefocus>
- Celce-Murcia, M. (1996). *Teaching pronunciation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dorling Kindersley. (2011). *Contemporary communicative English for technical communication*. India: Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd.
- Kenworthy, J. (1987). *Teaching English Pronunciation*. Longman Handbooks for Language Teachers
- Koshy, E., Koshy, V., & Waterman, H. (2011). *Action Research in Healthcare*. SAGE Publication.
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 7th edition. (2005). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pennington, M. C. (1999). Computer-Aided Pronunciation Pedagogy: Promise, limitations, directions. *Computer Assisted Language learning*, 15(5), 427-440.
- Thorndike, E. L. (1912). *Education: A first book*. New York: MacMillan.
- Thorndike, E. L., & Gates, A. I. (1929). *Elementary principles of education*. New York: MacMillan. From the book "Teaching English Pronunciation" by Joanne Kenworthy, (Longman Handbooks for Language Teachers), Longman Publishing, 1987.

USING SHARED READING APPROACH TO INCREASE YEAR 2 DELIMA STRUGGLING READERS' ENGAGEMENT IN READING SESSION TO IMPROVE THEIR READING MOTIVATION

By:

AMIRAH FATHINAH BT AHMAD KHAIRUDDIN
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

Reading motivation refers to the likeliness of a reader to be engaged in a reading session. However, struggling readers have very low reading motivation due to their inability to read as fast and as accurate as their other peers and this can be seen in their poor engagement in the reading. This study investigated the use of shared reading approach in increasing four Year 2 struggling readers' engagement in reading session to improve their reading motivation. In this study, the intervention was carried out in two sessions; session with intervention and session without intervention. Reading aloud using textbook was used in the session without intervention and shared reading using big book is used in the session with intervention. The student' engagement performance is evaluated against the engagement rubric and act of engagement checklist. These students are then interviewed to find out their perceptions towards the approach. The results of the shows a significant improvement in the engagement level for all students through shared reading approach. This would suggest an increased reading motivation among the target group. These students also showed positive perception towards the approach. In short, shared reading is a very effective approach to be used with struggling readers in the reading class because it increase the likeliness of them engaging in the session thus improving their reading motivation.

Key terms: struggling readers, reading engagement, reading motivation, shared reading approach

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Most students in Level 1 of primary education which are the Year 1 and Year 2 students are early readers who are struggling to read fluently especially those who are low proficiency learners. They are still in the stage of developing their sound-symbol association and word attack skills, making reading a very challenging task for them. During reading activity, they tend to fall behind and unable to perform the task given like their other fluent reader peers and this made them aware of their own incompetency in reading. This will negatively affect their reading motivation level which makes them feel demotivated to participate in reading, and become disengaged in the reading activity and in the language learning itself.

1.1 Reflection on Teaching Experience

During my practicum time, I taught low proficiency students in Year 2 Delima class in a school in Kuala Lumpur. One of the skill component that I taught is reading and the reading activity that I usually conducted is reading aloud. I observed that struggling readers were not engaged in the reading session. They were involved in off task behaviour while the other students were reading. These struggling readers, based on my observation, evidently had problems to decode and comprehend the text during the reading activity and this might cause them to be demotivated to participate in the reading sessions or work on the tasks given to them. These struggling readers are clearly often unmotivated in the reading class and understandably so because they continue making the same mistakes when reading, perform poorly on reading tasks and face failure day after day. (Carnine, Silbert, & Kameenui, 1990).

1.2 Related Theory/ Literature

Motivation plays a role in struggling readers' ability to comprehend text (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1999). The cognitive theorist believed that students' motivation is affected by their cognitions. Cognition here refers to the beliefs, values and expectations of the students towards themselves and their learning. In terms of reading, Gambrell (2007) defined the motivation to read as the likelihood of engaging in reading. Gambrell further describe engaged readers as intrinsically motivated to read for

variety of goals, knowledgeable in choice of strategies to comprehend a text and are very socially active interactive about reading a text.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The research intended to improve Year 2 Delima struggling readers reading motivation by increasing their level of engagement in the reading session. These students have very low motivations in reading class because they are aware of their poor reading skills, thus the fear of making mistakes during reading aloud sessions caused them to feel anxious and uneasy. Therefore, this action research was conducted to increase the struggling readers' reading motivation through their engagement in the reading session by using shared reading approach.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research is to adopt shared reading approach in order to improve struggling readers' motivation by increasing their engagement the reading session. Apart from that, this research also aims to find out the students perception towards the use of big book in reading session.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The participants for this research are four Year 2 Delima struggling readers of low proficiency class consist of two male participants and two female participants. The participants is labelled as S1, S2, S3 and S4.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The research was conducted based on Kemmis and McTaggart action research model. There are four stages in this model which are planning stage, action stage, observation stage and reflection stage.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

Data were collected using four data collection methods which are observation rubric, engagement checklist, interview and questionnaire.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

Based on the preliminary investigation done using interview with the teacher and observation, four students were identified as struggling readers with very low reading motivation.

5.3 Action

After the struggling readers was identified, I started the intervention with them. The interventions in this research was conducted in two cycles and in each cycle there were two sessions, session without intervention and session with intervention. In the session without intervention, reading aloud using text in textbook was conducted. In the session with intervention, shared reading approach was conducted using big book. The students' engagement level was observed in both sessions and the data gathered were compared. The students' perception towards the approach was gathered using interview (first cycle) and questionnaire (second cycle).

5.4 Findings

In this section, the findings will be presented through data instrument gathered throughout the course of the intervention cycles.

Observation rubric

Students' level of engagement is scored against the criteria set in the rubric. The following figure shows the comparison of their engagement level in the session without intervention and in the session with intervention.

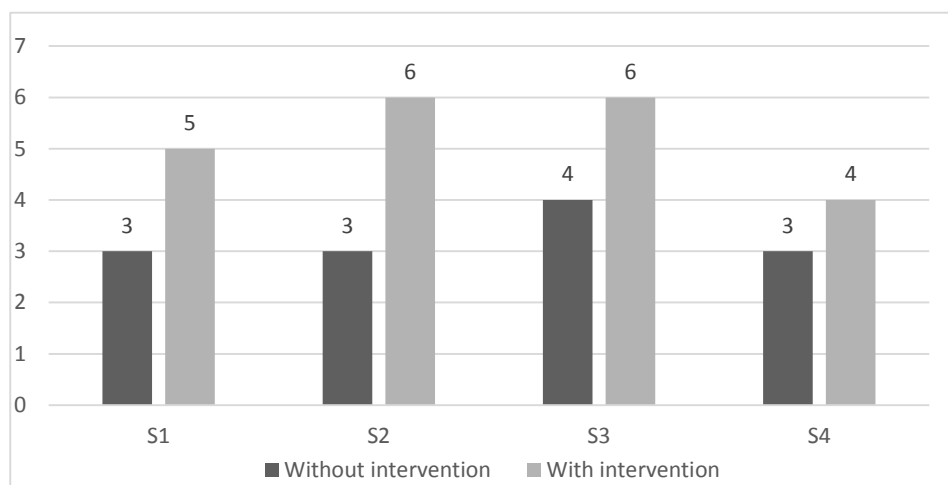


Figure 1: Comparison of students' engagement score in the session without intervention and with intervention.

Figure 1 shows the reading engagement score which is the total points that the students scored without and with intervention. In the session without intervention, S1, S2 and S4 scored a total of 3 points and S3 being the highest scorer among them scored 4 points. In the session with intervention, all of the students shows an increment in their total points. S1 has an increase of 2 points making the total points gained is 5. S2 has an increase of 1 point making her total points 4. S3 has an increase of 2 points making her total points 6 and lastly, S4 has an increase of one points making her total point 4. Of all the students, S3 has the highest score for his engagement level in the reading session.

Act of Engagement checklist

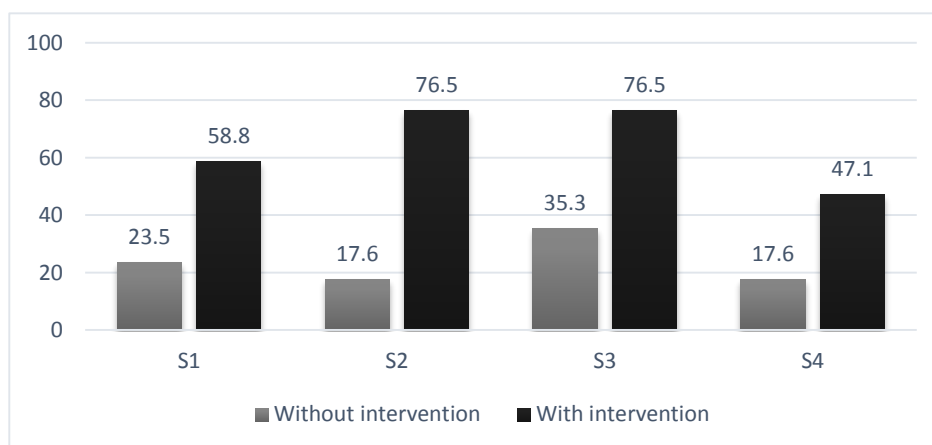


Figure 2: Comparison of students' total engagement act in the session without intervention and with intervention

Figure 2 shows total acts displayed by student, S1 scored 23.5% in the session without intervention and 58.8% in the session with intervention. In total acts displayed by S2, S2 scored 17.6% in the session without intervention and 76.5% in the session with intervention. In total acts displayed by S3, S3 scored 35.3% in the session without intervention and 76.5% in the session with intervention. In total acts displayed by S4, S4 scored 17.6% in the session without intervention and 47.1% in the session with intervention. All students show increment in total act of engagement in the session with intervention compared to the session without intervention.

Interview

Based on the interview, the students showed optimistic perception towards the use of big book. They agreed that they like using of big book in reading session. This is due to the features of the big book which is large in size. They also believed that they are able to read the big book which make them prefer it instead of the textbook.

Questionnaire

Based on the responses in the questionnaire, all of the students like reading session using the big book, and they enjoy it when the researcher tell them the story using the big book. They also think that the big book is easy to read, they would answer the question when reading the big book and they would like the researcher to use the big book in the next reading class. All of them also understand the story they read in the big book. However, would not retell the story they read in the book if asked to. In short, most of the students like the use of big book and shared reading in the reading class that they prefer it instead of the textbook.

5.5 Conclusion

The intervention is successful in increasing the level of engagement of the all the students in the reading session. This is probably due the features of shared reading itself. Shared reading provide a secure and non-threatening reading environment to the students who are struggling readers (Somaye Moazezi, 2008). This is because the reading in this approach is a shared responsibility between the teacher and the students, thus it lowers their anxiety level. This improvement of the students' engagement in the reading session suggests the motivational level of the students has improved with the intervention. Apart from that, the desire of the students to engage in an activity out of enjoyment shows that the students are motivated in the reading activity.

5.6 Reflection

From the result gathered in this research, the intervention of using shared reading approach to increase the students' engagement in reading session in order to improve their reading motivation is a success. However, as I carried out the intervention, there were some limitations that I have identified in the research. The type of text used in the intervention is only narrative text and means that the findings that I have gathered are limited to the use of narrative text in shared reading approach. Secondly, I have overlooked the impact that different research site might have on my findings because I carried out my intervention in two different sites. It is hope that if the research is furthered, the limitations is minimized.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The recommendation for further research are as summarised below:

1. Using informational text as reading text in shared reading approach to increase the struggling readers' engagement in reading session.
2. Using shared reading approach to promote higher order thinking of struggling readers.
3. Using shared reading approach to help develop sound-symbol association of the struggling readers

REFERENCES

- Carnine, D., Silbert, J., & Kameenui, E. J. (1990). *Direct Instruction Reading*. Ohio: Merrill Publishing Company.
- Gambrell, L. (2009). Creating opportunities to read more so that th students read better. In E. Hiebert, *Read more, read better* (pp. 251-266). New York: Guilford.

- Guthrie, J. T., Wigfield, A., Metsala, J. L., & Cox, K. E. (1999). Motivational and cognitive predictors of text comprehension and reading amount. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 231-256.
- Roberts, M. (2001, July). *Off-Task Behavior in the Classroom : Applying FBA and CBM*. Retrieved from National Association of School Psychologist: <http://www.nasponline.org/>
- Somaye Moazezi. (2008). *Shared Reading: A Technique to Enhance Reading and Writing Abilities of Iranian EFL Learners*. Retrieved from Academia.edu: http://www.academia.edu/4017362/Shared_Reading_A_Technique_to_Enhance_Reading_and_Writing_Abilities_of_Iranian_EFL_Learners

IMPROVING SPEAKING FLUENCY AMONG YEAR 3 DELIMA PUPILS USING ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES

By:

FARAH LYANA BINTI ABDUL RASHID
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

This action research was conducted to improve speaking fluency among year 3 Delima pupils using role-play activity. The data gathered from preliminary investigation showed that the pupils have problem in speaking skill. Pupils were able to write in English but they fail to speak the language. Thus, I chose to focus on improving their speaking fluency rather than focusing on speaking accuracy because my intention was to boost my pupils' self-confidence first. Four pupils who are weak in speaking were selected as participants for this research. Role-play activity was chosen as my intervention to improve their speaking fluency. This research was conducted in two cycles, and three methods of data collection were used. They are Pre- and post- intervention task, formative tests and questionnaire. The findings gathered from these methods showed that pupils have improved their speaking fluency through role-play activity. Therefore, it can be concluded that role play activities are able to develop pupils' speaking fluency. However, I only conducted my intervention with weak pupils for this research due to time constraints. For further research, it will be more effective if these role-play activities can be conducted with intermediate and advanced pupils for comparison purposes.

Key terms: speaking fluency, role-play.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This action research was carried out in order to improve speaking fluency among Year 3 Delima pupils.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

Last semester, I did my practicum Phase 3 at Sekolah Kebangsaan Alam Damai. I was teaching Year 3 Delima and 2 Berlian. After going through two phases of practicum, I have identified one important issue among young learners in learning English language. I realised that most of them are having difficulties to speak in English. The pupils are able to write in English but they are not able to speak and communicate in English because of certain factors such low self-confidence and afraid making grammar mistakes. Hence, the purpose of my action research was to enhance young learners' speaking skills in the aspect of fluency since it is very important for them to be able to communicate in English.

Speaking skill is given a lot of focus in the ESL classroom because speaking is a very critical skill that needs to be mastered in order for the pupils to be able to communicate in English. However, past researches showed that after 17 years of schooling, many pupils are still not able to speak fluently in English.

1.2 Related theory/literature

This section discusses the theories/literature used in this research.

Cognitivism Theory

Piaget (1954) stated that "cognitivists view language learning as an active process in which learners are constantly required to think and make sense of new information they receive." My intervention was related to this theory because students were required to integrate their prior knowledge about pets which was taught during English classroom with the new knowledge of role-play activities.

Interactional Function of Language

Interactional function refers to “the interaction which serves a primarily social function.” (Erasma, Gatot Sutapa and Urai Salam, 2013). The intervention was related with interactional function activities. This interactional function also known as spoken interaction refers to “the ability to ask and answer questions and handle exchanges with others” (Read, 2007). In the role-play activities, pupils exchanged greetings, engaged in chit-chats and established a comfortable zone of interaction with their partner.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The focus of my action research was on improving speaking fluency of 3 Delima weak pupils. Role-play activities were used as my intervention. Specifically, the focus was given to the development of pupils’ speaking fluency instead of accuracy since they are very weak pupils. Grammar accuracy was not emphasized too much in my intervention because one of the aims of my action plan was to develop pupils’ speaking fluency and motivate them to speak in English in their daily life despite of their grammatical errors. I believe when pupils are motivated to speak in English everyday regardless of their grammar mistakes, their speaking fluency will be improved as well.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

3.1 General Objective

Improving speaking fluency of Year 3 Delima pupils through role-play activity.

3.2 Specific Objective

- To identify whether the pupils have improved their speaking fluency through the use of role-play activities.
- To identify how do role-play activities help to improved pupils’ speaking fluency.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

Four pupils were selected as the participants of my action research. Two of them are girls and two of them are boys. They are nine years-old and their proficiency level is weak.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

My data gathering methods were pre- and post-intervention task, formative tests and questionnaire. Pre- and post- intervention task were used to compare pupils’ level of speaking fluency before and after my action research. Then, formative tests were used in order to evaluate each of the participants’ speaking fluency development throughout my intervention sessions with them. Lastly, questionnaire was used to collect data on participants’ perception towards the use of role-play activity to improve their speaking fluency.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

An observation, document analysis and survey were conducted in order to identify my target participants and to identify factors that contributed to their inability to speak in English.

Observation

Field notes were used to record the observation. Then, it was identified that the pupils rarely spoke in English although they were having English class. When the teacher asked those questions in English language, they replied their teacher in Malay language. They also communicated with their peers in Malay language during the class. Lastly, I realised that even their teacher used Malay language frequently to teach English and to communicate with them. This situation somehow discouraged the pupils to speak in English even though they were having English lesson.

Document analysis

Table 1 shows the result of English PKSR test of year 3 Delima pupils. However, the result did not portray pupils' speaking skill because this test was written test.

Table 1

Result of 3 Delima pupils in English PKSR test 2013

Marks	Total of pupils	Percentage (%)
100-80	11	26 %
79-60	25	60 %
59-40	6	14%
39-20	-	0%
19-0	-	0%

Survey

Table 2 below shows the frequency of the use of English language by year 3 Delima pupils during English lessons and in their daily life. From the results, it is shown that majority of the pupils in the class barely use English as their language medium of communication in classroom and in their daily life.

Table 2

Frequency of the use of English language

Issue	Total of Pupils		
	Often	Sometimes	Seldom
Frequency of the use of English language in Classroom	2	19	20
Frequency of the use of English language in daily life	2	17	22

5.3 Action

This action research was conducted in two cycles. For each cycle, I carried out two sessions of role-play activity with the participants. Session 1 is when I gave them complete script and they had to role-play the script. Session 2 is when I gave an incomplete script to the participants and they were required to complete the script using their own ideas. Then, they had to role-play the script they had completed. To add, participants were divided into pairs in order to role-play the script given to them. The topic given during the role-play activity was about pet. All sessions of role-play with them were also considered as formative tests for them.

Cycle 1

For Session 1 of this cycle, firstly I recalled the topic "Pet's World" that had been learnt by the participants in the classroom. After that, I divided them into pairs. I distributed a complete script of the role-play to each participant. Then, I read aloud the script and followed by the participants. Lastly, I asked each pair to role-play the script given.

Then, Session 2 was started with the distribution of an incomplete script to the participants. They were given 15 minutes to fill in the blanks of the script with their own words and ideas about pet. After that, I asked each pair to role-play the script. My friend helped me to video record the role-play activity in both sessions for analyzing purpose.

Cycle 2

Cycle 2 was conducted in order to increase the effectiveness of my intervention with them compared to the intervention carried out during Cycle 1. Similar to Cycle 1, the first session was started with the distribution of a complete script to each participant. Then, I demonstrated the role-play with my friend few times by using the same script in front of them. I demonstrated to them the correct volume, intonation, pace, phrasing and smoothness that should be used when communicating with other person. After showing few demonstrations to them, I asked each pair to role-play the script and my friend video recorded the role-play.

Session 2 of Cycle 2 started with the distribution of an incomplete script of the role-play to the participants. After that, I showed few picture cards of pet to the participants in order to trigger and motivate them. Similar to Session 1 of this cycle, I demonstrated the role-play with my friends few times by using my own ideas to complete the script. Then, the participants were given 15 minutes to discuss with their partner and complete the script using their own ideas. Finally, they had to role-play the script and my friend helped me again to video record the role-play done by each pair.

5.4 Findings

Below are the findings of my pre- and post-intervention task, formative tests as well as questionnaire

Pre-and post-Intervention Task

Comparison of Participants' Speaking Fluency Level Before and After Intervention

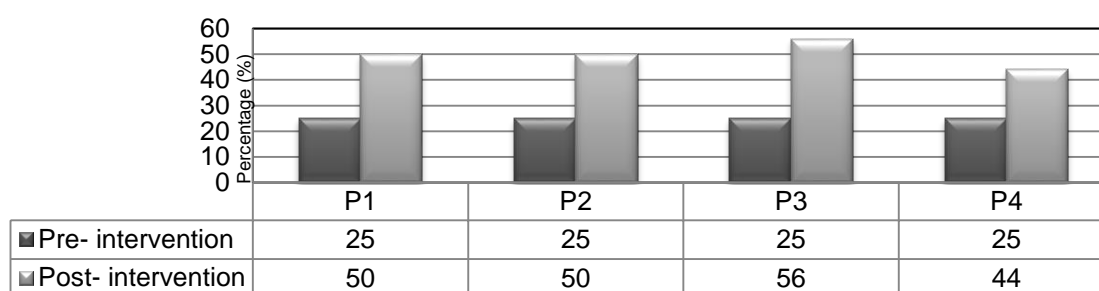


Figure 1: Comparison of Participants' Speaking Fluency Level Before and After Intervention.

Figure 1 above shows the comparison of participants' level of speaking fluency before and after the intervention task. Both Pupil 1 and Pupils 2 have increased their speaking fluency level from 25 % to 50 %. Then, Pupil 3 has improved her speaking fluency level from 25 % to 56% and Pupil 4 has improved his speaking fluency level from 25 % to 44 %. Hence, this increment shows that all participants have improved their speaking fluency through role-play activity carried out with them.

Formative Tests

Table 3
Result of Formative Tests

Pupil	Cycle 1		Cycle 2	
	S1	S2	S1	S2
P1	63 %	65%	84%	100%
P2	56%	50%	79%	100%
P3	48%	60%	73%	100%
P4	31%	44 %	78%	100%

Table 3 above shows the result of participants' formative test of role-play activity. From the result above, it shows that there was improvement of participants' speaking fluency in each session of role-play conducted with them.

Questionnaire

Questionnaire on participants' perception towards role-play activity had been given to the participants by the end of my intervention with them in Cycle 2. The result of the questionnaire indicates that all of my participants agreed that role-play activity can help to develop their speaking fluency. In addition, two participants have started to gain confidence to speak in English and the other two are still not really sure. However, I believe their confidence can be developed if more speaking activities are exposed to them.

5.5 Conclusion

Based on the findings of my research, it is concluded that role play activities can improve pupils' speaking fluency. These kinds of activity can also encourage pupils to develop their thinking and creativity especially when they express their own ideas during the activity. Lastly, I believe role-play activities can develop pupils' self-confidence to enhance their speaking fluency.

5.6 Reflection

There are a few strengths of this research. Firstly, I could see pupils' development in speaking fluency throughout my interaction with the participants. I could also see that they have started to realise the importance of speaking in English. Lastly, I noticed that the participants have developed their confidence to speak in English despite of their grammatical, pronunciation and vocabulary weaknesses.

However, there are also some weaknesses in my action research. Firstly, the reliability of my data could be questioned especially the data gathered from pre- and post- intervention task and formative tests as I am not really skilled and knowledgeable in evaluating pupils' speaking skill. Then, I also realised that I gave the same topic to the participants for all sessions of role-play activities. The topic given was not varied. Finally, I realised that the role-play activity that I conducted with them was not really related to interactional functional but more towards transactional function of speaking.

Erasma, Gatot Sutapa and Urai Salam (2013) defined transactional function as "the situation where the focus is on the message about what is said or achieved in order to make people understood clearly and accurately" such as group discussion.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are three suggestions that I would like to suggest for further research to enhance young learner's speaking skill. Firstly, a research on using role-play activities to improve pupils' speaking accuracy can be conducted and the data gathered can be used to compare the data gathered from my research since my focus of research was to improve pupils' speaking fluency. Besides that, the participants of my action research were weak pupils. Thus, another research can also be conducted to see the effectiveness of role-play activities on intermediate and advanced pupils. Lastly, I realised that more emphases should be given towards interactional function of language for future research so that these young learners can really learn how to communicate using English language in their daily lives.

REFERENCES

- Piaget, J. (1954). *The Construction of Reality in The Child*. New York : Basic Books.
- Erasma, Y. Gatot Sutapa, and UraiSalam .(2013). *Improving Students' Speaking Ability in ClassThrough The Role Play Technique*. Teachers' Training and Education Faculty Tanjungpura University

USING ANIMATED STORYTELLING TO IMPROVE THE READING COMPREHENSION OF YEAR 3P1 PUPILS

By:

MOHAMAD NAZMI BIN JAMIL
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to ascertain that the use of animated storytelling have improved pupils' reading comprehension. A total of 13 Year 3P1 pupils were involved in this research. The pupils' examination test scores in English examination showed that they have limited reading comprehension and required assistance in their reading comprehension. As such, the animated storytelling was designed to meet this purpose. A series of sessions and activities were conducted in the classroom which aimed to improve their reading comprehension. The data was collected from the pre-test and post-test, and also from questionnaires and structured interviews which was conducted after the sessions. The findings revealed that the pupils' reading comprehension have improved and have eventually helped them in understanding the second language after the intervention was conducted. Hence, this reinforces the fact that using animated storytelling helped in improving pupils' reading comprehension.

Key terms: Animated storytelling, reading comprehension

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The English Language has become one of the most important lingua franca and plays an important role in the Malaysian educational system. In the Malaysian primary school classroom, English has become one of the core subject and this compulsory language needs to be learnt and mastered by all pupils in schools. Pupils are expected to learn how to read, write and speak the language in which they need the understanding of the language itself to be able to perform all the skills regarding the language.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

The researcher did his practicum in Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Anggerik. He taught the class of Year 3P1 and noticed that his pupils can read the words in the storybooks, but did not know or remember the meaning of it. This affected their reading process. There were certain times during the practicum when the English lesson were being conducted, PowerPoint presentation was being used as one of the teaching aids for that lessons. The lesson was about going camping, where a number of vocabulary related to camping was being introduced to the pupils through PowerPoint presentation. It can be seen that the pupils were engaged with the lesson as they eager to know the next word that will pop up from the next slide because of the animations that have attracted their attention to learn about the topic.

1.2 Related theory/literature

In order to figure out the best way to overcome the problem, the researcher used Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism and will be supported by storytelling and multimedia approach.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The issue of concern in this study is, a minor group of pupils of Year 3P1 have not yet acquired the level of reading comprehension that supposed to be achieved at their level. The pupils were not competent in reading comprehension in the second language, as it will affect them in understanding the language. These pupils were always asking the teacher about the words that they found in the comprehension questions which they do not know the meaning of it. Thus, it stopped them from answering those questions. They also have short memory in terms or remembering any second language words that are not familiar to them even though those are the common words such as bite, run, see and etc. The moment the teacher explained to them about the meaning of those words, they

tend to forget and will repeat asking the same question again for the next two to three minutes. Consequently, this study focused on determining whether the use of animated storytelling can help to improve the pupils' reading comprehension.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

To improve the reading comprehension of Year 3P1 pupils through the use of animated storytelling.

To evaluate the effectiveness of using animated storytelling in improving Year 3P1 pupils' reading comprehension.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

13 pupils from Year 3P1 were involved in this research of which all of them are in the intermediate level of proficiency.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The following action were taken to conduct this research:

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

Three different types of instruments were used in this research. They are tests (pre-test and post-test), questionnaires and structured interview. All the instruments were used because it can measure the data of how much the pupils have improved from before and after the intervention correctly.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

In order to determine pupils' particular area of needs, first of all, the researcher has conducted an unstructured interview with the English teacher that taught in that class to know the pupils' performance as well as their exam scores obtained by those pupils in English Language Examination. Both data collected from both methods proved that the pupils are very weak in their reading comprehension.

5.3 Action

After conducting the preliminary investigation, the researcher conducted his first intervention by using animated storytelling in Cycle 1. The intervention is divided into two sessions; first session is listening to the animated storytelling while looking at the animations on the PowerPoint slides, and second session is individual reading in circle of an extract from the story. The researcher allocated around 10 minutes to do the first session, while the second session for 20 minutes.

For Cycle 2, the researcher has done adjustment to the both sessions in this cycle. The researcher used different types of story as the content for the animated storytelling, and made the animations bigger in size than before in the PowerPoint slides for the participants to see clearly, as well as using microphone for storytelling so that every participant can listen clearly. The second session also has been changed from individual to two persons reading an extract from the story in circle at the same time. The first and the second sessions is carried out in 10 minutes and 20 minutes respectively like Cycle 1.

5.4 Findings

This section discusses the findings in this research.

Pre-Test and Post-Test (Cycle 1)

Table 1
Data Analysis of Pre-Test and Post-Test (Cycle 1)

Participant	Pre-test (10/10)	Post-test (10/10)	Differences	Status
1	2	6	+4	Improved
2	3	7	+4	Improved
3	1	5	+4	Improved
4	3	6	+3	Improved
5	3	8	+5	Improved
6	2	6	+4	Improved
7	2	5	+3	Improved
8	1	5	+4	Improved
9	3	6	+3	Improved
10	1	4	+3	Improved
11	1	4	+3	Improved
12	1	4	+3	Improved
13	3	7	+4	Improved

Table 1 above shows that there are five participants who got only 1 mark over 10, while three participants scored 2 marks over 10 and the five remaining participants scored 3 marks over 10 during pre-test. Overall, all the participants scored the pre-test less than 50%. This shows that their level of reading comprehension were low despite reading only text without any clues and supports such as images. After the two-sessions of the intervention has been carried out, the researcher found that the number of marks scored by the participants have showed positive performance. It can be seen that in the Table 2, the marks scored in the post-test by the majority of the participants has reached 50% and higher. There are one participant scored 8 marks over 10, two participants scored 7 marks over 10, four participants scored 6 marks over 10, three participants scored 5 marks over 10, and the remaining three participants scored 4 marks over 10.

Table 2
Data Analysis of Pre-Test and Post-Test (Cycle 2)

Participant	Pre-test (10/10)	Post-test (10/10)	Differences	Status
1	3	6	+3	Improved
2	1	3	+2	Improved
3	1	3	+2	Improved
4	2	4	+2	Improved
5	1	4	+3	Improved
6	3	5	+2	Improved
7	3	6	+3	Improved
8	4	8	+4	Improved
9	0	2	+2	Improved
10	2	6	+4	Improved
11	2	5	+3	Improved
12	2	5	+3	Improved
13	2	4	+2	Improved

It is found that one participant scored 4 marks over 10, two participants scored 3 marks over 10, five participants which is the majority scored 2 marks over 10, two participants scored only 1 mark over 10 and 1 remaining participant scored nil during pre-test. This kind of result has become almost expected by the researcher as judging from the previous cycle, the marks is expected to be small and less than 50% because the participants have been given the same type of reading text and reading comprehension questions during the test, only the difference is the content of the text which is new to the participants and like before, there was no images that can be found in the text. After the

intervention was carried out, as presented in the Table 4, it is found that during post-test, all of the participants performed very well in the marks that shows the increasing of the number differences. It can be seen that, one participant scored 8 marks over 10, while three participants scored 6 marks over 10 and also the other 3 scored 5 marks over 10, the last one participant scored 2 marks over 10.

Questionnaires

Table 3
Data Analysis of Questionnaires

Questions	Answers (Number of participants)		
	Yes	No	Not Sure
1. Do you find the animations interesting?	13	0	0
2. Can you listen to the storytelling clearly?	11	0	2
3. Can you understand the story better when you looked at the animated storytelling?	13	0	0
4. Can you understand what is the animations trying to tell?	13	0	0
5. Can you answer the comprehension questions better than before?	11	0	2
6. Do you find it easier to listen to the storytelling while looking at the animations?	9	2	2
7. Do you find any problem while listening and looking at the animations storytelling?	3	9	1
8. Can you identify the characters in the story?	13	0	0
9. Can you retell the beginning of the story?	11	0	2
10. Can you retell the ending of the story?	12	0	1

As can be seen from Table 3, all of the participants found the animations were interesting. While two of the participants were not sure that they can listen to the storytelling clearly, the other 11 participants agreed that they can listen to the storytelling clearly. All of the participants found that they can understand the story better when they looked at the animated storytelling, they also found that they can see clearly what the animations was trying to show. Besides, 11 participants agreed that they can answer the comprehension questions better than the previous time before intervention being carried out, while the other remaining two participants claimed that they were not sure. Next, there are nine participants found that it is easier to listen to the storytelling while looking at the animations, while two of them did not agree and the other remaining two participants were unsure of that. Besides that, nine participants denied that they find any problem while listening and looking to the animated storytelling, as three of the participants did not agree and one remaining participant was unsure. All of them agreed that they can identify the characters in the story.

Structured Interview

From the interview, the researcher found that the participants gave surprisingly positive responses to the questions being posted to them regarding the story that they have gone through during the intervention. Almost majority of them can orally explained about the aspects of the story they have been asked on. The researcher found that the participants almost gave quite the same answers between them, and realized that it was linked to the words or sentences in the story. So, the researcher agreed that the participants have understand about the story.

5.5 Conclusion

The intervention aimed to improve pupils' reading comprehension. Referring to the findings gathered and the analysis, the strategy used was effective and the objective of the study was achieved. The findings shows that the pupils have improved in their reading comprehension based on the data analysed, which shows the positive results after the intervention carried out. From the findings, it have answered both Research Question 1 and Research Question 2.

5.6 Reflection

From the result gathered in this research, using animated storytelling appears to have been effective in helping pupils in improving their reading comprehension. However, there are a few limitations that the researcher noticed throughout the process of conducting this research. The researcher noticed that pupils needed more time to read the text confidently and fluently.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The researcher has successfully proved that the use of animated storytelling helped pupils in improving reading comprehension. As such, the researcher hopes that the study can use other method of collecting data such as field notes or pupils' journal to get more consistent and accurate data to be analysed. The study can use different stories but with the same level of what the pupils supposed to be achieved.

REFERENCES

- (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.socialanxietysupport.com/forum/f18/the-importance-of-reading-and-the-purpose-of-an-education-196651/>
- Duke, N. K. (2003). 10 Research-Tested Ways to Build Children's Vocabulary.
- Essential Strategies for Teaching Vocabulary. (n.d.). A Brief Overview of Vocabulary Development.
- Kusumayati, L. D. (2010). Improving Students' Vocabulary Mastery Using Contextual Teaching and Learning.
- Plomaritou, V. (n.d.). Why are Stories Important for Children? Retrieved 2009, from <http://www.writersbureau.com/writing/Why-are-stories-important-for-children.htm>
- Schmitt, N. (2012). A reassessment of frequency and vocabulary size in L2 vocabulary. Plenary Speech.
- Seyit, I. (2010). The Effect of Electronic Storybooks on Struggling Fourthgraders*. Turkish Journal.
- Soleimani, H. (2013). The Effect of Storytelling on Children's Learning English Vocabulary: A Case in Iran.
- The Importance of reading. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://bigbookcase.wordpress.com/2011/08/30/the-importance-of-reading/>

USING BRAINSTORMING WITH COMPOSITE PICTURE IN DEVELOPING VOCABULARY TO WRITE SIMPLE SENTENCES AMONG YEAR 5 AMANAH PUPILS

By:

MOHAMAD SHAHRIL BIN ALIM
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to ascertain that the use of brainstorming with composite pictures have developed pupils' vocabulary and thus helping them to write simple sentences. A total of 5 pupils of Year 5 Amanah are involved in this research. The pupils' vocabulary test scores in diagnostic test in the preliminary investigation show that they have limited vocabulary that hindered them to perform in writing. The focus of this research is to help the pupils in developing vocabulary to write simple sentences. As such, the use of brainstorming with composite picture is designed to meet this purpose. A few sessions are conducted in the classroom which aims to develop vocabulary which eventually will enhance their writing performance. The data is collected from the pre-test and post – test, interview and reflective participants' journal before and after the intervention in both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. The findings from each data collection methods used in both Cycle1 and Cycle 2 revealed that pupils' vocabulary have indeed developed and eventually help them in writing simple sentences after the intervention. Hence, this reinforces the fact that using brainstorming with composite picture helped pupils in developing vocabulary to write simple sentences.

Key terms: Brainstorming, vocabulary, composite picture

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The role of vocabulary in language learning is very important. When language learners do not acquire enough words, do not know the words and do not understand the meaning of the words, they are likely to have difficulty in expressing themselves in writing. Baba (2009) stated that second language learners who have limited vocabulary will hinder their writing quality. The quality of a piece of writing can be evaluated through the number of the lexical items and less lexical errors in terms of spelling and meaning. In short, the language learner should have the knowledge of the words: the forms and the meaning of words to enable them in producing a quality piece of writing.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

The researcher did his practicum in Sekolah Kebangsaan Tun Hussein Onn. He taught the class of Year 5 Amanah. Initially, the researcher conducted a writing lesson with his pupils on the topic of 'Saving Our Environment'. The researcher noticed that his pupils managed to write all the sentences correctly with minor grammatical errors. However, he realized that half of his pupils kept using the same vocabulary in their writing. The researcher asked the reasons for this situation regarding their writing and they responded that they did know the meaning of the words but they did not know other words that have the same meaning to it. They also claimed that they were afraid of making mistakes by writing words that they felt unsure of.

1.2 Related theory/ literature

In order to figure out the best way to overcome the problem of this study, the researcher used Vygotsky's Theory of social constructivism and will be supported by writing process approach.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The issue of concern in this research is, a minor group of pupils of Year 5 Amanah have limited vocabulary of the English Language. It has affected their performance in writing. They could not express their ideas in their writing. The researcher has a strong instinct saying that the problem faced by pupils is, the pupils have limited vocabulary of the English Language. The problem that the pupils faced had hindered them to explore the language to the optimal in the language learning. If the

pupils know English words, know the meaning of the words and being able to use correctly, probably the pupils would be able to perform well in language learning.

As a result, this study focused on determining if using brainstorming with composite picture could help the pupils in developing vocabulary to write simple sentences.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

To develop Year 5 Amanah pupils' vocabulary in writing simple sentences through the use of brainstorming with composite picture.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

Five pupils from Year 5 Amanah of Sekolah Kebangsaan Tun Hussein Onn were involved in this research. There were two boys and three girls and all of them are Malays.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The following actions were taken to conduct this research:

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

Three different kinds of instruments were used in this research: tests (pre- test and pos-test), interview and reflective participants' journal to help the researcher to collect the data. All the instruments were used due to its purpose and its effectiveness so that the intended data could be collected.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

To determine pupils' particular areas of needs, the researcher conducted diagnostic test and also interview session with the English teacher. Both data collected from both methods proved that the pupils really have limited vocabulary.

5.3 Action

After conducting the preliminary investigation, the researcher conducted his first intervention which is using brainstorming with composite picture in Cycle 1. The researcher allocated around 10 minutes to do brainstorming activity and 20 minutes to teach them how to write simple sentences. 20 minutes allocated for writing activity.

While for Cycle 2, the researcher did a minor adjustment to the original intervention in Cycle 1. The researcher used 3 composite pictures and a wh-words chart to support brainstorming activity. The brainstorming was divided into 2 parts: 10 minutes allocated for individual brainstorming and 15 minutes for group brainstorming. 10 minutes allocated to teaching them how to write the sentences by using the vocabulary developed during brainstorming activity and 15 minutes allocated for the writing activity.

5.4 Findings

This section discusses the findings of this study.

Pre- test and Post-test (Cycle 1)

Table 1
Comparison of Word Listed in Pre- Test and Post-Test

No	Participants	Pre- test	Post – test	Difference in pre- test and post- test scores.
1	S1	2	5	+3
2	S2	5	5	0
3	S3	4	6	+2
4	S4	4	6	+2
5	S5	5	5	0
TOTAL		20	27	+7

Table 1 above showed the number of words listed by the participants in both the pre-test and post-test. Overall, 20 words were listed by the participants in the pre-test. This number went up to 27 in the post-test. The increment of word listed by the participants showed a moderate improvement. The highest improvement showed by S1 with additional of three words listed for both pre –test and post -test. Second highest showed by two participants, S3 and S4 with additional of two words listed in both pre- test and post- test. However, two participants, S2 and S5 did not show progression in both pre and post-test.

Table 2
Comparison of Sentence Constructed in Pre-Test and Post -Test

No	Participants	Pre- test	Post – test	Difference in pre- test and post- test scores.
1	S1	2	6	+4
2	S2	5	5	0
3	S3	4	5	+1
4	S4	3	6	+3
5	S5	3	5	+2
TOTAL		17	27	+10

Table 2 above showed the number of sentences constructed by the participants in both the pre-test and post- test after the invention. Overall, 17 sentences were constructed in the pre-test and this number went up to 27 in the post-test. The increment number of sentence constructed by the participants between pre-test and post- test is 10. The highest improvement showed by S1 with the additional of four sentences in post- test. Second highest improvement showed by S4 with three sentences constructed followed by two participants, S5 and S3 with the additional of two sentences

and one sentence respectively. However, one participant, S2 showed no increment in sentence construction for the post-test.

Pre-test and post-test (Cycle 2)

Table 3
Comparison of Word Listed in the Pre- Test and Post-Test

No	Participants	Pre- test	Post – test	Difference in pre- test and post- test scores.
1	S1	9	16	+7
2	S2	8	19	+11
3	S3	9	12	+3
4	S4	7	17	+10
5	S5	7	14	+7
TOTAL		40	78	+38

Table 3 above showed the number of word listed by the participants in both the pre-test and post-test after the implementation of the intervention. Overall, 40 words were listed by the all participants in the pre-test. This number went up to 78 in the post-test. The increment of word listed by the participants showed an excellent improvement. The highest improvement showed by S2 with additional of 11 words listed in post-test. Second highest improvement showed by S4 with the additional of 10 words listed followed by S1 and S5 with the additional of seven words listed in post-test. The lowest improvement showed by S3 with additional of three words listed in the post -test.

Table 4
Comparison of Sentence Constructed in the Pre-Test and Pos-t Test

No	Participants	Pre- test	Post – test	Difference in pre- test and post- test scores.
1	S1	7	10	+3
2	S2	4	10	+6
3	S3	4	9	+5
4	S4	5	11	+6
5	S5	5	7	+2
TOTAL		24	47	+23

Table 4 above showed the number of sentence constructed made by the participants in both the pre-test and post -test after the invention. Overall, 24 sentences were constructed in the pre-test and this number went up to 47 in the post-test. The increment number of sentence created by the participations between pre and post -test is 23. The highest improvement was shown by S2 and S4 with the additional of six sentences in post- test. Second highest improvement was shown by S3 with five sentences created followed by two participants, S1 and S5 with the additional of three sentences and two sentences respectively.

Interview

Based on the responses and comments given by all the participants in the interview session, they agreed that brainstorming activity with pictures really helped them in developing their vocabulary. The participants claimed that they learned more new words and the picture did actually help them in

providing more new words. Besides that, all the participants also agreed that after the interventions, they could write confidently. They said that they could write more sentences based on the words they have. In addition, the sentence constructions also have variety of new words.

Reflective Participants' Journal

Based on the responses and comments given by all the participants in their reflection journal, they agreed that brainstorming activity with pictures really helped them in developing the vocabulary. They claimed that they learned more new words and the picture provided them more words. Other than that, they also believed that their confident level increased in writing. Most of them felt confident to write because they now have the words. Besides that, all the participants agreed that after the interventions, their writing performance improved. They said that they could write more sentences based on the words they have acquired.

5.5 Conclusion

The intervention aimed to develop vocabulary in writing simple sentences. Referring to the findings gathered and the analysis, the strategy used was highly effective and the objective of the study was achieved. The findings have answered both Research Question 1 and Research Question 2.

5.6 Reflection

From the result gathered in this research, using brainstorming with composite picture appears to have been effective in helping pupils in developing vocabulary to write simple sentences. However, there are a few limitations that the researcher noticed throughout the process of conducting this research. The researcher noticed that pupils need more time for brainstorming activity. 15 minutes were allocated for brainstorming activity to take place was not enough for the participants to develop the vocabulary. They need time to think. The other limitation that the researcher noticed while carried out the intervention is, the participants managed to list down words, however there was spelling error detected.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The researcher has successfully proved that the use of brainstorming with composite picture did helped pupils in developing vocabulary to write simple sentences. According to Nesamalar Chitravelu (2005), there are few classroom practices that could be beneficial for the vocabulary development: using visual techniques, verbal techniques, dictionaries and translation strategy. As such, it would be interesting to further research by replacing the composite picture into other form of materials that are rich in vocabulary such as songs, poems or nursery rhyme. Instead of providing with vocabulary, it also helps to attract pupils' attention and exposes them with different learning materials in language learning. Other than that, the researcher also can further research on using brainstorming with dictionary to minimize spelling error.

REFERENCES

- Baba, K. (2009). Aspects of lexical proficiency in writing summaries in a foreign language. *Second Language Writing*, 18, 191-208.
- Nesamalar Chitravelu (2005). *Techniques and activities for teaching vocabulary*. ELT Methodology: Principles and practice. Oxford Fajar Sdn. Bhd.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

USING GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION AMONG YEAR 4 BESTARI PUPILS

By:

NOR ADILA FADLIN BINTI YA'ACOB
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

This study aims to improve reading comprehension among Year 4 Bestari pupils by using graphic organizers. Eight pupils from 4 Bestari were chosen as the participants based on the preliminary investigations carried out. Instruments like pre-test, post-test, formative test, observation checklist and teacher's log were used to collect data in this study. The pupils were introduced to the use of the graphic organizers in reading lessons. The study adopted the action research design and the intervention was carried out for 2 cycles. Each cycle consists of three sessions. For each session, there are three different focused skills. These comprehension skills include identifying main ideas, summarizing and inferring causes and effects. The focus of this research is to investigate if graphic organizers can help to improve reading comprehension skills of Year 4 Bestari pupils. The results obtained by the pupils in the post-test in both cycles showed significant improvement of pupils' ability in answering comprehension questions. There are three pupils who were able to increase above 29.1% in Cycle 1 and four pupils for Cycle 2. Some issues emerged in the teacher's log that revealed how graphic organizers had assisted pupils in conceptualizing and remembering factual information, in organising and making relationships among ideas, deriving meaning from text and focusing on key points. The issues mentioned explain how graphic organizers have helped the pupils to improve their reading comprehension. Based on the results in my findings, it clearly showed that graphic organizers are effective tools to help improve reading comprehension.

Key terms: graphic organizers, reading comprehension

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This section will discuss the reflection on teaching experience and the related theories which form the basis for the intervention strategy designed.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

During my teaching practice attachment to a school in Kuala Lumpur for three months, I had identified some learning problems in English Language among pupils in the class I was teaching. There are 36 pupils in this class. I managed to know their proficiency level based on a few reading lessons. When asked to read a passage or story aloud, there were some pupils who prefer to keep quiet. I expected that most of them able to comprehend the story while reading. However, when I asked them questions which required answers that were explicitly stated in the text, some of them were not able to answer my questions correctly though I could see that they tried their best. The situation exhibited that some pupils just merely reading the stories without understanding the meaning. For post-stage in reading lesson, the pupils were not able to sequence sentences in correct order. The purpose of this activity is to see their understanding after reading a text. These observed situation in the reading classroom helped me to identify the problems of the pupils in English language, specifically in reading comprehension. Since comprehension in reading is very important, every pupil should master that skill.

1.2 Related theory/literature

Reading comprehension is related to our cognitive development. Cognitive development is much more than the addition of new facts and ideas to an existing store of information (Woolfolk, 2010). Based on Piaget Theory of Cognitive Development, students construct their own knowledge by comparing new ideas with their existing knowledge base. Graphic organizers are tools that help learners to visually represent the interconnections between their previous knowledge and new concepts.

When reading a text, we interact with the text and interpret it based on our knowledge and experience. By using graphic organizer, the pupils would learn how to assimilate information and

adjust thinking to fit with the information. Comprehension occurs in the transaction between the reader and the text (Kucer, 2001; Rosenblatt, 1978). The Schema theory is one of the theories that support such claim of comprehension. Basically, schema theory states that all knowledge is organized into units. The information is stored within these units of knowledge or schemata. According to this theory, schemata represent knowledge about concepts, for instances situations, events, sequences of events, actions, and sequences of actions. Schema is the prior knowledge gained through experiences stored in one's mind. According to Winn and Snider (1996), one's existing schema influence how information is processed or interpreted. If prior knowledge is activated, the schema will be able to provide a framework to which new information can be attached and learning and comprehension will be improved. As such, graphic organizers with their visual representation, make it easier to link new information to existing knowledge and help students build the schema they need to understand new concepts (Guastello, Beasley, and Sinatra, 2000).

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

My study focuses on how to develop pupil's reading comprehension through the use of graphic organizers for understanding reading texts. This focus is decided upon because based on the Curriculum Standard Document (2009), the pupils should be able to read independently for information and enjoyment by the end of 6-year primary schooling. Therefore, I have to help Year 4 pupils who still have problems in reading comprehension to enable the pupils to comprehend a text more effectively and efficiently so that they become avid and independent readers by the end of 6-year primary schooling.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This section will present both the general and specific objectives of the study.

3.1 General Objectives

The general objective of this research is to improve reading comprehension skills of Year 4 Bestari pupils using graphic organizer.

3.2 Specific Objectives

- To investigate if graphic organizers can help to improve reading comprehension skills of Year 4 Bestari pupils.
- To ascertain how graphic organizers are able to help in improving Year 4 Bestari pupils' reading comprehension skills.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

This study focused on eight pupils from 4 Bestari whom I had identified through diagnostic tests in the preliminary investigation. They are all Malays, two girls and six boys. They were categorized as intermediate achievers based on their performance in the 2013 end of year examination and their low scores in the diagnostic tests. The selection of these eight pupils was also based on their English Language teacher's recommendation.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

This section will explain the various data gathering methods used and its findings. In addition, it will also describe how the study was conducted based on the chosen action research model.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

There are three types of instruments used in this research. They are tests, observation checklist and teacher's log. The tests include diagnostic test, pre-test, post-test and formative test. Each test has different purposes in this research. Diagnostic test was used in preliminary investigation to identify the selected pupils. Post-test results will be compared to pre-test results to see the

improvement of the pupils. The purpose of formative test is to identify the pupils' understanding for each skills tested. Observation checklist was used to observe pupils' observable behaviour while conducting the intervention using graphic organizers. Some aspects that were observed like the physical and verbal response given, confidence and attention given. Teacher's log also was used to recall and record the significant behaviour which happen among the pupils that could be observed by the teacher while conducting the intervention. All these instruments were chosen because they are suitable to record the pupils' performance before, during and after the intervention.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

The problem identified based on some preliminary investigations carried out for examples like diagnostic test and interview. These included diagnostic tests and interview with the previous English language teacher. Based on the overall data collected, the pupils showed understanding in answering low level questions. When the level of questions moved to the higher orders, they were not able to complete the task. This further confirmed the needs to address the identified problem.

5.3 Action

The model adopted for this research is the Stephen Kemmis Spiral Model of Action Research. For this research, two cycles were conducted. The stages are planning, action, observing and reflecting. For planning stages, I administered the preliminary investigations like the diagnostic tests and interview English teachers. In action stage, the pupils were given pre-test which consists of three reading texts with five or six comprehension questions for each text. During intervention, there were three sessions. Each session focused on different skills like identifying main ideas, summarizing and inferring cause and effects. For post-test, the format of questions and difficulty level was quite similar with pre-test. Formative test was given after every session during the intervention. Generally, the questions was designed based on the first three level in Barrett Taxonomy which are literal comprehension, reorganization and inferal comprehension. In observation stage, I have to analyse the data to see the results. Each of the data could be analysed whether quantitatively or qualitatively. In reflection stage, I have to reflect the results gathered. Thus, if the pupils did not perform as expected, the factors should be identified and re-planned for the next cycle.

5.4 Findings

This section will present the data which had been collected during the intervention. The data was based on the pre-test and post-test, formative test, observation checklist and teacher's log.

Pre-test and Post-Test Results

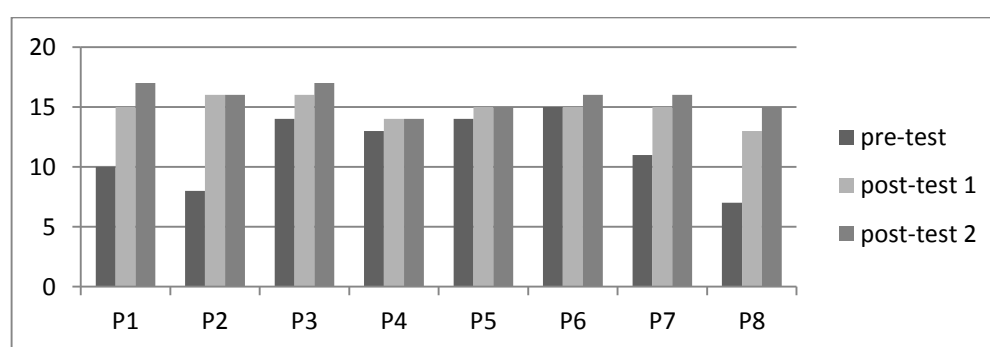


Figure 1: Comparison of pre-test and post-test results

The results show the progress of pupils in post-test 1 and post-test 2. The result for post-test was taken after three sessions of intervention in cycle 1. Based on the result for post-test 1, 3 pupils increased more than 5 marks and they are P1, P2 and P8. After the intervention in cycle 2, there are 4 pupils who increased in marks between 5 and above. There are P1, P2, P7 and P8. This shows that the intervention using the graphic organizers works for the pupils.

Formative assessment

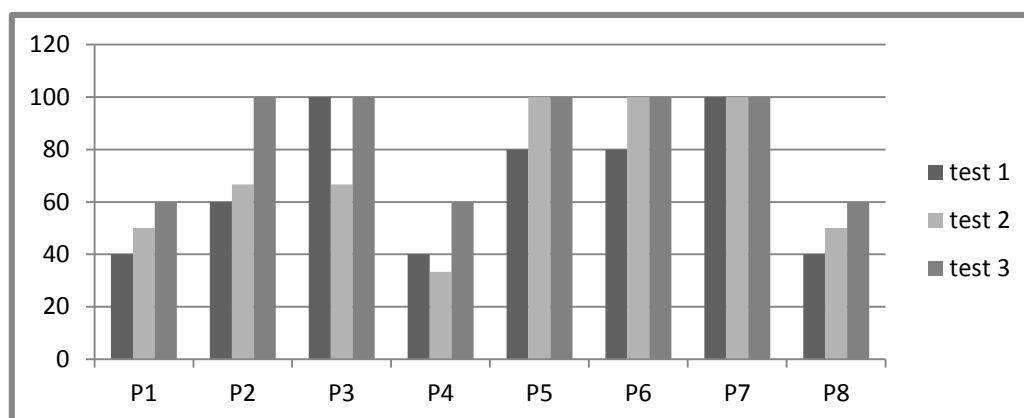


Figure 2: Formative assessment in cycle 1

The result of formative assessment was taken after each session during intervention. Each test focused on different skills like identifying main ideas, summarizing and inferring main ideas. Most of the pupils show improvement from one to other skills.

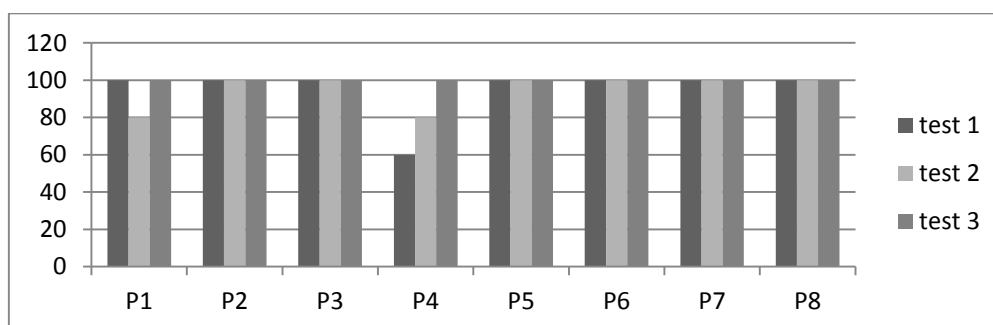


Figure 3: Formative assessment in cycle 2

This is the formative assessment in Cycle 2 after some changes were made in the sequence of skills introduced. The results indicated that majority of the pupils got 100% except for two pupils which are P1 and P4. However, the two pupils also have shown improvement from intervention in Cycle 1.

Observation Checklist

During the observation, the observer could see some behaviors which could tell their interests while using the graphic organizers. For example, some pupils showed physical respond by nodding their head when they have understood. Besides that, the pupils also show interest by giving attention with minimum disruptions and they were excited to complete the graphic organizer.

Teacher's Log

There are some issues that were identified based on the teacher's log. The first one is graphic organizers assisted pupils in conceptualizing and remembering factual information. This can be seen when one pupil able to retell again the summary of the story without referring back to the text. Second issue is the pupils able to organize and make relationships between ideas. During inferring causes and effects, the pupils able to conclude the effect of the certain events in the story based on their understanding. The third issue is the pupils learned how to derive meaning from text and how to focus on key points. The evidence is when the pupils could differentiate the important information from what might be interesting but not essential.

5.5 Conclusion

Based on the results obtained, it shows that the strategy used which is graphic organizer worked well for most of the pupils when all of them showed excellent performance during the intervention and produce better result in post-test. The pupils find out that the graphic organizer is the best way to improve their understanding. Pupils also become motivated hence better integrate new information and complete complex tasks (Ellis, 2004). This technique can motivate pupils to involve actively in the learning process.

From this research also, I also learnt that it is very important to identify the problems of the pupils and find the correct intervention from the beginning. If I was not able to identify the problems and did not manage to use the right intervention, I would not able to help the pupils to improve in their learning.

5.6 Reflection

While conducting this research, there are some limitations that I have to face. I have to take considerations about some important things which could affect the validity and reliability of the results obtained. During my first intervention in Cycle 1, I conducted the intervention as a whole class. So, I put the targeted pupils in one side of the classroom. However, I still feel that it was difficult for me to handle too many pupils in the class. For the next lesson, I asked the permission from the English teacher to take out the selected pupils to conduct the intervention in other place and I found out that it was better and comfortable for them to learn.

One of my data collection methods is observation checklist. One observer also might not able to observe all the eight pupils at the same time especially when they were asking and answering questions together. Based on this experience, I think that video recording should be used because it can be replayed for many times and I can analyse the data based on the video recording. The checklist also can be used when analyzing the video recording.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

If I were to carry out this action research study again, I will do research on using graphic organizers for writing skills. This research would be very helpful for pupils especially when they want to brainstorming ideas before writing an essay. When the pupils already familiar and get used to the graphic organizer, they will have a good writing skills because they know how to elaborate more on their writing. Apart from that, I also prefer to do research on how Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) can activate pupils' creative and critical thinking in learning. That skill is very important as it train the pupils to think beyond from the given text. This also can stimulate students' creativity in learning when they have to think for something different and novel. When students share their new ideas in the class, other students can trigger their mind to also think differently.

REFERENCES

- Ellis, E. (2004). Q&A: What's the big deal with graphic organizers? Retrieved August 31, 2014 from [http://www.graphicorganizers.com/ArticleAbout/Q&A%20 Graphic%20Organizers.pdf](http://www.graphicorganizers.com/ArticleAbout/Q&A%20Graphic%20Organizers.pdf).
- Guastello, E. F., Beasley, T. M. & Sinatra, R. C. (2000). *Concept mapping effects on science content comprehension of low-achieving inner-city seventh graders. Remedial and Special Education*, 21(2), 356-365. Retrieved August 30, 2014, from Academic Search Premier database.
- Kucer, S.B. (2001). *Dimensions of literacy: A conceptual base of teaching reading and writing in school settings*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Winn, W., & Snyder, D. (1996). Cognitive perspectives in psychology. In D. H. Jonassen (Ed.), *Handbook of research for educational communications and technology* (pp.115-122). New York: Remedial and Special Education, 20(6), 356-364.
- Woofolk, A. (2010). *Educational Psychology*. New Jersey: Pearson.

THE USE OF SUBSTITUTION TABLE TO REDUCE SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT ERROR IN WRITING AMONG LOW PROFICIENCY YEAR 5 STUDENTS

By:

NORIZARINA BINTI MOHD KHALID
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this action research was to determine if substitution table was effective in reducing the Subject Verb Agreement (SVA) error in writing among low proficiency Year 5 students. For the purpose of this study, a preliminary investigation was done among thirty-seven students from a primary school in Seri Kembangan. The results revealed that the most apparent linguistic inaccuracy pertained to the wrong use of SVA rules. Subsequently, intervention in the form of substitution table was implemented to address the identified problem. The intervention was implemented during a writing lesson in the pre-writing stage. The students sat for pre and post-test before and after they have undergone the intervention. Results of the study showed that there was a reduction in the occurrence of SVA errors after the treatment. The findings were supported by teacher's journal and students' interview responses. The substitution table was effective in bringing reduction of the SVA errors due to the meaningful drilling session, the use of colour coding, students' active involvements and also students' collaboration in learning.

Key terms: Substitution table, subject verb agreement

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Writing involves constructing sentences correctly. Therefore, in English for students to effectively communicate their ideas well in writing, they need to construct meaningful sentences that have correct grammar. Dorn (2000) states that the sentences created by words and phrases are the essential blocks of meaning that allow us to communicate thoughts. Tan (2005) proposed that despite its difficulty for learners, SVA is one of the basic grammatical knowledge every Malaysian learner must acquire in order to communicate fluently and effectively in English.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

Throughout her experience in teaching a Year 5 class, the researcher noticed that majority of students struggled very hard to construct sentences with the correct application of SVA rules. Most of them copied their friends' work and English textbook without knowing what they were writing as long as they managed to write something. As a result, they felt that they had produced good essays without realising there were many grammatical errors. Furthermore, after collecting students' work, the researcher found that they have made several SVA errors in their writing. Most of them failed to differentiate the use of singular and plural verbs. For instance, many students wrote "*My father like to eat fried rice.*" while the correct form was "*My father likes to eat fried rice.*". This indicated that students were unable to apply correct SVA rules because the knowledge in differentiating nouns and verbs was low which resulted in confusion throughout the writing process. From the observations made too, the researcher noticed that students preferred asking questions from their teacher in Malay. Then, they tended to direct translate what they usually wrote in Malay when writing English sentences. As a result, interference from students' first language led to confusion in the writing process. The reason was that, Malay grammar did not have SVA rules that required inflections based on the number of the subject. This was supported by Nik Safiah Karim (2004) when she mentioned that number of status of the subject did not affect the verb structures in the predicate in Malay language.

1.2 Related theory/literature

There were several related theories related to this action research which were behaviourism learning theory, direct method and also noticing hypothesis. Behaviourism theory of learning related to the drilling sessions of developing students' understanding of SVA rules. Teacher demonstrated the process of constructing sentences with the correct application of SVA for several times and the

students were also required to construct the sentences, identify mistakes and also substitute the subjects and the verbs by using their previous knowledge.

Direct method in meanwhile played its role when there were no Malay words used throughout the intervention session. Direct method helped students to overcome the problem of interference from their first language due to the fact that the use of the target language as a means of instruction and communication in the classroom contributed greatly to forming the habit of thinking in the target language, which was necessary in efficient real communication.

The last related theory which involved in this action research was noticing hypothesis in second language acquisition. According to Schmidt (1990), "the noticing hypothesis stated that what learners noticed in input was what became intake for learning." Not only that, Schmidt (1990) also claimed that instruction and frequency factors influenced noticing in the input. Instruction provided structured, differentiated input that assisted noticing by focusing attention on and enhancing awareness of language features (Skehan, 1998). Hence, the use of colour coding helped students to "notice" the difference between singular and plural verbs.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The Year 5 students undergo English lessons for seven periods in a week. Despite the fact that they have been learning English since their low primary level, it was found out that they still could not construct sentences with the correct application of SVA rules. Such inadequacy posed concern for the researcher as the teacher as the students were expected to face even greater demand when they continue their studies in the next level such as secondary and tertiary level of education.

Based on the premise of helping students develop their writing accuracy, this action research focussed on reducing SVA errors in students' writing. The basic rule of sentence agreement is simple in that a subject must agree with its verb in number. Number means singular or plural. It thus follows that a singular subject must have a singular verb; a plural subject must have a plural verb. If subjects do not agree with verbs, "your sentences will sound awkward and may confuse your listeners and readers (p. 61 Rozakis, 2003)". The researcher is thus interested to address subject-verb agreement problem among the students by implementing substitution table in the learning process.

3.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This section outlines the general and specific objectives of this action research.

3.1 General Objective

The objective of this action research was to develop 5 Gemilang students' skill in writing sentences with the correct application of SVA rules by using substitution table.

3.2 Specific Objectives

This study aims to ascertain:

- i. the use of substitution table as an effective tool to reduce Year 5 low proficiency students' subject verb agreement error in their writing.
- ii. how substitution table helped to reduce Year 5 low proficiency students' subject verb agreement error in their writing
- iii. students' perspectives on the use of substitution table to reduce their subject verb agreement error in writing.

4.0 TARGET GROUP

A total of 21 boys and 16 girls make up the class of Year 5 Gemilang in the school. All 37 students were involved in this action research.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The following actions were taken to conduct the action research:

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

Three data collection methods were used to gather information for every research question. The methods were pre-test and post-test, teacher's journal and also group interview. The pre and post test were administered to gather information on students' performance before and after they undergone the intervention. The number of SVA reduction was recorded and compared from both pre and post test to identify the effectiveness of substitution table to help students reduced SVA errors. Next, teacher's journal was used when teacher's reflections after the implementation of intervention were recorded. This was done in collecting data on how substitution table helped to reduce SVA errors among students. Lastly, group interview was conducted to discover students' perspectives on the use of substitution table in reducing SVA errors. All the data gathered would then triangulated to keep the validity of the results gained.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

Preliminary investigation was conducted through observations, interview with previous English teacher and also analysis of students' previous worksheets.

Observations

In the first week of teaching practicum, the researcher entered several writing classes and observed students' behaviours and attitudes throughout the intervention. Based on the observations done, the researcher identified factors that contributed to students committing SVA errors in their writing. The factors were failure to identify the subjects, interference from mother tongue language and also more focus on the end product rather than the writing process.

Interview

The interview session with the previous English teacher revealed that students faced problem in writing correct sentences. The teacher also expressed her worry in the problem happening among her students. The fact that the students are going to sit for UPSR next year adds into her worry.

Analysis on Students' Previous Worksheets

Students' previous worksheets were analysed and the researcher found that students have problems in writing with correct application of SVA rules. Students failed to differentiate the number of subjects and therefore committed errors in choosing the correct verbs.

5.3 Action

Before the students undergone the intervention, pre-test was administered in gathering information on students' initial performance of applying correct SVA rules. After that, intervention was implemented over a period of 4 weeks. In the first cycle of the intervention, the researcher used substitution table in teaching students constructed sentences with correct SVA. After that, the students sat for the post test. Based on the results gathered from the first cycle, the researcher revised the intervention and made improvements by using colour coding and promoted students' collaboration in bringing maximum reduction of SVA errors among students. After that, the students sat for the post test and the number of SVA errors was compared with the one in pre-test.

5.4 FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings of this research.

Pre-test and Post-test

The results gathered from the pre-test and post-test indicated that most students managed to reduce the number of SVA errors in their writing. In Cycle 1, 34 students manifested reduction in the number of SVA errors while all 37 students managed to reduce their SVA errors in Cycle 2. The results proved the effectiveness of substitution table employed was effective in helping students reduced their SVA errors. Not only that, the level of reduction made from both cycles was further analysed. The level was categorized into three which were low (reduced 1-3), moderate (reduced 4-6) and high (reduced 7-10). Figure 5 below shows the percentage of reduction according to the level for each cycle. In Cycle 1, majority of the students reduced moderately while in Cycle 2, majority of the students reduced very high. This indicated that the drilling session, the use of colour coding, students' active involvement, and student' collaboration implemented in Cycle 2 was effective for all the students in bringing reduction of their SVA errors.

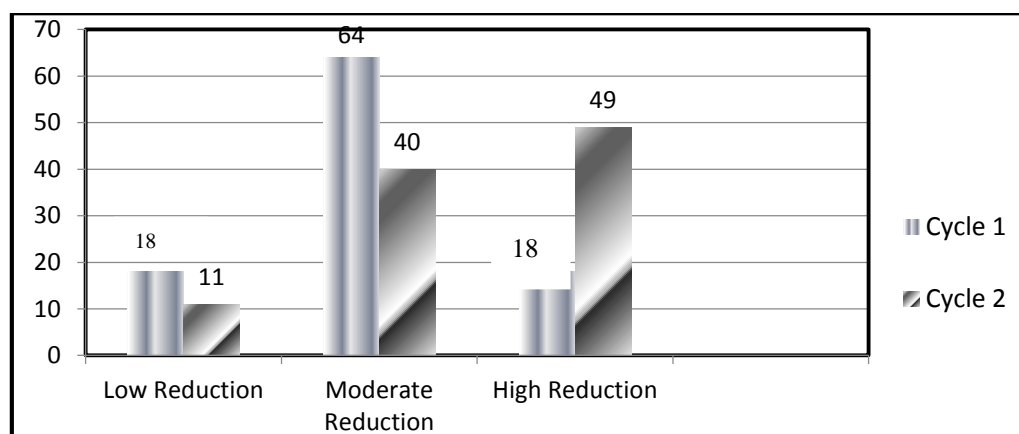


Figure 1. Comparison of Percentage of Level of Reduction between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

Teacher's Journal

Based on the data collected in the teacher's journal, there were six issues found which related to how substitution table helped students reduced their SVA errors. The intervention was found effective to reduce students' SVA errors due to the drilling sessions. Next, another issue found was that substitution table with colour coding captured students' attention and their interests to stay focus during the intervention. Not only that, it was also found out that substitution table with colour coding enhanced students' understanding on SVA and substitution table with colour coding enhanced students' memory retention on SVA. Lastly, it was also found out that collaboration among the students enhanced their understanding on SVA rules and substitution table allowed active involvements among the students.

Group Interview

The responses given by the students were categorized into four issues which were drilling sessions, the use of colour coding, students' active involvements and students' collaboration. Basically, students agreed that all the issues as listed above have helped to reduce their SVA errors. Furthermore, the four issues also contributed to students' level of confidence in writing with correct SVA rules as stated by S20 and S2; *"I feel more confident to write"* and *"I feel good compared to before."*

5.5 Conclusion

In a nutshell, it was identified that substitution table was effective in helping students reduced SVA error in their writing. Not only that, substitution table helped to reduce students' SVA errors through the drilling sessions, the use of colour coding, active involvement among students and also students' collaboration in developing their understanding of SVA. In addition, all students agreed that they felt more confident to write with the correct application of SVA rules because of the drilling

session, the use of colour coding, when they actively involved throughout the learning session and also when they collaborated with each other.

5.6 Reflection

This action research has its own strengths and weaknesses. The intervention comprised all learning styles which were auditory, visual and also kinaesthetic. Not only that, it was identified practical to be applied to different group of students although the rate of reduction might be different. Apart from that, this action research also proved that the connotation saying drilling was not practical to be used in 21st century classroom due to its "traditional" approach was wrong. This was because, meaningful drilling managed to be implemented through the use of colour coding, students' active involvement and also students' collaboration.

This action research also has several limitations. This was because, only one type of SVA was addressed. Hence, students' knowledge of SVA rule might lack of other types of SVA rules. Not only that, students might also find to over generalize that all singular verbs must end with the letter /s/. Hence, teacher plays an important role in explaining the exceptions to the students.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Therefore, the researcher would like to recommend that future researchers address different types of subject verb agreement rules such as in terms of indefinite pronouns, the use of fractional expressions and collective nouns. This would then expose students to different types of SVA rules that they may face and use later in their writing. Not only that, the researcher may try giving different level of sentence constructions that provides more challenges to students. Another recommendation would be to monitor students' progress in their application of correct SVA rules in their writing by having formative tests which would further provide more information on the students' progress in reducing their SVA errors.

REFERENCES

- Dorn, D. (2000). *Building Essays: A reader centered writing guide*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Nik Safiah Karim. (2004). *Tatabahasa Dewan*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Rozakis, L. (2003). *English Grammar for the utterly confused*. New York: McGraw Hill
- Schmidt, R. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics* 11, 129-158.
- Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tan, Aig Bee. (2005). The use of drill exercises in helping students reduce subject-verb agreement errors in academic writing: A case study in IPBA. *Jurnal. IPBA*. 3/ 2.

IMPROVING FLUENCY IN READING OF YEAR 5 CEMERLANG PUPILS THROUGH REPEATED READING

By:

NUR AISYAH BINTI MOHD RAZALI
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this action research is to improve Year 5 Cemerlang students' reading fluency using repeated reading. This study was conducted on 28 students of Year 5 Cemerlang at a school in Kuala Lumpur. From the observation through the reading lessons held showed that the students were not fluent in their reading even it was only a simple text thus it hinders their reading comprehension. The focus of this study is to find out whether the strategy of repeated reading would improve the students' reading fluency. As such, the strategy of repeated reading was designed to meet this purpose. A few intervention sessions were carried out in the classroom which aimed to help them to improve their reading fluency eventually will improve their reading comprehension. The data was collected through the pre-test and post-test, observational checklist, document analysis of the students' work and also formative tests. The findings revealed that students' reading comprehension had finally improved and helped them read the test fluently. Hence, the use of repeated reading helped the students read fluently and improved their reading comprehension as well.

Key terms: Improving, fluency in reading, repeated reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will discuss the reflections on my past teaching experience. I will also discuss the related theoretical framework that supports the focus of my study.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

Students of Year 5 Cemerlang is the first class from eight classes in SK Pengkalan Tentera Darat, Sg. Besi. Even though they are from the first class, their fluency in English can be categorized at average level and below. Most of them could understand English quite well, but some of them did not understand English and they found it very difficult to respond in that language. Only a few of them could attempt to respond well in English, and only one of them could speak and respond excellently. The rest of them would prefer to respond in their mother tongue which is Bahasa Melayu. They also found it hard to read fluently even when it comes to simple text. Most of them mispronounced the words hole and hall, small and smell, want and went and also us, use, and as. They pronounced the words hole as hall and hall as hole. They were unable to differentiate the differences between small and smell as they pronounced both words as small and also, they pronounced the words us, use and us as. Besides that, they were hesitated to read the text and they paused quite some time. For example, "the bees (pause) live (pause) in the beehives (repeat after teacher)". The student took quite some time to finish reading this sentence since she paused two times and were unable to read beehives without the teacher's assistance. Therefore, I corrected them by pronouncing the words correctly, every time when they mispronounced them. I repeated the correct pronunciation, until they can say the words correctly. Most of them can say the words correctly when they were being corrected, but three of them could not say the word correctly, even when corrected many times.

This situation happened because of the lack of English usage in the classroom even during English lesson. The 5 Cemerlang's English teacher tends to speak Bahasa Melayu whenever she enters the class. The lack of English usage in the class is a major factor to why some of the students did not understand the teacher's instructions during the English periods.

1.2 Related theory / literature

In order to figure out the best way to overcome the problem faced by 5 Cemerlang students, I used behaviorism theory and also social cognitive theory. These theories were related to the strategy of repeated reading that I implemented in this research study.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

In 5 Cemerlang, I found out that some of the students were having difficulty in reading fluently. They were unable to read fluently thus contributed to failing in understanding the text. Teachers see practice as essential, and attempt to find material that is meant to be performed. If the passage, whether it is a song, script, speech, or poem is meant to be performed, it has to be rehearsed or practiced repeatedly. The performance of a passage makes the practice meaningful to students. They will want to perfect their reading so that the performance is as good as possible. This is related to when students are taking examinations, the teachers would want them to read fluently thus making them able to make meaning of the text and able to answer the questions based on the text that they read.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

To improve the fluency in reading of year 5 Cemerlang students by using repeated reading.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

This research was conducted in Year 5 Cemerlang who are of average in English. There are 28 Malay students, 10 boys and 18 girls. There are 28 students and 24 of them are average level and three of them are of weak level. Most of them are barely able to speak or respond in English but they can understand the language quite well. Only one of them who could respond excellently.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

I had chosen Kemmis and McTaggart action research model which fits very well with my own action research. From this model, there are several stages that need to be taken for action research which are planning, acting, observing and reflecting. So the following actions were taken to conduct this research:

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

There were three types of data gathering methods that I used in my research which were pre-test and post-test, observational checklist, document analysis and as well as individual check. For cycle 1 and 2, the instruments used were pre-test and post-test, observational checklist, document analysis and also individual check. All the instruments were used due to its purpose and its effectiveness so that the intended data could be collected.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

I had carried out preliminary investigation on my issue of concern. In order to get the data, I used data gathering methods such as observation, document analysis and also individual check. The data collected proved that the students were not fluent in reading.

5.3 Action

After conducting the preliminary investigation, I conducted the intervention sessions of cycle which was using repeated reading. I gave them a set of questions to be answered (pre-test). Throughout the sessions, I helped them with the meaning of the words and assisted them in reading the text. After that, they had to read in pair, group and lastly individually reading. Then they had to do the post-test. Then, I compared their results from the pre-test and post-test.

5.4 Findings

Tests

Table 1

Students' progression in the pre-test and post-test

Level of progress	Number of students
Good progress	21
No progress	6
Regress	-

As seen from Table 1, it shows that 21 students showed good progress from the pre-test and the post-test scores. Only 6 students have shown no progress. Therefore, from the progress of the students, I could see that the strategy that I had implemented has succeeded because most of the students managed to show good progress in their learning.

Observational Checklist

The checklist was designed to check the students' fluency in reading the text given. The checklist contained four areas to be measured which are expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness and pace. The highest score of each area is four, whereby the reader met all the criteria as listed in the rubric of the checklist. In cycle 1, only five students scored 16 marks and met all the criteria as listed in the rubric as a fluent reader. These five students also showed a remarkable progress during the post – test upon the implementation of the intervention. In cycle 2, all of them scored above 10 marks over 16 which is the full mark. However, there are only five students who achieved full marks during this reading test.

Individual Check

Prior to the implementation of repeated reading in improving students' reading fluency, students were also provided with formative test which was carried out during the English lessons. These formative test was designed to determine the progress of the students in comprehending the text as fluency in reading will lead to better comprehension. The questions were asked randomly to each student, individually, during the English lessons.

Document Analysis

From the concrete evidence of the students' work, I could observe that before the implementation of the repeated reading, the students still were not able to identify understand the text and answered wrongly. However, after the implementation of the repeated reading, the students were able to answer the questions correctly from time to time. Therefore, I apprehended that the students were able to understand the story by using repeated reading that I had introduced during the interventions.

5.5 Conclusion

Overall, the strategy that I had implemented showed great improvement and was successful. From the data that I collected through several methods such as observational checklist, document analysis and individual check I could conclude that the students were able to read fluently thus helped them in understanding the text better. From the pre-test and post-test results, most of the students showed good progress. As a result, repeated reading helped the students to improve their reading fluency. For many young and struggling readers at all ages, repeated readings seems to be an essential method for achieving fluency. Jay Samuels' (1979) seminal work on the method of repeated readings found that when students orally practiced a piece of text they improved on their reading of that text – rate, accuracy and comprehension.

5.6 Reflection

This action research had given me the opportunity to evaluate the strengths and also weaknesses of my research study. Therefore, I had found the strengths and weaknesses that could be improved. The intervention went on smoothly without any difficulty even though some of them were absent during the one – month intervention. The students were also highly spirited and participated actively throughout the sessions with them. They gave full attention and made it easier in order to group them in a group of five, during the group reading session.

However, I faced some difficulty especially in handling the time. The three sessions of reading were able to take place but the last session took up quite some time since it is individual reading and I had to give them the marks. I found myself was hurrying things. I needed more time so that the last session could be done properly. However, the last session did manage to take place successfully although I was running out of time on that particular day.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

For future research, I would suggest to reduce the number of participants to suit to the time given so that all the sessions would be done properly as repeated reading requires limitless time and effort in ensuring that it would bring great positive impact to the participant. Besides, in order to apply research to the appropriate group of students, various methods could be compared and suitable material should be provided in accordance to the targets' level.

REFERENCE

Samuels, S. J. (1979). The method of repeated readings. *The Reading Teacher*, 32, 403–408

IMPROVING YEAR 4 JUJUR STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION IN IDENTIFYING ELEMENTS OF FICTIONAL STORIES USING STORY MAPS

By:

NUR FARAH SYAFIQAH BINTI MOHAMAD FU'AD
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

This action research aims to improve Year 4 Jujur students' reading comprehension in identifying elements of fictional stories using story maps. This study was conducted on 8 students of Year 4 Jujur at a school in Kuala Lumpur. From the observation of field notes showed that the students were not used to seeing the elements of fictional stories and thus hindering their reading comprehension. The focus of this study is to find out whether the strategy of story maps has developed students' reading comprehension of fictional stories by identifying the elements of fictional stories such as setting, characters and plot. As such, the strategy of story maps was designed to meet this purpose. A few intervention sessions were carried out in the classroom which sought to help them identify the elements of fictional stories which ultimately will improve their reading comprehension. The data was collected through pre-test and post-test, observational checklist, document analysis of the students' work and also interview. The findings revealed that students' reading comprehension had finally improved and helped them to identify the elements of fictional stories such as setting, characters and plot after the intervention. Hence, the use of story maps helped the students to identify the elements of fictional stories and improved their reading comprehension as well.

Key terms: improving reading comprehension, elements of fictional stories, story maps

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will discuss the reflections on my past teaching experience. I will also discuss the related theoretical framework that supports the focus of my study.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

In Phase 3 practicum, I underwent practicum in SK Seri Johor, Kuala Lumpur (a pseudonym) for three months. I taught English Language subject to Year 4 Jujur (a pseudonym) students. There are only 8 students in the class. During my reading lesson, I introduced a story entitled, "Rosemary and The Four Gutsy Gnomes". When I asked questions such as "Who is the main *character* in the story?", "Where does the story take place?" and "What do you think happened next?" The students were stuttering and looking at me with a blank face. They were unable to give correct answers to the questions that I had asked.

As I reevaluated the teaching and learning scenario mentioned above, I realized that the students were used to reading story and simple aural-oral questioning technique only but they were not used to seeing the elements of literature such as characters, setting and events. I found that the students may have struggled to comprehend the story read since they were unable to identify the elements of a fictional story. Understanding the different parts, or elements of a piece of fiction and how they work together can help struggling readers like my Year 4 Jujur students become more analytical about literary works (Lynch-Brown, Tomlinson & Short; 2011).

1.2 Related theory / literature

In order to figure out the best way to overcome the problem that faced by 4 Jujur students, I used Piaget theory of cognitive development and schema theory. According to Piaget (1970), "change in children's schema is actually representing the results obtained from learning" (Mok Soon Sang, 2013). I too believe that if students can learn from simple skill of identifying to the skill of understanding the reading text, it shows that there is improvement in their learning. Kitao (1990) says the schema theory involves an interaction between the reader's own knowledge and the text, which results in comprehension. Based on this schema theory, if the students already have the knowledge about the people, things, and events, it helps students to categorize the story into elements of fictional

story such as characters, settings and plot or sequence of events, and thus, they can comprehend the text better. Therefore, students can relate this new information to the existing information they have structured in their minds, adding it to these “files” for future use. These theories were related to the strategy of story maps that I implemented in this research study.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

From the experience of teaching and learning during my practicum, I found that my students had not been exposed to the elements of literature such as characters, setting and events in a fictional story. The problem faced by my Year 4 Jujur students was that they were unable to identify the elements of a fictional story. It will be difficult for the low ability readers like my Year 4 Jujur students to be able to understand the *whole* text if they are not given the exposure to the elements of a fictional story. They are not used to seeing the elements of literature since these elements had not been taught in school in their previous years. Thus, based on the new KSSR syllabus of Year 4, students must know these elements of literature like characters, place and time, and also values before they exit school. Since these elements of literature are crucial for Year 4 students to master, I should expose them to these elements before leaving primary schooling. When they exit school; they should have already mastered these elements of story.

Furthermore, by introducing these elements of literature, it provides opportunity for students to examine the text and the story structure such as the events which consequently, develops their writing skills or higher level comprehension skills. Thus, these low ability readers like my Year 4 Jujur students would be able to enjoy reading literary texts because it makes them engage with the text as the teacher gives the exposure to the elements of literature.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of my study is to improve the Year 4 Jujur students’ reading comprehension in identifying elements of fictional stories using story maps.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

This research involved eight students in the class which consists of five males and three females of Year 4 Jujur (a pseudonym). The levels of proficiency of the students range from intermediate to lower intermediate. Besides, the target participants were mostly Malays and only one Chindian. Therefore, the class that I had chosen is also my target group in this study.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

I had adopted Lewin (1946) and Laidlaw’s (1992) action research model which fits very well with my own action research. From this model, there are several stages that needed to be taken for action research which are identifying an aspect of the educational practice to improve, planning an action, implementing the action, collecting the data and reflecting on the action. So the following actions were taken to conduct this research:

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

There were three types of data gathering methods that I used in my research which were pre-test and post-test, observational checklist, document analysis and as well as interview. For Cycle 1, the instruments that I used were observational checklist, document analysis and interview. Later in Cycle 2, I used pre-test and post-test, observational checklist and document analysis. All the instruments were used due to its purpose and its effectiveness so that the intended data could be collected.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

I had carried out preliminary investigation regarding my issue of concern. In order to get the data, I used data gathering methods such as interview, field notes and also document analysis of the students’ work. The data collected proved that the students were not used to seeing the elements of fictional stories.

5.3 Action

After conducting the preliminary investigation, I conducted the first intervention sessions of Cycle 1 which was using story map consisting of the main characters, setting, problem, events and resolution. I introduced and explained the key terms of each element of fictional stories. After that, I used different fictional stories of the same genre which was fairy tale throughout the sessions for them to read. After they had read the story, I guided them to do the story map for two sessions and on the last session, they did the story map independently.

In Cycle 2, I made some amendments of the story map and gave more guidance on the plot sections (beginning, middle and end) since they were not able to identify the plot of the story. Before I started the intervention sessions, I gave them a pre-test in order to ascertain that the students had problem in identifying the plot of the story. I only conducted two intervention sessions. So I gave the same genre of fictional stories for them to read and then they completed the story map with my guidance on the first session and they did the story map independently for the second session of the intervention. Finally, I gave the same set of comprehension questions in the pre-test and conducted the post-test. Then, I compared their results from the pre-test and post-test.

5.4 Findings

In this section, I will explain the findings of my research from the data that I had collected through different instruments such as pre-test and post-test, observational checklist, document analysis and interview.

Tests

Table 1
Students' mark in the pre-test and post-test

Students	Pre-test		Post-test		Difference	
	Marks	%	Marks	%	Marks	%
S1	4	57	6	86	2	29
S2	5	71	7	100	2	29
S3	6	86	7	100	1	14
S4	4	57	6	86	2	29
S5	4	57	5	71	1	14
S6	5	71	7	100	2	29
S7	5	71	7	100	2	29
S8	5	71	7	100	2	29

From the table 1 above, it shows the difference in scores between the pre-test results and the post-test results that have been done on the students in Cycle 2 of my research study. The purpose of the comparison of students' marks in the pre-test and post-test is to see whether the students had improved their reading comprehension in identifying elements of fictional stories using the story maps (with more guidance in the plot section). S2, S3, S6, S7 and S8 scored 100% in the post-test results. As I compared in the pre-test results, their marks were in the range of 50% to 70%. Therefore, it showed that the results increased from grade C and B to grade A. On the other hand, only 3 students did not manage to score 100% but they still scored well in the post-test. Overall the results of the tests displayed an increment in the students' performance.

Table 2
Students' progression in the pre-test and post-test

Level of progress	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Good progress	6	75
Moderate progress	2	25
No Progress	-	-

As seen from Table 2, it shows that 6 students showed good progress from the pre-test and the post-test scores. Only 2 students have shown moderate progress whereby the percentages of the level of progress were 75% and 25% respectively. Therefore, from the progress of the students, I

could see that the strategy that I had implemented has succeeded because most of the students managed to show good progress in their learning.

In conclusion, the results of my research showed that the students able to identify the elements of fictional stories and improved their reading comprehension as well. In a 2009 study performed by C. Stagliano and R. Boon, research proved that after receiving one-on-one teaching on the story elements and how to create and use a story map, the percentage of comprehension questions answered correctly increased immediately and dramatically. Thus, I too believe that story maps helped students' reading comprehension in identifying elements of fictional stories.

Observational Checklist

During the intervention sessions in Cycle 2, I had observed students' responses towards the strategy used (with more guidance in the plot section) by using checklist as the instrument to collect the data. So I had observed their ability to identify elements of fictional stories, ability to complete the story maps, ability to complete all the boxes in the story maps, ability to complete the story map within the time allocated and also ability to answer teacher's questions. From my observation, I found that all of the students had showed improvement in identifying the elements of fictional stories and they were able to complete the story maps.

As I compared the results in Cycle 1, three students still could not complete all the boxes and the rest could complete all the boxes in the story map. For instance, they were only able to identify the setting, main characters, problem and first event in the story. But after I implemented the story maps with more guidance on the plot sections during Cycle 2, all of the students were able to do the plot and complete all the boxes in the story maps.

Interview

After the intervention in Cycle 1 of my research, I had carried out an interview with the students in order to find out the effectiveness of the strategy used which is the story maps. From the students' perceptions, most of the students said that the story maps used were interesting and fun. They could also understand the story better by identifying the elements of fictional stories rather than reading the lengthy story through story-mapping. However, they still could not manage to do the plot sections because they needed more time to read the story and completed the story map on time.

Document Analysis

From the concrete evidences of the students' work, I could observe that before the implementation of the story maps (with more guides in the plot sections), some of the students were still not able to identify the plot of the story. However, after the implementation of the story maps (with more guidance in the plot sections, all of the students were able to complete the story map and identify the elements of fictional stories. Therefore, I realized that the students are able to understand the story by using both the story maps that I had introduced during the interventions.

5.5 Conclusion

Overall, the strategy that I had implemented showed great improvement and was successful. From the data that I collected through several methods such as observational checklist, document analysis and interview I could conclude that the students were able to identify the elements of fictional stories such as characters, setting and plot by using the story maps and complete all the boxes in the story maps. From the pre-test and post-test results, most of the students showed good progress but only 2 students showed moderate progress. They were able to answer all the comprehension questions and another 2 students still needed more guidance in order to answer the comprehension questions. As a result, the story maps helped the students improve their reading comprehension in identifying elements of fictional stories.

5.6 Reflection

This action research had given the opportunity for me to evaluate the strengths and also weaknesses of my research study. Therefore, I had found out the strengths and also weaknesses that could be improved for future research. From this study, I found that the strategy of story map has

improved the students' reading comprehension. It has been proved that from the results of the pre-test and post-test, most of the students were able to answer all of the comprehension questions and managed to get 100%. This shows that the strategy that I had implemented during the intervention has improved their reading comprehension of fictional stories. However, other strategies were needed as alternatives to prepare for further problems that might occur during the research in the future. Short period of time would also interrupt the intervention sessions and the research could not be completed on time. I would not be able to collect the data accurately if I did not plan the action early. Therefore, early planning is important in action research so that the research can be carried out smoothly and systematically.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Pertaining to the research results and discussion, some suggestions are offered on the use of story maps in order to improve the students' reading comprehension in identifying the elements of fictional stories. First, I should focus my attention on the selection of the instructional material and media as well as the allotment of time for the intervention sessions. Second, after the students have completed their own story maps, it is suggested for future researcher to encourage the students to make a story map of their own version if they are already familiar with the strategy. From the suggestions given, I hope that other future researchers and teachers could improve my research and can apply the strategy in other reading skills.

REFERENCES

- Brown, C.L; C.M and Short K.G. (2011). *Essentials of Children's Literature*. United States of America: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Kitao, Kathleen S. (1990). *Textual Schemata and English Language Learning*. *Cross Currents*, Issue 3, 147-155.
- Lewin, K. (1946). Action Research and Minority Problems. *Journal of Social Issues*, 2: 34-46.
- Mok Soon Sang. (2013). *Educational Psychology & Pedagogy: Learner and Learning Environment*. Selangor: Penerbitan Multimedia Sdn. Bhd.
- Stagliano, C., Boon, R. (2009). *The effects of a story mapping procedure to improve the comprehension skills of expository text passages for elementary students with learning disabilities*. *Learning Disabilities: A Contemporary Journal*, 7(2), 35-58.

USING HANDS-ON GROUP ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE THE ENGAGEMENT OF FOUR STUDENTS WITH SHORT-ATTENTION SPAN IN YEAR 3 JUJUR

By:

NUR SYAHIRA BINTI MARUDING
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

This study examines the effectiveness of hands-on group activities in improving the engagement of students with short-attention span. The subjects of this study are 4 students with short-attention span identified through their behaviours in class. A preliminary investigation conducted reveals that the students often display disengaged behaviours such as scribbling using chalk under their drawer, cutting papers and colouring their colouring books. The intervention in this study is the use of hands-on group activities that involve the use of clay to make objects and creating mini aquariums using boxes. The data gathering methods used are video recordings and semi-structured interviews with the students. The recordings are analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively to see the improvement of the students' engagement and the nature of the students' engagement. The findings show that there is an improvement in the students' engagement. From the interviews, it is found that the students with short-attention span perceived the intervention as activities that allow them to use their art skills and encourage competitiveness. Suggestions for further research are to use the intervention for language learning and to infuse language games elements in it as this can add the elements of fun learning.

Key terms: Hands-on activities, group work, short-attention span, students' engagement

1.0 INTRODUCTION

An understanding of students' engagement in the classroom is vital for teachers to enhance positive learning outcomes among the students. Engaging students is one of the challenges that teachers need to face in teaching, especially when it comes to dealing with students with short-attention span. Student engagement does not occur spontaneously rather it is the result of a teacher putting specific, effective strategies into place that are proven to foster engagement (Neil, 2011). So, teachers need to find effective ways to enhance the students' engagement. This is in line with the aims of our National Philosophy of Education which seeks to optimize the intellectual, emotional and spiritual potential of pupils.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

Based on the researcher's teaching practice experiences, it was found that students with short-attention span were frequently disengaged during the lessons. From the researcher's past lessons on the topic of Healthy Food, the researcher noticed that some of them were not looking at the pictures and just pronouncing the words while doing other activities such as colouring their books. In the same lesson, the researcher put up a table of healthy and unhealthy food on the board. The students were required to classify the food by pasting the pictures in the right column. The students mentioned earlier were still not paying attention. They were looking outside, talking among themselves and also doing off-task activities such as scribbling their tables and under their drawers, and cutting papers. They would only pay attention to the lesson only if their behaviours were reprimanded by the teacher.

In another Language Arts lesson, the students appeared to be on-task. In this lesson, the researcher implemented an activity which required all groups to make mini scrapbooks on the topic taught. Each group with four pupils needed to colour the given pictures of fruits and copy a jazz chant related to the fruit. The researcher could see they were focused on completing the scrapbook in their respective groups. They were engrossed in decorating their books and finishing it. As mentioned by Godwin et. al (2007), if the student was looking at the teacher, paying attention to the instructional activity, and the relevant instructional materials, they were categorised as on-task. From this scenario, the researcher became interested to find out more about the use of hands-on group activities in engaging students with short attention span in their learning.

1.2 Related theory / literature

The underlying theories that form the framework of this study are Constructivism and Multiple Intelligences. According to Witcom (2007), the constructivists proposed that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. This theory encourages the use of instructional theory by encouraging hands-on activities in the learning. The report describes that learning is an active process of creating meaning from different experiences. The use of hands-on group work activities would be relevant and suitable for the students to actively learn and apply their understanding about the learning. The students learn best by trying to make sense of something on their own with the teacher as a guide to help them along the way (Parson & Taylor, 2011). Based on the constructivist teaching, students who participate in hands-on activities will construct their own knowledge.

The theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) proposed by Howard Gardner(1996) provides a rich framework for designing learning experiences (Voke, 2002). In a research conducted by Voke (2002), it was found that students have certain basic psychological needs and are most likely to become engaged in the learning process when the learning environment is compatible with those needs. The intelligences in MI provide a foundation for the teacher to create suitable learning activities to suit students' differences. Based on the characteristics of the short-attention span students as listed by Parson & Taylor (2011), described as never settled at the same task for long and often have loads of energy and won't sit still, the theory of bodily-kinesthetic intelligence could be applied to fulfill their needs and preferences.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The issue of concern in this research is that the students with short-attention span were not engaged in their learning. The disengaged behaviours displayed affected the learning process for the teacher and the students as a whole. The use of hands-on group activities is chosen as an intervention in improving the students' engagement in their learning.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

This section outlines the general and specific objectives of this action research.

3.1 General objective:

The objective of this research is to improve the engagement of the short-attention span students using hands-on group activities.

3.2 Specific objective:

This study aims to ascertain:

- i. the improvement of Year 3 Jujur students' engagement in their learning using hands-on group activities.
- ii. the students' perception on the use of hands-on group activities.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

Four students of Year 3 Jujur were involved in this study. They were identified through the researcher's observation and interview with the teacher. They displayed disengaged behaviours frequently. All of them were Malay boys. In this research, they were addressed as Nazim, Syafiq, Adib and Hazman to protect their privacy.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The researcher adopted Stephen Kemmis's model in carrying out this research. The procedure of action undertaken in this research is explained in the following.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

Two data gathering methods were used to gather the information. Audio-visual recordings were used to record the students' engagement in terms of their behaviours and interactions. Another method, the semi-structured interview sessions with the students were conducted to collect information on their perception of the intervention.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

A preliminary investigation was carried out prior to the implementation in Cycle 1 to collect factual information regarding the problem identified. The data gathering methods used for this investigation were observation, interview and questionnaires.

Observation

The researcher observed the students' engagement in two lessons using an unstructured checklist. Through the observations, the researcher identified disengaged behaviours of the students such as easily distracted and getting bored easily. The researcher also could identify the students who had shown the most frequent disengaged behaviours through the observations.

Interview

The researcher interviewed the English teacher of Year 3 Jujur about the most prominent problem faced in teaching this class. Based on the interview, it was found that the teacher faced the same problem as identified by the researcher regarding the engagement problem of the students with short-attention span. Besides that, in the interview, the students with short-attention span problem were identified.

Questionnaires

The researcher conducted a survey on the students' preferences of their learning activities. It reveals that most of them preferred to have hands-on learning activities such as making puppets, face-masks and mobile charts.

5.3 Action

The intervention was conducted in two cycles. The first cycle involved two sessions. In the first session, the lesson was carried out without the intervention. The students were required to practise reciting a jazz chant. In the second session, the researcher implemented the lesson with the intervention whereby the students were required to produce a mobile chart. This was done to compare the students' engagement in two different activities-one that required the students to use hands-on and the other without any hands-on activities.

The second cycle involved four sessions. In the first session, the students were required to create a riddle. In the second session, the researcher implemented the intervention by asking the students to make a mini aquarium using box. In the third session, the researcher implemented the lesson without the intervention which was creating a jazz chant and in the last session, the lesson was conducted with the intervention whereby the students needed to make objects with clay. Basically, in the intervention sessions, the researcher started the session by showing the model of what the students need to do and explain the instructions. Then, in their groups, the students were required to do the hands-on activities. The process was recorded by the researcher.

5.4 Findings

Improvement of Students' Engagement Behaviour

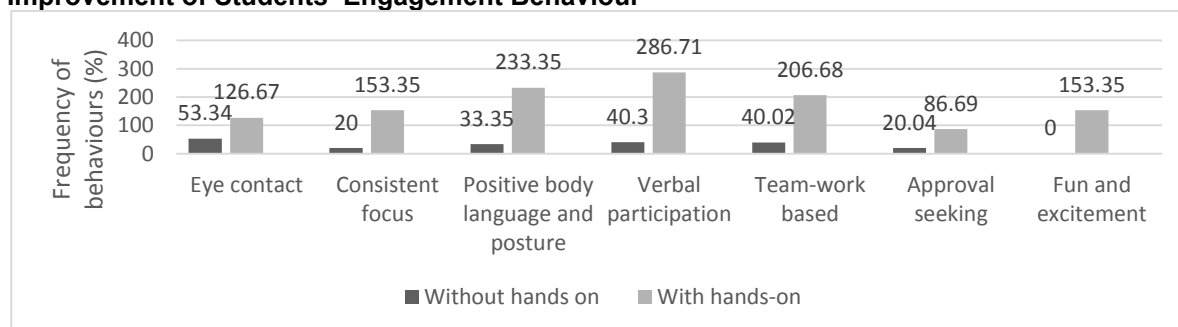


Figure 1: A Comparison of Students' Engagement in Hand-On and Without Hands-On Activities

Figure 1 above shows the improvement of the students' engagement behaviours according to criteria like eye-contact, consistent focus, positive body language and posture, team-work, approval-seeking as well as fun and excitement. It shows an increase in the frequency of engagement especially in verbal participation, positive body language and posture, and team-work.

Students' Engagement Behaviours

Table 1
Students' engagement behaviours

Students' engagement behaviour (Nazim)	Descriptions of behaviours
Eye contact	He stopped colouring and listened to the teacher (the recorder assistant) when he told his friend to cut the pictures instead of joining the colouring activity.
Positive body language and posture	He stood up and leaned forward to see at what his friend did.
Consistent focus	He continued to colour the picture and did not bother the noise came from outside which was from the school-next-door which was having sports' day.
Team-based work	He quickly followed when his friend asked him to put the paper in the middle so that others can colour it too.
Fun and excitement	He referred to his dictionary in finding the answer. He laughed when one of the members guessed that he was making a fat snake.

Table 1 shows the analysis of the students' engagement behaviours. The descriptions above demonstrate how the intervention has helped in improving the engagement of the students in their learning.

Perceptions of Students on the Use of Hands-On Activities

The themes that emerged from the interviews with the students regarding the use of hands on group activities includes the following. First, the use of hands-on activities encourage them to seek help from the teacher and peers. Second, the use of hands-on activities allows the students to make use of their art skills in language learning. Third, the use of hands-on group activities encourages them to be competitive in their learning. It also creates a fun and exciting learning environment for the students. The students' learning preferences are met by the use of hands-on group activities. Besides that, according to Jones (2009), approval-seeking and ability to work in group show the students' confidence in learning. These elements were demonstrated during the intervention sessions. In general, the students have positive perceptions towards the intervention implemented.

5.5 Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the use of hands-on group activities could improve the engagement of the students with short-attention span in their learning. This is because the nature of the intervention which is the integration of the students' art skills enhance the students' participation in learning. Besides that, the researcher realised that the teacher's preparation in terms of materials and clarity in instructions are crucial in determining the effectiveness of the activities.

5.6 Reflection

After completing the research, the researcher feels that this study can be applied in her classroom practices. This is because, its effectiveness had been seen through the improvement of the student' engagement, students' interaction and positive perception on the use of hands-on group activity.

However, throughout the process of carrying out this research, the researcher realizes a few limitations that might have affected the results. One of them was the lack of emphasis on language learning. The researcher was too engrossed with art and fine motor skills demonstrated by the students.

Besides that, in collecting the data, the researcher could have done better if the interview sessions were conducted outside the classroom. This would allow the students to express their views without any distractions from their friends.

The use of hands-on would also be beneficial both for teachers and students. For the teacher, it helps in classroom management because the activities can reduce disengaged behaviours. Besides, it allows the teachers to implement student-centered learning. For the students, the use of hands-on group activities will allow them to actively seek help from the teacher and peers, to make use of their interest and talent in arts and help them to understand the language in a creative, interesting and engaging activities. For the researcher, this research helps in building a better understanding about engaging students in learning especially those with short-attention span.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is recommended that future researchers implement the intervention to teach language skills such reading. Future researchers may also embark on the use of hands-on activity with low-proficiency students. Last but not least, it is recommended that the elements of games that require movements of students, and so on are integrated in the hands-on group activities.

REFERENCES

- Godwin, K. E., Almeda, M. V., Petroccia, M., & Baker, R. S. (2007). *Classroom activities and off-task behavior in elementary school children*. Retrieved Mar 3, 2014, from Columbia.Edu: http://www.columbia.edu/~rsb2162/Godwinetal_v12.pdf
- Jones, R. D. (2009). *Student engagement; Teacher handbook*. USA: International Center for Leadership in Education.
- Neil, S. '. (2012, November 12). *Social development and the need for a more-knowledgeable other*. Retrieved March 12, 2014, from The Writing Center at PCCC: <http://pcccwriting.blogspot.com/2012/11/social-development-and-need-for-more.htm>
- Parson, J., & Taylor, L. (2011, March). *Student engagement: What do we know and what should we do?* Retrieved March 12, 2014, from University of Alberta: http://education.alberta.ca/media/6459431/student_engagement_literature_review_2011.pdf
- Voke, H. (2002, February). *Motivating students*. Retrieved March 17, 2014, from ASCD: <http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/policy-priorities/feb02/num28/Motivating-Students-to-Learn.aspx>
- Witcom, G. (2007). *Vygotsky's social constructivist theory*. Retrieved March 13, 2014, from glwhitcomb: http://glwhitcomb.iweb.bsu.edu/portfolio/resources/Artifacts-&-Rationales/GW_Social_Cognitive_Theory.pdf

ENHANCING YEAR 3 BESTARI PUPILS' READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS THROUGH AURAL-ORAL QUESTIONING TECHNIQUE WITH PICTURE SERIES

By:

NURHANIM BINTI ZAINUL
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to use oral-aural questioning technique with picture series to enhance Year 3 Bestari pupils' reading comprehension skills. Based on data obtained from the preliminary investigations 10 pupils were selected. These pupils were unable to answer even direct question from based on the text. The technique of aural-oral questioning with picture series was used to enhance their reading comprehension skills in a two-cycle intervention. Findings from various data gathering methods such as pre-test, post-test, formative tests, observation checklists, teacher's logs and interview showed that this technique helped pupils to foster their understanding of the text read and motivated them to read more as the questioning directed their comprehension of the texts read and learning tool like picture series was interesting enough which captured their interest. Plus, the pupils' perception towards this strategy was convincing enough as they prefer the technique used which combined oral and visual representation that increased their understanding of the reading text. This strategy also encouraged them to participate actively during the session as they were producing self-initiated questions and using non-verbal gestures in order to show their understanding of the story. Therefore, it can be concluded that using oral-aural questioning with picture series is a useful and effective strategy to enhance learning of higher level of comprehension skills among pupils in reading.

Key terms: Reading comprehension, oral-aural questioning, picture series

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This section will present the reflection of teaching experience in which the problem is first identified and the theory which backed the intervention designed.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

During my previous practicum, the school had assigned Year 3 Bestari class for me to conduct my teaching. The class consisted of different ethnic groups: Malays, Indians, Iban and there was among them whose parents were Indonesians. The pupils in this class came from different classes when they were in Year 2. During one of my reading lesson, I used a text taken directly from the textbook on the topic of "My Family". While reading the text, I found that they could read quite fluently although there were some minor errors in pronunciation of certain words. Then, in the next reading lesson, I also found out that most of them could read fluently as was observed in the previous lesson. However when I asked a few questions based on the text, I was alarm to find that most of them could not answer questions that only required answers that could be lifted from the text. Then, I tried to ask in general what they had understood from the text and only three pupils managed to respond to my questions. This made me wonder if the text used was too difficult but this was unlikely as the text was taken from the textbook. Hence, the only explanation is that, though they can read fluently but they have problem understanding the text.

1.2 Relatedtheory/literature

The product of reading should be comprehension. This process involved thinking which took place during reading. According to Piaget's cognitive theory, this involves two concepts which are assimilation and accommodation. Santrock (2010) elaborate that the assimilation process takes place when pupils relate new information learned into their existing schemes, while the accommodation process helps adjust their schemes to fit new information and experiences. In other words, when pupils obtain new information from reading, it will be incorporated with the existing knowledge in order to link the information and helped them to make meaning. In order to build pupils' understanding of the text, weaker pupils will need external facilitation to help them learn. This means that, this external facilitation, which usually comes from the teachers, should emphasise on maximizing the

effectiveness of the interaction that included "...listening, watching, and questioning the pupils during reading" (Santrock, 2010). Among all these three skills mentioned, questioning should be teacher's focused point as "language is the main tool that promotes thinking, develops reasoning, and supports cultural activities like reading and writing" (Santrock, 2010). Consequently, the questioning skill should scaffold the pupils' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which means that "with the help of adults, pupils can do and understand much more than they can on their own" (Vygotsky, as cited in Cameron, 2009). Teacher's language during questioning gives impact to pupils' development in reading comprehension. Facilitation through questioning would help the child to activate their existing schemes and learnt to build the comprehension on their own.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The weak pupils in Year 3 Bestari had experienced difficulty in comprehending the text. As having this problem, they could not respond to any questions asked, be it written or orally. Most of them had difficulty in getting the ideas from the text. So, when they could not process the information from the text, the comprehension questions given to them were meaningless. They were merely reading plainly without any purpose. In addition, while they were reading, they could not make sense between each line which is very important in the process of understanding a particular text. This impeded the process of making meaning. Moreover, their problem also aroused due to the lack of vocabulary. This directly hindered their understanding of the whole text. There were also cases where the pupils managed to respond to the text, but they could not back up or point out where they found the answer in the text. This showed that they were merely guessing the answer. So, based on this situation, this research aimed to increase the pupils' ability to comprehend text by using a specific technique. This technique incorporated oral questioning with the use of a story as the context. I chose this technique because the pupils really needed a model for them to activate their thinking while they were reading as this technique would provide all these aspects.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

This section will present both the general and specific objectives of the study.

3.1 General objective

The general objective of this research is to enhance reading comprehension of Year 3 Bestari pupils through oral questioning technique with picture series.

3.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

- 1) To identify whether oral questioning technique with picture series help to enhance Year 3 Bestari pupils' reading comprehension.
- 2) To determine how oral questioning with picture series help to enhance pupils' reading comprehension.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

This study focused on 10pupils whom I had identified in the preliminary investigation. They are nine Malays and an Indian, five boys and five girls. They were categorized as low achievers based on their performance in the 2013 end of year examination and their low scores in the diagnostic test. The selection of these 10 pupils was also based on their English language teacher's recommendation.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

This section will explain the various data gathering methods used and its findings. Plus, it will also describe how the study was conducted based on the chosen model of Action Research.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

In this study, I used tests, observation, interviews and teacher's logs as my data gathering methods. For tests, it was divided into diagnostic test, pre and post tests and formative test. I used diagnostic test in my preliminary investigation in order to identify the selected pupils. Plus, pre and post test were conducted before and after the intervention as to identify the improvement made by the pupils. Whereas, the formative test was done for each session in order to track the ability of the pupils for each task given. Observation was done for all the sessions as to see their changes in several aspects that have been listed in the checklist. These aspects were then categorized according to behaviour of the pupils and also the skills in reading comprehension. On top of that, interviews had been used both with teacher and pupils. When I had an interview session with the teacher, it meant for preliminary purposes. I had interviewed the previous English teacher of the pupils to further clarify the level of the pupils in reading comprehension. Whereas, for the interview session with the pupils, this was to know their views and perceptions towards the intervention carried out. The pupils who were interviewed were selected based on their performance throughout the whole sessions. The last data gathering method was teacher's logs. This data collection method was done by the teacher and was done right after each session conducted. It was done this way as to ensure that the teacher still remember all the important and prominent events or activities that happened during the session.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

The problem identified was based on some preliminary investigations carried out. These included diagnostic test, document analysis on the pupils' work and interview with the previous English language teacher. Based on the overall data collected, the pupils showed understanding in answering low level questions. When the level of questions moved to the higher levels, they were not able to complete the task. This further confirmed the needs to address the identified problem.

5.3 Action

The model adopted for this research is the Stephen Kemmis Spiral Model of action research (Mills, 2014). This model consists of four stages: plan, action, observe and reflect. These stages are repeated and thus the spiral model.

Cycle 1 and cycle 2

In the planning stage, I had gathered all the required information regarding my target pupils. Based on the background information, I could plan on the suitable task which cater to their level. Thus, in this stage, I had designed all the tests such as pre-test, post-test and formative tests. Plus, the observation checklist had also been listed out accordingly.

For action stage, all the tests in the above such as pre-test, post-test and formative tests were carried out with the target pupils. I had also identified the pattern of behavior of the pupils throughout the whole sessions by asking one of my friends to observe using checklist. Plus, I played an active role in delivering the oral-aural questioning strategy with picture series with the pupils to ensure the effectiveness of the intervention.

For observation stage, the data gathered were analyzed as to see the results. Each of the data could be analyzed whether qualitatively or quantitatively. In reflection stage, it encouraged me to reflect on the result gathered. Thus, if the pupils did not perform as expected, the factors should be identified and re-planned for the next cycle.

5.4 Findings

The findings (refer to Table 1) shows that the strategies of using aural-oral questioning with picture series help to enhance pupils' reading comprehension skill is successful. The result shows that the pupils scored positive improvement made from the post-test as compared to pre-test. This shows that the pupils had shown improvement in their reading comprehension of the text. For instance, the questions in the pre and post-test consisted of different level of comprehension. From the findings gathered it shows that 70% of the pupils managed to improve in the post-test. The pupils'

achievement shows that they managed to identify main ideas from the story and able to sequence the events. This shows that the intervention worked well for their context.

Table 1.
Comparison of pre-test and post-test results

Pupils	Pre-test (a)		Post-test 1 (b)		Different in marks (b-a)		Post-test 2 (c)		Different in marks (c-a)	
	Marks	%	Marks	%	Marks	%	Marks	%	Marks	%
P1	8	80	8	80	0	0	9	90	1	10
P2	5	50	3	30	-2	-20	7	70	2	20
P3	5	50	6	60	1	10	6	60	1	10
P4	7	70	5	50	-2	-20	6	60	-1	-10
P5	6	60	4	40	-2	-20	6	60	0	0
P6	4	40	4	40	0	0	7	70	3	30
P7	1	10	3	30	2	20	4	40	3	30
P8	2	20	5	50	3	30	6	60	4	40
P9	4	40	8	80	4	40	7	70	3	30
P10	7	70	8	80	1	10	6	60	-1	-10

In addition, from the formative tests result, I also found out that majority of the pupils scored well in each formative test given to them. This included their ability to identify main idea from the story, sequencing the events and ability to predict and gave reason.

To further support this findings, interview carried out with some of the pupils reflected that the intervention had helped them to sequence and understand better due to the use of oral questioning with picture series. One of the pupils said that through the use of pictures and questioning helped him to make sense of the story and at the same time he could remember the story for a longer period of time. This shows that they learnt best when visual and oral representation had been given to them. Whereas the findings from the teacher's log showed that some misbehaved pupils had changed and behaved well during the lesson. This could be interpreted that the pupils who have always disturbed their friends had totally changed due to the use of pictures and questioning that hold their attention and interest in reading.

The data from the observation checklist also stated that the number of pupils who disturbed their friends during reading session had decrease towards the end of the intervention. I could conclude that the pupils learnt better if they were given enough support for them to understand. Plus, their behavior also could enhance their interest in comprehending the story. To sum up, these pupils became more engaged with the reading lesson when the teacher always gave her attention by prompted questions regarding the text and triggered pupils' attention and retention using pictures in order to make sense of the situation to them.

5.5 Conclusion

The teacher's ability to come up with an intervention is really important. It is a crucial part in order to deal with pupils' problem. Therefore, in this intervention, I used oral questioning with picture series. The pupils had shown some improvement in their comprehension as the oral questioning had been used with pictures. Pictures are well known to be the effective tool for children's learning. As mentioned by Santrock (2010) that organizational pictures are useful in providing a structural framework for the content of the text. Picture not just produced an effective learning, it also promoted learning which was interesting and made the pupils eager to learn. The oral questioning with picture series had helped to improve pupils' reading comprehension. The combination of both oral and visual representation gave a very clear view on the text read. Plus, pictures were a media in teaching which provided opportunities for the pupils to experience an enjoyable and interesting learning environment. The oral questioning also enhanced the reading session to be interactive. Thus, this strategy had given a positive impact to the pupils. Although it really gave positive impact to my pupils, the result should not be generalized to all classroom setting. This is because, different pupils would perceive different reading style.

5.6 Reflection

During the intervention, it was a physical environment problem which happened. During the intervention, I did not manage to separate the targeted pupils away from the other pupils in the class. So, I had conducted the intervention as a class but the assessment or observation made towards the target pupils. Through this situation, it was difficult for me to control all the pupils at one time. Plus, it was quite hard for me to deliver my oral questioning to them. As to make this situation under control, I should have pull out the target pupils and conduct the intervention in a more conducive environment. Besides that, time allocated for the intervention was quite packed. During the intervention, the pupils took longer time just to finish reading. In order to improve this, I should take into consideration of the time spend in order to give ample time for them to comprehend the text and complete the task given. Plus, the length of the text should be in controlled with time limit.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

For further research, oral questioning technique can be used not only in reading lesson. It depends on the teacher's creativity to apply this technique in writing lesson for instance. This technique functions the same as in reading lesson. In writing class, the use of oral questioning will help the teacher to stimulate her pupils' thinking in order to produce an interesting write up by the end of the lesson. Besides that, oral questioning can also be used with different text type. The story can be changed with a factual text. Factual text requires more critical understanding. Therefore, this technique can further clarify the understanding of the factual terms use. Instead of improving the pupils' comprehension, the oral questioning technique also will be a medium to develop higher order thinking skill (HOTS). For instance, the questions prepared by the teacher should encompass different level of questions. In Barret taxonomy, as to achieve HOTS, teacher can incorporate Evaluation and Appreciation level of questions. This is because, these levels require the pupils to judge a situation according their perception and why they choose it to be that way. It requires pupils' own judgment and reasoning ability. Thus, it will help them to formulate their own opinions and substantiate their thinking.

REFERENCES

- Cameron, L. (2009). Teaching languages to young learners. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Mills, G. E. (2014). Action Research : A guide for the Teacher Researcher. London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Santrock, J. W. (2010). Cognitive developmental approaches. In J. W. Santrock, *Child Development* (pp. 181-204). New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

USING COVER, COPY, COMPARE (CCC) STRATEGY FOR SIGHT WORD RECOGNITION TO IMPROVE LOW PROFICIENCY YEAR 2 PUPILS' READING FLUENCY IN A MALAYSIAN CLASSROOM

By:

NURUL AINA BINTI MUHAMMAD
English Language Department

ABSTRACT

This purpose of this action research is to determine the effectiveness of the use of Cover, Copy, and Compare (CCC) strategy for sight word recognition to improve low proficiency Year 2 pupils' reading fluency. The study involved four low proficiency Year 2 pupils at one school located in Kuala Lumpur. Preliminary investigation is conducted through diagnostic tests, document analysis and interview with the English teacher. Early findings provide evidences that these four pupils are weak in sight word recognition thus hindering them achieving fluency in reading. Therefore, this study focuses on the use of the CCC strategy for sight word recognition to improve reading fluency problem among low proficiency Year 2 pupils. The study uses three methods of data collection which are pre-test and post-test, observation and interview. In the pre-test and post-test, the pupils are assessed in two areas which are number of sight words identified correctly and reading fluency in the aspects of sight words accuracy, smoothness, pace and rate. Two cycles for this study are conducted and based on the post-test results in cycle 2, P1, P2, P3 and P4 show significant improvement by achieving 85% to 100% marks in both areas. The issues identified in the observation checklist correspond with the findings that the CCC strategy has helped to improve their reading fluency through effective drilling session, the use of error correction procedures and through active involvement experienced by pupils throughout the intervention. The results of these findings clearly show that the use of the CCC strategy for sight word recognition can improve low proficiency Year 2 pupils' reading fluency.

Key term: Cover, Copy, Compare (CCC) strategy, sight words, reading fluency

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the aims of English Language in our curriculum is for pupils to be able to acquire the reading skill. Reading skill is the ability of pupils to decode printed word to sound (Nesamalar, Saratha & Teh (2005). In this case, reading skill is very important as it is tested in the reading instrument under LINUS (Literacy and Numeracy Screening) programme because without this skill, it is nearly impossible for pupils to attain higher education and function in the modern society (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013-2015). This is further supported by Norman & Wood (2008) who state that the ability to read common words is an essential component of education which has been linked to an individual's overall achievement and success over their lifetime and children who do not learn to read fluently by the first grade are at risk of falling further behind their peers each year. In other words, reading fluency is a crucial component of instructional reading programs and should be assessed regularly in the classroom.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

In most of the reading lessons, it was observed that a few students were reading slowly, haltingly, and sometimes pointing to each word with their finger as they read. When they encountered words such as 'that', 'said' and 'about', some of them would sound them out no matter how long it took. But the other half, when they came to an unknown word they either skipped, guessed, dismissed it with "whatever" and read on, or they relied on their weak phonics skills to try to sound the word out. Possible reasons for them to react this way is due to the inability of the pupils to recognise and decode most of the high frequency words in the reading materials given.

This is further supported by Samuels (2006) who note that dysfluent readers may make many errors, their reading may be slow and laborious as they employ strategies to identify most of sight words, and their reading may lack expression, instead being monotone and unnatural. Thus, based

on the reflection of the teaching and learning as stated above, I realised that basic sight word recognition is a significant problem that hinder students from achieving fluency in reading.

1.2 Related theory/ Literature

Behaviourism theory of learning will be the main learning theory in this study. According to John B. Watson, behaviourism learning theory emphasizes the study of observable and measurable behaviours (Mok Soon Sang, 2010). It means that the behaviourism theory assumes that the outcome of learning is a change in behaviour and it emphasizes the effect of learning on individual. In this study, the change in behaviours is reflected on the increase of correct responding of sight words through repeated drills and practices.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The ability to recognise basic sight words is most crucial in achieving literacy and fluency in reading. This objective of basic English Literacy in LINUS 2.0 further highlights the importance of recognizing sight word with automaticity according to their level in order to enhance fluency in reading. This means that sight word recognition is a crucial element in developing pupils' fluency in reading. The intervention that I used is the explicit Cover, Copy, Compare (CCC) strategy to improve their reading fluency skill by developing their sight word recognition skills. The goal was for the pupils to be able to read the text smoothly, easily, and readily with freedom from word recognition problems.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

3.1 General objectives

To determine the impact of the Cover, Copy, Compare (CCC) strategy for basic sight word recognition in helping pupils to improve reading fluency at primary level education.

3.2 Specific objectives

- To improve pupils' reading fluency skill using Cover, Copy, Compare (CCC) strategy for sight word recognition.
- To determine the effectiveness of the Cover, Copy, Compare (CCC) strategy for sight word recognition in helping low proficiency Year 2 Cekap pupils to improve their reading fluency.

4.0 TARGET GROUP/PARTICIPANTS

Stratified sampling was used where the samples were chosen according to criteria based on the analysis that has been done through the preliminary investigations. This research involved four participants, comprising of two boys and two girls. For the purpose of this research, I coded each participant as P1, P2, P3 and P4. The participants were identified based on several criteria which are low level of proficiency, different races and ethnicity and low and average socio economic background.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The model used for this research is adapted Laidlaw (1992) and Lewin (1946) Model. The cycle consists of a series of steps which included identifying problems, planning, implementing, collecting data and reflecting and it led to a second cycle, which incorporate improvements suggested in the first cycle. Preliminary investigations were conducted before the intervention to help ascertain the problem.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

I used three different methods in conducting the study. They were pre-test and post-test, observation and interview. These data gathering methods were used and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

Three methods were used to ascertain the problem faced by the pupils. They were diagnostic test, interview with English teachers and document analysis. Diagnostic test was conducted to all 19 pupils in the classroom to determine how many sight words they already know with automaticity. Only 36.84% of pupils scored 60 marks and above and achieved the baseline standard. Interview sessions were conducted with two teachers; the pupils current and previous English teachers. Both teachers agreed that the pupils had problem in reading due to their limited and poor word recognition process which causes them to read slowly and haltingly. The last one was document analysis on pupils' reading literacy results from the first screening test in the LINUS 2.0 programme. Result indicated that most of the pupils failed construct number seven to twelve as the constructs require a lot of sentences and paragraphs reading hence requiring a lot of sight word recognition process.

5.3 Action

The CCC instructions occurred two times per week during the art period for approximately 20 to 25 minutes for each session. Sessions took place on Monday and Thursday and there were a total of five sessions in Cycle 1. Pupils were introduced to four unknown sight words in each session. Thus, there were a total of 20 unknown sight words for Cycle 1. The words that pupils failed to recognize were chosen based on the diagnostic test administered earlier. During each session, pupils were introduced to four unknown sight words through repeated presentation of single words on flash cards. The unknown words were similar for each pupil.

First, pupils looked at the (stimulus) word on the flashcard, then pupils said the word, next pupils turned over (cover) the (stimulus) flashcard and wrote the word from memory, and finally turned the flashcard back over and checked their response for accuracy by comparing it to the original stimulus. When pupils gave correct responses, I moved on to the next word whereas when incorrect responses occurred I would give immediate feedback and modelled the right answers to prevent pupils from practicing the incorrect responses. Pupils were given several learning trials for each word and the words are considered mastered when pupils completed the learning trials for three times consecutively.

During the second cycle, changes were made to the CCC procedures whereby maintenance and drilling procedure were conducted systematically and positive reinforcement was included to motivate pupils to complete the learning trials. In Cycle 2, there were a total of 20 words which consisted of 5 known words and 15 unknown sight words for Cycle 2. The five sight words were the words that pupils had difficulty the most to score in the post-test Cycle 1.

5.4 Findings

In order to answer research question 1: Can Cover, Copy, Compare (CCC) strategy for sight word recognition help improve reading fluency among low proficiency Year 2 Cekap pupils? Data from two methods were triangulated. They were the pre-test and post test results and observation checklist.

Pre-test and post-test

Pre-test was administered before the intervention and post test was conducted after the intervention in the two cycles respectively. Pupils were given a pre-test and post-test in two areas; Part A: recognition of sight vocabulary in isolation and Part B: reading fluency which was calculated by using a reading fluency rubric in terms of accuracy, smoothness, pace and rate.

Table 2

Differences in percentage of pupils' progression level from pre-test and post-test result in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 for Part A: Sight Word Recognition in Isolation.

Level of progression	Cycle 1		Cycle 2	
	No. of pupils	Percentage (%)	No. of pupils	Percentage (%)
Excellent progress	1	25	4	100
Moderate progress	2	50	-	-
Minimal progress	1	25	-	-
Total	4	100	4	100

The comparison of two tests show that all the pupils (100%) showed improvement after 2 cycles for Part A: Sight Word Recognition in Isolation. This means that the strategy used, CCC strategy for sight words recognition is effective in improving pupils' ability to identify the sight words automatically.

Table 3

Differences in percentage of pupils' progression level from pre-test and post-test result in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 for Part B: Reading fluency

Level of progression	Cycle 1		Cycle 2	
	No. of pupils	Percentage (%)	No. of pupils	Percentage (%)
Excellent progress	-	-	4	100
Moderate progress	3	75	-	-
Minimal progress	1	25	-	-
Total	4	100	4	100

The comparison of two tests indicate that all the pupils (100%) showed improvement after 2 cycles for Part B: reading fluency. This improvement suggests that the CCC strategy for sight words recognition is effective in improving pupils' ability to read the text fluently in four aspects which are sight words accuracy, smoothness, pace and rate.

Observation checklist

Observation was done with the help from other observer using checklist. Based on the result, the total frequency of 'always' for all the aspects looked which were pupil's responses and behaviour towards Cover, Copy and Compare strategy, meaningful drilling, error correction procedure and modelling technique during the CCC session increased from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. The total frequency of aspects analysed indicated that the CCC strategy for sight word identification is effective in helping pupils to improve their reading fluency.

Second research question: How does the use of Cover, Copy, Compare (CCC) strategy for sight word recognition help to improve reading fluency among low proficiency Year 2 Cekap pupils?, is answered using data gathered from two different methods which were observation checklist and interview.

Observation Checklist

Behavioural notes were jotted in the observation checklist during the intervention session. After the data was analysed, it was shown that the CCC strategy encourages pupils' active participation. Besides, the systematic drilling and maintenance procedure in the CCC strategy helps to build automaticity in word recognition. During the intervention session, it was found that the CCC strategy encouraged self-correcting in pupils. Error correction procedure used during the intervention was effective in helping pupils to recognize words correctly.

Interview

An interview session was conducted with the pupils. Based on the data gathered, it is clear that the pupils' responses were consistent with the result of post-test and observation checklist as they agreed that the CCC strategy is effective for developing sight words identification to improve reading fluency. This could be seen when the issues found from the observation checklist correspond with pupils' perceptions. According to the pupils, the CCC strategy allowed them to participate actively throughout the CCC instruction session. Besides that, the pupils agreed that the CCC strategy provides drilling and maintenance procedure to enhance memory retention on the words. Other than that, the pupils responded that the CCC strategy encourage self-correcting.

5.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to improve pupils reading fluency by developing pupils' sight word automaticity. The intervention aimed to help pupils read smoothly, easily, and readily with freedom from word recognition problems. The theory of behaviourism was effectively implemented throughout the CCC instructions. Based on this research, it can be concluded that the improvement shown in pupils' marks from the pre-test to the post test indicated that the intervention used which was the CCC strategy is effective in helping pupils to improve their reading fluency. The used of drilling and maintenance, error correction and modelling technique procedures contributed to the success of the CCC strategy in helping pupils improved their reading fluency.

5.6 Reflection

There are strengths and weakness in the study conducted. One of the strengths is that the strategy used is very effective to the pupils. The results show the pupils were able to recognize sight words automatically and read smoothly with freedom from sight word recognition problems. In addition, acquiring basic acquisition of sight words from this study will further help the pupils to sit for their 2.0 LINUS second reading screening test that will be held in September. There are added benefits to using the CCC strategy whereby pupils can be independent when using the CCC in the future. The strategy takes little time to learn, and once pupils show mastery of the strategy, a teacher can decrease the amount of verbal or gestural prompting provided, thus allowing pupils to use the CCC strategy independently. The weakness is that this study used the same amount of unknown words for each pupil in each session. The findings indicated that the pupils had different rates of acquisition and this may affect their learning of the sight words.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION RESEARCH

There are a few suggestions for future researchers of the study. One of the suggestions is that to conduct a research by assigning the number of unknown words based on a student's individual acquisition rate. Apart from that, a lot of references associated with this study are not easily obtainable or accessible to local researchers as most of the studies carried out were mostly from the western perspective. Based on this concern, it is suggested that more studies be carried out among Chinese, Tamil or National primary school pupils. Other than that, this study only focused on developing sight word competencies to improve reading fluency. It is recommended that future researchers use the CCC intervention to improve spelling among second language learners.

REFERENCES

- Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025). (2012). Putrajaya: Malaysia Ministry of Education.
- Mok Song Sang. (2010). Psikologi Pendidikan dan Pedagogi Murid dan Alam Belajar. Kuala Lumpur. Penerbitan Multimedia Sdn. Bhd.
- Nesamalar Chitravelu, Saratha Sithamparam & Teh Soo Choon. (2005) ELT methodology principles and practice. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford Fajar Sdn Bhd.
- Norman, R.K., & Wood, C.L., (2008). Effects of prerecorded sight words on the accuracy of tutor feedback. Remedial and Special Education, 29(2), 96-107.

Samuels, S. J. (2006). Toward a model of reading fluency. In S. J. Samuels & A. E. Farstrup (Eds.), *What research has to say about fluency instruction* (pp. 24- 46). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

USING VISUALS TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION AMONG YEAR 5 PUPILS IN A SPEAKING ACTIVITY

By:

SAIDAH NABILAH BINTI MOHAMED SALLEH
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, there are many working fields that require people to communicate well in English. This might be because the criterion for success and advancement in the fields of employment is to have good English language skills and fluency in English. So, it is important for pupils to start communicating in English starting from primary school. As we know, verbal language is only a part of the way we usually get meaning from contexts. Things we see also play an important part where we predict, deduce and infer, not only from what we hear or read, but also from what we see around us and from what we remember having seen. Thus, the purpose of this research is to examine the effectiveness of using visuals to encourage pupils to participate in a speaking activity. Visuals can be a very powerful tool to enhance the impact of teaching as it can appeal directly to the pupils' imagination. Hence, this research seeks to stimulate pupils using visuals to "speak" by interacting and communicating in English. A class of Year 5 pupils in a school in Kuala Lumpur were involved in this research. The instrument of this research involves two sources; interview and observation checklist. Before the intervention in both cycles, the participants showed mere participation. After the intervention in cycle 1, there were still a few pupils who were not able to participate well in the activity. However, results from the intervention in cycle 2 showed there was great improvement in their participation in terms of focus, body language and oral language.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

When I was teaching speaking in a Year 5 class, I noticed that a few pupils did not raise their hand. They did not even raise their hand even though they knew the answers. I knew this because when I went to check their work, they could actually do it very well. To a certain extent, I even practically pleaded for someone, anyone, to participate. The pupils are good pupils. They paid attention and earned good grades. However, when I asked them one by one the reason they did not want to participate, they told me that they were quite shy and therefore perfectly happy to keep their mouth closed in class. In fact, they didn't volunteer a single answer and prayed that I would not call them. Other than that, most of the teachers use 'chalk and talk' method in the ESL classroom. This traditional teacher-centered way of teaching resulted in pupils losing interest to just listen to what the teacher is saying and started to lose focus.

1.2 Related theory/literature

I used the Communicative Language Teaching approach and Piaget Cognitive Theory of Development to support this research.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The aim of this study is to highlight the role of visuals in encouraging Year 5 pupils to participate in a speaking activity. McDonough, J., Shaw, M. & Masuhara, H. (2013), with the growth of English as an international language of communication (Graddol, 2006) asserts that there is clearly a need for many learners to speak and interact in a multiplicity of situations through the language. Therefore, in order to enhance pupils' language skills, teachers need to know how to use various types of visuals in order to encourage them to participate or engage themselves in their English classroom activities.

There are many types of visuals ESL teachers can use in aiding the pupils' imagination such as PowerPoint slides, maps, posters, photos, picture cards, cartoon strips, realias and many more. For this research, I used cartoon strips and realias as I find them interesting and entertaining enough to

encourage pupil participation in the activity. Wright (2010) also believed that sometimes it is amusing to teach the words for basic concepts like illustrating everyday activities through an unusual or amusing picture.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

3.1 General Objective

My objective for this research is to be able to encourage Year 5 pupils to participate in a speaking activity through the use of visuals. According to Liaw (1997), teachers should offer English language learners a language-rich environment in which pupils are constantly engaged in language activities. Thus, the use of visuals would help as it can prompt pupils to talk about them, carry out discussions with everyone as well as answer questions.

3.2 Specific Objective

As my objective is to encourage participation among Malaysian ESL primary school pupils by using visuals, I need to specifically study how visuals can be used to make the pupils want to participate orally.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

From my observation during the preliminary investigation, the pupils identified for this research are the pupils who did not participate as actively as the other pupils. The table below shows the participants identified for this research.

Table 1
Target participants

Participant	Gender	Race	Socio-Economic status	Proficiency level
P1	Male	Malay	Low	Low
P2	Female	Malay	Average	Low
P3	Female	Malay	Low	Average
P4	Female	Malay	Average	Average
P5	Male	Malay	Low	Low
P6	Male	Malay	Low	Low
P7	Female	Malay	Average	Low
P8	Male	Malay	Average	Average

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

5.1 Data gathering methods

The data gathering methods for this study involved two sources which are qualitative and quantitative methods.

For the data gathering method, I believe that using qualitative method is the best way to collect data. According to the Oxford Journal, qualitative method is defined as field research because the investigation is carried out in the usual environment where a phenomenon occurs, rather than in controlled laboratory settings (1999). Therefore, using this method would be best as this research aims at the pupils and teachers in the school.

The other method that I used to collect data is at quantitative method. Direct observation can allow for quantitative or qualitative data collection. However, quantitative data collection can reveal the occurrence or non-occurrence of specific behaviors, or frequency of occurrence (Berry, 2005). For this research I chose to use observation checklist as I want to measure the pupils' behavior in order to determine their participation in the activities. I collected data that choose to measure several variables using observation checklist.

5.2 Preliminary investigation

Based on the problem statement, I conducted a listening and speaking activity to observe the participation of Year 5 pupils in the classroom. To gather the data, I used an observation checklist. While the participants were discussing in groups, my partner and I observed them by attending to each group and observed their behaviour. From the observation, I tabulated the data and analysed it.

5.3 Action

According to Mills (2011), action research designs are systematic procedures done by teachers (or other individuals in an educational setting) to gather information about, and subsequently improve, the ways their particular educational setting operates, their teaching, and their student learning. It means that it is meant to improve the teaching and learning based on the information gathered from the research. Basically, it is the integration of action which is implementing a plan with research such as an understanding of the effectiveness of the implementation.

Kemmis & McTaggart (2000) describe action research as participatory research. It means that action research emphasises participation and action. In other words, it seeks to understand the world by trying to change it, collaboratively and following the reflection to improve it to be better. For this research, I have followed Kemmis and McTaggart's model as I found it suitable for this intervention.

5.4 Findings

Interview

I recorded and transcribed the interview and from the analysis I came out with 5 emerging themes. There are 5 items that were the focus of the interview. From the interview, all the participants' response towards the use of visuals in the classroom, especially in the speaking activity is positive.

Observation checklist

Participant	Cycle 1		Cycle 2	
	Without visuals	With visuals	Without visuals	With visuals
1	X	/	X	/
2	X	/	/	/
3	X	X	X	/
4	X	/	/	/
5	X	/	X	/
6	X	X	X	/
7	X	/	/	/
8	X	/	X	/

From the table above, it is concluded that before intervention using visuals in the first cycle of intervention, all participants could not participate in the speaking activity like the rest of the Year 5 pupils. While in cycle two, most of the participants still were not able to participate well in the activity before intervention. However, after the intervention in cycle two, I could see that all participants could take part in the speaking activity.

In a nutshell, I could conclude that the strategy I used, which was the Kemmis and McTaggart's model of action research, had shown great improvement from the first cycle to the second cycle. In the first cycle, I could see that there were a few participants who did not give full participation during the speaking activities, however, in the second cycle, all participants could focus better in the activities. They were also able to be engaged during the activity, display more confidence in speaking and reflecting on the activity.

5.5 Conclusion

From the research, it is proven that the Year 5 primary school participants could participate well in the speaking activity. Hopefully, it would benefit them in the future in equipping them with more confidence to communicate orally in English.

5.6 Reflection

Moving from the traditional “chalk and talk” method to using visuals in the classroom has shown great improvement in term of pupils’ participation during the activities. The participation of pupils has increased and this could be seen in their discussion and interaction during the intervention. By showing and using visuals, it helps to prompt them to talk.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This action research generally seeks to encourage the pupils to participate in an ESL classroom. Specifically this research seeks to help pupils to participate in a speaking activity using visuals. It also hopes to help pupils to become motivated to talk in English using the intervention. The use of visuals is common in many classrooms but there will be exclusive results if more interesting visuals were used.

The research has been limited to an investigation of just eight ESL pupils. A larger participant size might render more conclusive results and give greater validity to my findings. My research findings only apply to the speaking skill. While the findings pertain only to speaking, insights obtained could also be useful in any other skills.

Other than that, the researcher should also focus more on the selection of text used for reading and time allocation for the reading part. The selection of the reading text should consider the familiarity, level of difficulty, and students’ interest. Besides choosing a suitable reading text, the time allocated for reading also needs to be considered. As some of the words in the text are challenging for the lower-intermediate pupils, the researcher needed more time to explain the meaning.

REFERENCES

- Berry, J. (2005). Quantitative Methods in Education Research. Retrieved on 21st August 2014 from <http://www.edu.plymouth.ac.uk/resined/quantitative/quanthme.htm>
- Graddol, D (2006), *English Next*. British Council. London.
- McDonough, J., Shaw, M., Masuhara, H. (2013). Observing the Language Classroom. *Material and Method in ELT: A Teacher’s Guide*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. United Kingdom.
- Mills, G (2014). *Action Research* (5th ed.). Pearson Education Limited. London.
- Vale, David. (1996). *Teaching Children English: a training course for teachers of English to Children. Visual and Other Teaching Aids*, p.105-106. Cambridge University Press. Melbourne, Australia.
- Wright, A (2010). *Pictures for Language Learning*. 18th ed. Cambridge University Press. United Kingdom.

THE USE OF LINED PAPER TO IMPROVE YEAR 5 LOW PROFICIENCY STUDENTS' HANDWRITING

By:

SALINI A/P ARMUGAM
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to apply the technique of using lined paper to help improve Year 5 students' handwriting. A total number of 10 students from Year 5 in Sekolah Kebangsaan Taming Jaya, Seri Kembangan Balakong were the participants in the research that I carried out. A preliminary investigation was carried out to know the number of students that needed handwriting assistance through the use of checklists. The focus of the research is to identify the effectiveness of the use of lined paper to improve students' handwriting in terms of their letter formation, writing on the line and spacing between words. The methods that were used throughout the research were teacher's reflective journal, document analysis and interviews. The findings of the research showed that the use of lined paper with tracing letters improved students' handwriting. Some of the suggestions for future research are like incorporating motor components such as gross motor, fine motor, and oculomotor skills together with the use of existing intervention on lined paper with tracing letters, extending the current research by focusing the importance of having legible handwriting amongst the lower primary students in Year 1, 2 and 3 and by inculcating the importance of the element positioning before implementing the use of lined paper with tracing letters during the research.

Key terms: lined paper, handwriting

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Handwriting is a significant part of the classroom day for early elementary students. It constitutes one of the main means of communicating ideas in written form especially in schools. Despite the advances in technology and the easy access to computers and notebooks, most of a student's schoolwork requires mastery of the written word.

1.1 Reflection on Teaching Experience

Based on my teaching experience, I found out that many students in the second level education from the age of 10-12 years old are still struggling to cope with legible handwriting. My experience of teaching the writing skill in the Year 5 low proficiency classroom had led me to identify some handwriting problems amongst students. The lack of vital skills such as writing on the line, correct shaping of alphabets and pencil grasp are the main factors which led to poor handwriting performance. According to Berninger & Rutberg (2006), "Poor handwriting performance has been linked with students' low self-esteem, frustration, peer acceptance, and negative school performance." Hence, these skills are necessary in ensuring legible handwriting amongst the students which has a great influence on their self-esteem as well as academic achievement.

1.2 Related Theory

This section discusses the theory involved in this study.

Bandura's Modeling Theory

Albert Bandura recognized that many overlooked a significant aspect of learning, the observation of others. Observational learning is also highly associated to Bandura's Social-Cognitive Theory where learning occurs through the replication of others' behaviour. There are four main processes in an observational learning. The first process is attention in which students' attention is a vital element in ensuring them to pay attention to what is happening around. The second process in observational learning is retention. During this process, students are expected not only to recognize the observed behaviour but also to remember it. Next, production is the third process which deals with the capability of students in producing the act that they have observed through the model. The last

process is motivation. Students must be motivated to reproduce the acts they have observed through the model.

Montessori Approach

The Montessori approach touches on basic themes such as motor foundation skills which are the basis for handwriting acquisition and must be in place for students to progress in their handwriting. In this approach, lined paper is introduced and children learn to shape the letters between the two parallel lines and also learn that the letters of words are hitched together. These steps can be implemented in the classroom by requiring students to trace letters in an unlined paper and then to lined paper. Montessori also believes that the child's absorbent mind helps him or her to absorb the images of the letters. Hence, the use of tracing paper to trace letters will help students to know the correct formation of letters.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

My experience of four week teaching English in this class led me to identify an issue in which some students have difficulty in the production of legible handwriting. Alston & Taylor (1987) stated that factors that contribute to illegible handwriting are incorrect letter formations or reversals, inconsistent size and height of letters, variable slant and poor alignment, and irregular spacing between words and letters believe that students face this problem throughout their schooling years and it has become a habit for them to continue having illegible handwriting. Some of the students from this classroom face major handwriting problems when it comes to written work.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

3.1 General Objective

This research is directed in helping to identify the effectiveness of the use of lined paper to improve students' handwriting during any lesson which requires writing tasks. The use of lined paper served as an intervention to improve students' illegible handwriting in the aspects of letter formation, poor spacing between letters and words and writing on line.

3.2 Research Questions

Research questions are the fundamental aspects in the research that I have carried out in helping to improve students' handwriting. These research questions are listed as below:

- a) Does the use of lined paper help to improve students' handwriting?
- b) How can the use of lined paper help to improve students' handwriting?
- c) What are the students' perceptions on the use of lined papers to help to improve their handwriting?

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this study included 3 boys and 7 girls, with 7 right-handed and 3 left-handed students from the class 5 Cemerlang which is a third class in Year 5 out of 8 classes in the same level. Most of the students were identified from middle class families where their English Language proficiency was below the average level. Hence, students in this class could be classified in the lower intermediate level.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The research on wanting to know about the students' handwriting was carried out by using an action plan and appropriate methods. The chosen intervention that was used to see improvement in students' handwriting was lined paper. The use of this intervention was looked into and analysed thoroughly in order to know its' effectiveness to improve handwriting amongst the students. There are a number of models in the field of research that can be used to carry out the intervention. I had used Stephen Kemmis's Model of cyclical nature of the typical action research process. It consists of 2 cycles and each cycle has four steps which are plan, act, observe and reflect. This cycle was further revised based on the data that I had collected and analysed at the end of Cycle 1.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods and Analysis

Teacher's Reflective Journal

Teacher's reflective journal was used immediately after each session of the intervention by the researcher to record the observed behaviour. These observed behaviours from the students were recorded in a form of table in order to know students' change in behaviour towards the intervention together with teacher's personal views and possible reasons for the specific behavior. The observed behaviours were tabulated in a form of table by including teacher's personal views and opinions for the occurrence of the particular behaviour. Lastly, these observed behaviours were categorized under several emerging issues.

Document Analysis

In order for me to analyze students' handwriting, one of the things that I have carried out was by collecting students' written work in a form of documents. Collection of students' written work will be gathered and analyzed using certain criteria of legible handwriting. The samples of handwriting collected from students were analysed according to three aspects of handwriting which were on the formation of the letters, spacing between letter and words as well as writing on line.

Interview

Students were interviewed to know their perceptions on the use of lined paper with and without tracing letters. I have constructed same type of questions to be asked to the students. These chosen questions played different roles depending on the responses that I had gotten during the interview process with the students. The whole interview process was translated in the form of interview transcripts in order for researcher to analyse the students' answers according to the 3 aspects of handwriting.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

During my English Language lesson, I have carried out a number of observations during the preliminary investigation. During the observations, I found out that some of the students' handwritings were not legible and they face difficulties in terms of getting the correct shaping of alphabets, spacing between the alphabets as well as writing on the line.

5.3 Action

Cycle 1

Firstly, it is necessary for a researcher to identify problems experienced by students during neither activities nor participation. For instance, in my research, students' handwriting were analysed individually in order to provide the necessity guidance and help through the use of lined paper which is the research intervention. The next step that was carried out in this planning stage was by analysing the type of activities and environment which hinder students' performance. In knowing the students' environment which had become the hindrance for them to be able to produce legible handwriting, I had carried out a number of steps. During one of these steps, some of things that I have carried out to identify the cause for students' handwriting were in terms of external factors, internal factors or a combination of both.

Next, during this phase of action, the intervention on using lined paper was carried out in order to improve students' handwriting. The first step that I had carried out during the implementation of the intervention is by requiring students to write a short parafigure about themselves on a piece of paper. The second step was by modeling the legible handwriting on the whiteboard as a reference to the students on how to form letters, how to have correct spacing and how to write on the line. The third step was by giving out lined paper to these 10 identified students. They were required to copy a short parafigure from their textbooks on the given lined papers. The final step when I carried out the intervention was on requiring these students to write a short parafigure on their exercise books of common lines.

The next phase as mentioned in Kemmis's Model is the observe phase which comes after the action phase. This phase of observation was carried out after the implementation of the intervention together with the data obtained through the use of different data collection methods. One of the ways that I used to identify students' behaviour towards the use of lined paper was on taking down brief words and phrases and later write a description in the form of teacher's reflective journal on everything that I could remember about the events that I have observed. Therefore, these information that i had obtained would serve as the data to analyse the effectiveness of lined paper to improve students' handwriting.

The final phase as mentioned in Kemmis's Model is the reflect phase which focuses on the overall view on the effectiveness of the intervention carried out in the research to improve students' handwriting. It was found out that the use of lined paper merely seemed less effective in improving students' handwriting in terms of the letter formation, spacing between letter and words as well as writing on the line. Therefore, the improvement that has been made to the lined paper was by adding tracing letters on it.

Cycle 2

The first phase of planning as in Kemmis's Model is the revised plan which is from the result of Cycle 1 intervention. This initial plan was revised and adapted in order to have a newly revised plan on the intervention for Cycle 2. Hence, one of the main adaptations that were made to the lined paper was by adding tracing letters into it. This is because, tracing letters were believed to provide students with confidence to learn and know the legible formation of letters.

The next phase that comes after revising the plan is the action phase as found in the Kemmis's Model. During this phase, students were given lined paper with tracing. They were required to trace out the words on the given lined papers. The next step was by providing more lined papers with tracing letters to the students and this practice was carried out by requiring them to complete 15 minutes of homework at home.

The next phase as mentioned in Kemmis's Model of Cycle 2 is the observe phase which comes after the action phase. A number of observations were carried out after the intervention on lined papers with tracing letters were given out to the students during the writing lesson. The data obtained during observations were analysed and tabulated based on emerging issues.

The final phase as mentioned in Kemmis's Model is the reflect phase which focuses on the overall view on the effectiveness of the intervention carried out in Cycle 2 to improve students' handwriting. It was found out that the use of lined paper with tracing letters seemed effective in improving students' handwriting in terms of the letter formation, spacing between letter and words as well as writing on the line.

5.4 Findings

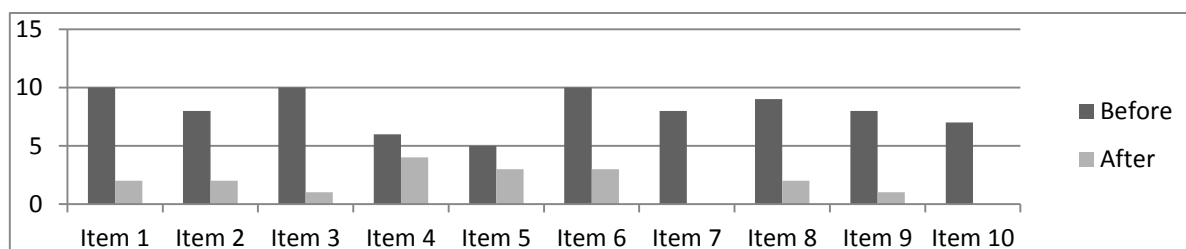


Figure 1: Comparisons for identification of students needing handwriting assistance before carrying out the intervention and after carrying out the intervention

Figure 1 shows the comparisons for identification of students needing handwriting assistance before carrying out the intervention and after carrying out the intervention. From the figure shown, I found out that a number of 10 students needed handwriting assistance before carrying out the intervention on lined paper and lined paper with tracing letters. The same number of students showed progression after carrying out the intervention through the reduction of number of students in the figure shown.

Next, the figure also shows that 8 out of 10 students left too much of space between letters and words when I analysed their handwriting before carrying out the intervention. This problem occurred in handwriting because students were not taught the correct technique to use in order to get the proper spacing between letters and words during any writing tasks. A number of two out of the 10 students needed handwriting assistance after carrying out the intervention. There is a decrease in the number of students from eight to two is because the technique of using pointer finger was exposed to the students during the modelling session. Hence, the outcome shows that the use modelling technique as one of the steps in carrying out the intervention helped students to learn about not having too much space when writing.

Besides, from the figure, I also found out that the total number of 10 students did not know the legible way of forming letters correctly before the intervention. The inconsistent letter formation in all the sentences made their handwriting to be illegible. One of the reasons for this handwriting illegibility is due to lack of practice in learning the correct directional method to shape the letters. On the other hand, after the intervention, the total number of student reduced to only one student who faced problem in getting the correct letter formation. This reduction in number of students is because of the use of lined paper with tracing letters which had eventually helped in terms of learning to trace dotted line letters on a lined paper.

5.5 Conclusion

As for the conclusion in the research that I have conducted, the need to have clear, neat handwriting is of utmost importance in today's society. One of the reasons for me to come up with such a statement is due to communicating ideas, writing and signing checks, signing legal agreements, and other daily activities need clear handwriting that is legible by others who will reading the written work. The overall results on the effectiveness of the use of lined paper and lined paper with tracing letters showed improvements and progression in students' handwriting. This improvements are necessary in ensuring that students had not only gained the skills of having legible handwriting but as well the knowledge of knowing that legible handwriting cannot be produced without the understanding on the intervention used during the research.

5.6 Reflection

Throughout the research, there were some limitations to this action research. One limitation was that the study used only 10 participants out of 34 students in the whole class. Another limitation was students' inability to generalize to the extent that I would have desired. While a drawback to during school program is the limitation of time that the researched had with the students when carrying out the intervention. One of the disadvantages is that there was less one-on-one intensive with the students. In order to overcome this disadvantage I would integrate a component into the classroom throughout the lesson to overcome the time limitation gap which occurred during intervention.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Some of the suggestions for future research are like incorporating motor component such as gross motor, fine motor, and oculomotor skills together with the use of existing intervention on lined paper with tracing letters, extending the current research by focusing the importance of having legible handwriting amongst the lower primary students in Year 1, 2 and 3 and by inculcating the importance of the element positioning before implementing the use of lined paper with tracing letters during the research for example by helping students to place their desk or table no higher than their elbow when they are sitting on the chair. The next step would be by helping to tilt paper to the left for right-handed students and tilt paper to the right for left-handed students. Therefore, these suggestions are expected to be achieved in upcoming research.

REFERENCES

- Alston, J., & Taylor, J. (1987). *Handwriting: theory, research, and practice*. New York: Nichols Publishing.
- Berninger, V. & Rutberg, J. (2006). *Relationship of finger function to beginning writing*. *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology*, 34(3), 198-215.

DEVELOPING YEAR 2 DINAMIK PUPILS' READING OF SINGLE SYLLABLE WORDS USING THE PHONICS APPROACH

By:

SITI NORSHAHILA BINTI SAEMAN
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to develop Year 2 Dinamik pupils' reading of single syllable words through phonics approach. The study was conducted in two cycles utilising two strategies – vowel first blending and sound by sound blending. The target participants were 12 Year 2 pupils in a primary school in Kuala Lumpur. These pupils were identified through a diagnostic test administered on 42 pupils of the same class. To assess the effectiveness of the strategies used, the target participants sat for a pre test. Results from this test were then compared to that of the post test. The increase in pupils' scores in the post test and the consistent improvement in the formative assessment confirmed the effectiveness of the strategies used. To probe further on how the strategies were effective, their observable behaviour was recorded in the teacher's log and observers checklists during the sessions. Qualitative analysis of the data from these sources revealed that the strategies used enhanced pupils' phonemic awareness, word recognition and blending abilities. These findings indicated that the strategies used during the intervention had effectively helped the Year 2 Dinamik pupils to develop their early reading skills.

Key terms: single syllable words, phonics approach, vowel first and sound by sound blending.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of teaching English in the Malaysian classrooms is to expose pupils to four main skills of the English language which are listening and speaking, reading, writing. This will give them basic knowledge and experiences on learning foreign language besides mastering it for future amendments especially to further studies in various field, to fill up job vacancy and so on. The pupils are expected to achieve some standard of English Language within the curriculum when they finish their primary school. They have to master certain areas in the language including the main skills specified earlier with the addition of knowledge of grammar, language skills and language arts. They have to be able to pass the basic knowledge and ability in listening and speaking, the reading with wide knowledge of vocabulary and mechanics of writing up to short simple essay in giving out opinions and own thought within their level. These are to develop their maturity in liking, using and applying the language in classroom context.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

While teaching phonemic awareness and reading skills in a Year 2 English language classroom, I could see some pupils pronounced the individual sounds of a word, for example 'park' as /gɑ:k/ which should be /pɑ:k/. This is because, they tend to forget the individual sound they have sounded out earlier and ended up blending the wrong sound, thus pronouncing the word wrongly. Besides, I could spot that the pupils were imitating the pronunciation of new vocabulary. I could see that most of the time, when they knew certain words and its pronunciation, they segmented the words to its individual sounds and it is often incorrect. For instance, they knew the word 'sad' but they segment it wrongly as /sæd/ which the /æ/ sound as 'are' but not the correct one which is 'air'. Thus, it is predicted for them to blend the word as 's(are)d' rather than 's(air)d'. However, they can still blend the word as 's(air)d' which clearly do not match with what they segmented earlier. Thus when they encountered new words that they never heard of, I could see that many of them were able to give me the correct individual sound for the word especially consonants but having problems in blending the sounds altogether to form the correct pronunciation of that particular word.

1.2 Related theory/literature

Skinner (as cited in Tompkins, 2006) explained that "students learn to read by learning a series of discrete skills. Teachers use direct instruction methods to teach skills in a planned, sequential

order. Information is presented in small steps and reinforced through practice activities until students master it because each step is built on the previous one" (p.21).Piaget (1969) also posited that "children are active and motivated thinkers and learners. This definition of learning and children's role in learning requires a re-examination of the teacher's role: instead of simply being dispensers of knowledge, teachers engage students with experiences so that they modify their schemata and construct their own knowledge"(p.67).In the context of this study, pupils may know how to sound the particular or individual sound in a certain word, for example 'run' as /rʌn/ or incorrectly as /ru:n/ which then blended incorrectly to be 'run' (read as r-u-n) instead of 'run' (read as r-are-n).This is already considered as blending problems whereby they already know the individual sounds of words yet have difficulty in combining sounds especially for unrecognisable or non-common words in their reading. Thus, a strategy that will help them in combining existing knowledge of sounds with newly learnt knowledge (the blending) is necessary.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

As stipulated in the Curriculum Standard Documents for English, primary school pupils are expected to be able to read through blending the individual sounds into appropriate sounds of a word by the end of Year 2. Hence it is of great needs that these Year 2 Dinamik pupils be taught strategies that will enhance their ability in reading.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

The general and specific objectives of this study are presented below.

3.1 General Objective

To develop Year 2 Dinamik pupils' reading of single syllable words through the phonics approach specifically using blending.

3.2 Specific Objectives

- a)To investigate if blending can be used for Year 2 Dinamik pupils to read the single syllable words
- b)To ascertain how the activities used in the intervention help Year 2 Dinamik to master blending of individual phoneme to form words

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The participants for this study are from a Year 2 class which I taught the English language during my third phase of the practicum. This school is located in the urban area in Kuala Lumpur. I chose 12 out of 42 pupils from this class based on their performance during diagnostic test which I conducted on 5th and 6th weeks of my practicum in the school. The 12 pupils chosen are the weaken ones who had scored the lowest or could only read one or two words in the diagnostic test among the 42 pupils in the class.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The procedure planned and applied throughout the study are as discussed below:

5.1 Data gathering methods

The data gathering method used throughout the study in both cycles involved the use of pre-test and post-test, teacher's log for every sessions recorded by the teacher after the intervention, observer's checklists from every sessions recorded by the observer invited and the formative assessment conducted at the end of each session with the pupils.

5.2 Preliminary investigation

The end of Year 1 examination results reflected that most of the pupils in 2 Dinamik are very good in English, somehow their language ability contradicted in term of reading single syllable words

individually by using the phonics approach, the blending technique in particular. They still have difficulty in reading single syllable words.

The English language teacher interviewed felt that pupils should have mastered the blending skills for single syllable word and able to blend individual phoneme to form words. Somehow, they may have difficulties in reading using blending skills if they are not familiar with the words shown or to read independently. They were fully dependent on the teacher sometimes which made quite a number of them mispronounce the sound, forgot the individual sounds learnt and made silly mistakes in reading using blending technique.

The diagnostic test administered on the Year 2 Dinamik pupils revealed the actual number for pupils who are the weaker ones among the 42 pupils in the class. They scored the lowest (could only read one or two words) in the diagnostic test.

5.3 Action

I selected the Dave Ebutt's Model of Action Research in discussing the recommended action in my study. The Ebutt's model is a clear continuous step on carrying out an Action Research where it incorporates feedback within and between circles of action. This model is also focusing more on evolution of overall plan through a spiral analogy as it is important for a researcher to be careful at when looking and identifying particular problem or issue to work at. We have to make sure in order to come out with a precise and workable issue before we could actually proceed to the next stage in doing the Action Research. The six steps in Dave Ebutt's Model of Action Research carried out in both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 in this study are general idea, reconnaissance, overall plan, Action 1, monitoring and reconnaissance and Action 2.

5.4 Findings

The increase in scores in the post-test result (difference in marks) supports that the intervention carried out is able to develop pupils in reading the single syllable words by using phonics approach. The intervention does help pupils in learning the blending strategies to read single syllable words and hence help to overcome the problem identified in the early stage of the study.

Table 1.
Comparison of pre and post test scores

Pupils	Pre test (a)		Post test 1 (b)		Post test 2 (c)		Difference in marks (b-a)		Difference in marks (c-a)	
	Marks	%	Marks	%	Marks	%	Marks	%	Marks	%
P3	16	64	24	96	23	92	+8	32	+7	28
P5	18	72	25	100	24	96	+7	28	+6	24
P18	21	84	24	96	25	100	+3	12	+4	16
P20	14	56	22	88	24	96	+8	32	+10	40
P22	19	76	20	80	25	100	+1	4	+6	24
P29	14	56	23	92	25	100	+9	36	+11	44
P30	17	68	24	96	23	92	+7	28	+6	24
P32	16	64	24	96	25	100	+8	32	+9	36
P34	18	72	22	88	25	100	+4	16	+7	28
P37	22	88	25	100	25	100	+3	12	+3	12
P39	13	52	21	84	23	92	+8	32	+10	40
P40	16	64	19	76	23	92	+3	12	+7	28

Every result obtained from the formative test administered during the intervention for all the sessions showed that, the pupils benefited the learning sessions conducted in acquiring the phonics approach knowledge (refer Table . Although they achieved satisfactory level in acquiring the blending knowledge, they still underwent remedial sessions for vowels 'i' and 'u'. This is to maximise the findings gathered at the end of the study in order to equip pupils with knowledge of phonics approach in reading skills to be successful and as expected.

Table 2.
Pupils' formative assessment scores in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

Pupils	Cycle 1										Cycle 2			
	S1		S2		S3		S4		S5		S2		S4	
	M	%	M	%	M	%	M	%	M	%	M	%	M	%
P3	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	10	83	12	100
P5	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	12	100	12	100
P18	6	100	6	100	4	67	6	100	6	100	12	100	12	100
P20	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	12	100	12	100
P22	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	12	100	10	83
P29	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	3	50	12	100	8	67
P30	6	100	6	100	4	67	6	100	3	50	12	100	12	100
P32	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	4	67	12	100	12	100
P34	6	100	6	100	4	67	6	100	6	100	12	100	12	100
P37	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	12	100	12	100
P39	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	4	67	12	100	12	100
P40	6	100	6	100	6	100	6	100	4	67	10	83	10	83

The strategies used which were vowel first blending and sound by sound blending and taught repeatedly throughout the intervention were able to make the pupils recognized the short vowel phonemes and the consonants phonemes sounds within the single syllable words. By learning these blending strategies, the pupils are aware towards the individual sounds consist in a word to be read. They practice the knowledge learnt via activities and tools like pictures which enhance their understanding of the blending of individual phonemes in forming words. This is in reference to the emergent issues identified within the observer's checklist and teacher's log throughout the sessions during the intervention classes. The pupils observable behaviours within the data gathering methods used in the study further support the successfulness of the strategies used in this study.

5.5 Conclusions

Phonics approach through the usage of the vowel first blending and sound by sound blending strategies in this study has helped pupils to recognize the individual short vowels sounds as well as the consonants sounds within the particular words.

5.6 Reflection

The strength of the study is giving solutions to teachers particularly as well as the school community to further enhance and modify their methods, approach and strategy in teaching so that it would suit the pupils needs. Whereby the weaknesses of the study are the pupils were a bit bored throughout the sessions as I only used pictures during the sessions and the effectiveness of the practitioner in applying the phonics approach. "When we try to isolate a consonant sound like the one for t, we tend to add a schwa (/tuh/ = /ə/) or some similar vowel sound, so that instead of saying a pure /t/, we sometimes say /tuh/ (or /teh/ or /tih/, etc.)" (Stevenson, 1950, para 8).

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In accordance to the study discussed, I have come to realization on suggestions for further research. Despite developing on reading skill which specify into the single syllable words CVC through phonics approach, I could suggest for other research as well in relation to my study which are improving the writing skill through segmentation, enhancing pupils' vocabulary through pre-reading stage and enrich pupils reading skill to become independent readers.

REFERENCES

- Lancashire Literacy Team. (2012). Supporting Children's Phonics and Reading. United Kingdom: Lancashire County Council.
- Skinner, B. (1953). Science and Human Behavior. New York: Macmillan.
- Stevenson, N. (1950). Thoughts on long vowels, short vowels and the Stevenson Program.
Retrieved September 2, 2014, from Stevenson learning skills: <http://stevensonsemple.com/>
- Tompkins, G. E. (2006). Literacy for the 21st Century: A Balanced Approach, 4/E. California State University, Fresno: Pearson.

USE OF PICTURE CARDS TO INCREASE PUPILS' VOCABULARY LEARNING IN READING COMPREHENSION FOR YEAR 5 CEMERLANG PUPILS

By:

SITI ZULAIHA BINTI MOHD HANAZAN
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

Several research studies have proven the high correlation of word knowledge with reading comprehension. If pupils do not adequately and steadily improved on their vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension will be affected. This study aims to increase pupils' vocabulary learning in reading comprehension for year 5 Cemerlang pupils in teaching of reading skill by using picture cards. The participants of this study are five participants from Sekolah Kebangsaan Tun Hussein Onn. The preliminary investigation shows that the participants lack in vocabulary. They could not comprehend the reading text and answer the questions because their lack of vocabulary. The implementation of this action research consists of two cycles which is Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. Each session consist of three sessions. For the purpose of this study, five participants sat for a pre-test. From the results, the intervention was carried out. After the intervention period, the participants sat for a post-test. The results show the interventions carried out were moderately effective. The participants also sat for formative tests after each intervention. The function of formative test is to monitor participants' learning and to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by the researcher to improve her teaching and by the participants to improve their learning. The researcher writes logs after each session in Cycle 2. The researcher also interviews the participants about their feelings toward the English language and the intervention carried out. Three issues emerged in the teacher's logs and interview. These issues help the researcher to answer research question two. The researcher believes that the intervention carried out was successful with the targeted participants.

Keywords: Picture cards, vocabulary, reading comprehension

1.0 INTRODUCTION

English is taught as a second language in all Malaysian primary and secondary schools in the country. In learning English language, the most important aspect is vocabulary (Allen, David & Valette (1997) who state that without sufficient vocabulary learners cannot understand others or express their own ideas. Therefore, people will not be able to use English effectively in their daily life without mastering vocabulary.

1.1 Reflection On Teaching Experience

In semester 7 of practicum at Sekolah Kebangsaan Tun Hussein Onn, the researcher recognized that majority of pupils have problem in comprehending reading texts because their lack of vocabulary. Therefore, they prefer to keep quiet and refuse to take part during discussion activity based on reading texts. The researcher believes that the more vocabulary words pupils know the better they are in comprehending the meaning of the words. When pupils have vocabulary, they would not have problems in comprehending the reading text. Therefore, they were able to discuss and answer questions related to the reading text.

Learning vocabulary is very important because nothing can be conveyed without vocabulary though the person is very good in grammar (Wilkins, 1972). Therefore, English teachers should find an effective technique in teaching English vocabulary efficiently as the suitable technique will enable the learning to occur within a reasonable period of time. Based on the teaching experience, the researcher would like to focus the study on how to increase pupils' vocabulary learning in reading comprehension by using picture cards.

1.2 Related Theory/Literature

During the intervention, the researcher used picture cards to introduce new vocabulary to the participants in reading comprehension lessons. Picture cards enabled the participants to generate their thinking skills in brainstorming words. This technique of teaching is related to Cognitive Learning Theory (CLT). According to Piaget and Vygotsky, CLT is based on how people think (Ormrod, 2008). When you look at an object, a certain area of the brain is activated. Therefore, the researcher believes that visualizing based on the picture cards enabled the participants to learn vocabulary and comprehend the reading text better. This is supported by Rumelhart (1994) which is visualization can help participants to focus, remember and apply their learning in a new and creative situation.

Generally, reading is a complex and active process of comprehending written language. When people read a text, they have decoded and comprehended the meaning of the written symbols, imagined the scene in their head and agreed or disagreed with the text (Goodman, 1970). In this study, the researcher focuses more on an interactive approach. Interactive approach occurs when the researcher used both bottom-up and top-down processes simultaneously or alternately in comprehending the reading text (Aebersold & Field, 1997). In other words, participants use their knowledge of the content to predict what is in the text (top down) and relate their understanding of affixation to guess the meaning (bottom up) of the text. Therefore, interactive approach enables the participants to comprehend the reading text better.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

This study focuses on how to increase pupils' vocabulary learning in reading comprehension by using picture cards. Based on the researcher's observation, pupils have very limited vocabulary. They could not comprehend the reading text and lead them to face difficulty in comprehending the questions related to the text. The researcher concludes that lack of vocabulary influenced pupils in comprehending reading text. Vocabulary knowledge is very important to reading comprehension as one cannot understand the reading text without knowing what most of the words mean.

The researcher decided to use visual-aid in introducing new vocabulary to the pupils. In a teaching context, visual-aids are items that are designed to support written or spoken information so that it can be understood more easily. In this study, the visual aid used is picture cards. According to Manning (2002), pictures enable the pupils to build mental pictures or images while reading. When pupils are able to construct any mental image from what they read, it is likely that their understanding of the material will be greater than they had not. The researcher believes that the use of picture cards enable the pupils to understand vocabulary better and keep it in their long term memory.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This section discusses the objective of this research.

3.1 General Objective

Generally, this research aims to increase pupils' vocabulary learning in reading comprehension by using picture cards as teaching aids.

3.2 Specific Objective

In this study, the researcher has identified two main objectives which were:-

- To increase pupils' vocabulary learning through brainstorming activity based on the picture cards.
- To enhance pupils' understanding of the reading text by using picture cards.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The subject of this research is year 5 Cemerlang pupils from Sekolah Kebangsaan Tun Hussein Onn of which there were four boys and one girl. They are 11 years old who are Indonesians

(P1 and P5) and Malays (P2, P3 and P4). Generally, the level of participants' English proficiency was very low.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

There were several instruments used in this study. The instruments were tests (pre-test and post-test), formative tests, interview and teacher's logs. Various instruments were used as to answer the two research questions throughout this study. The researcher decided to use picture cards to increase pupils' vocabulary learning in reading comprehension during the intervention.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

The data gathering methods used were tests (pre-test and post-test), formative tests, interview and teacher's logs. The researcher used various methods as to triangulate the data and answers two research questions in this study. Data triangulation occurred when different research methods are employed in order to increase the validity of the research. In this study, the researcher decided to combine both qualitative and quantitative methods in gathering the data. This idea is supported by Creswell (2012), whereby "... the combination of both forms of data provides a better understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data by itself."

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

Diagnostic test was used during the preliminary investigation. Diagnostic test used as to diagnose pupils' level or weaknesses in English language. Based on the results, pupils could not do well because their lack of vocabulary. They could not comprehend the questions and choose the right answers. Though the answers were provided, still they could not do well. The researcher believes that vocabulary influenced pupils to comprehend the questions. For example, most of the pupils could answer question number four because they are familiar with the vocabulary in the question. The vocabulary was closely related to them as it was about teacher and school.

5.3 Action

In this study, the researcher referred to Kemmis and McTaggart Model (1988). This model is a cyclical process. There are four steps in each cycle which is plan, act, observe and reflect. Two cycles were carried out in this study. The researcher used picture cards during the intervention for both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. The difference was the picture cards in Cycle 1 were used at the pre-reading stage only. While in Cycle 2, the picture cards were used through the lesson. For each cycle, there were three sessions of the intervention. The picture cards acted as a stimulus for the participants to brainstorm words that comes to their minds. They can discuss with their group members or refer to the dictionary to find the meaning of the words. The results after the intervention showed progression. Formative tests were carried out after each intervention in both cycles. In Cycle 2, the researcher added two more instruments which were interview and logs. These instruments helped the researcher to answer research question two.

5.4 Findings

This section discusses the findings of this research.

Pre-Test and Post-Test

In Cycle 1, the result of unrecognizable vocabulary was slightly effective as the percentage of reduction was 44%. Meanwhile, the result of unrecognizable vocabulary in Cycle 2 was moderately effective. The reduction of the percentage was 57%. This data shows that the intervention carried out was moderately effective as the percentage of unrecognizable vocabulary decrease for both cycles.

The result of the test scores between the pre-test and the post-test in both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 also showed progressions. All the participants scored 60% in the pre-test and increased to 80% in the post-test in Cycle 1. While in Cycle 2, participants' lowest score in the pre-test was 60% and increased to 90% in the post-test. The results of the Cycle 2 intervention also showed progression.

Formative Tests

Based on the results of formative tests in Cycle 1, all the participants showed good progress as they could score 100% for each session. While in Cycle 2, all the participants (P1, P2 and P3) scored 80% in session 1 and 100% in both session 2 and 3. There were two participants (P4 and P5) who showed slight progress however they scored 80% in Session 1 and 2 and 83% in Session 3. This showed that the intervention carried out was successful with the targeted participants.

Interview

The interview was carried out to answer Research Question 2. The interview was guided by the following questions:

- Do you think learning English language is difficult?
- What do you like during English language?
- Do you like reading any English materials?

Three issues emerged from the interview data. The issues were learning English language was difficult when pupils lack in vocabulary, interesting activities and pictures develop active participation and pictures promoted positive attitudes towards reading. These issues showed that the intervention carried out could attract participants' attention and develop active participations. They believed that learning English language was difficult when their lack of vocabulary.

Teacher's Logs

In teacher's logs, the researcher recalled the situation in class and jotted down the important things or issues arise during the intervention. Three issues emerged from the teacher's logs. The first issue was pictures cards could develop participants' thinking skills. Participants were able to brainstorm words based on the picture cards pasted on the board. The second issue was brainstorming activities developed active participants. Each participant was involved actively in brainstorming words related to the picture cards. The third issue was brainstorming words based on the picture cards enabled the participants to comprehend reading text better.

5.5 Conclusion

In this study, the two research questions constructed earlier could be answered through the findings from the triangulation of data. During the intervention, the researcher used picture cards as her teaching materials to introduce new vocabulary to the participants. Based on the results, picture cards enabled the participants to think creatively and critically. Participants were able to brainstorm and produce words related to the picture cards based on their prior knowledge or experienced. The intervention indirectly helped the participants to increase their vocabulary learning and comprehend the reading text better.

5.6 Reflection

Generally, the research was carried out successfully. Initially, the researcher planned to have five pupils in the class who were very weak in English language as the subject of the study. But, there was limitation faced by the researcher in choosing the participants. The biggest problem was the pupils' case of absenteeism to the school. Hence, the researcher faced difficulty to carry out the intervention with the targeted participants.

The intervention carried out should be suggested to the other English teachers too. This school has very limited facility especially in term of power point. Hence, it was difficult for a teacher to present the pictures into PowerPoint slideshows. Therefore, the other English teachers should try to use picture cards during their lesson. Based on the findings, it showed that picture cards could enrich pupils' vocabulary learning in reading comprehension.

Overall, the intervention carried out was successful to increase pupils' vocabulary learning in reading comprehension. It could enhance participants' involvement during the session. Participants were actively involved during the intervention and showed progression after the intervention.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The researcher would like to suggest for further research to increase pupils' vocabulary learning in reading comprehension by using different techniques. In this study, picture cards were used during the intervention as to compare the effectiveness before and after the intervention. For further study, the researcher would like to suggest three other techniques that can be used to improvise the intervention. Firstly, the researcher would like to suggest the use of animated pictures integrating with ICT in introducing new vocabulary to the pupils. Animated pictures can have different functions in the process of learning. They can have an enabling function if they allow the learner to perform a higher amount of cognitive processing than static pictures. They can also have a facilitating function if they make specific cognitive processes easier to perform through external support (Salomon, 1994). Secondly, English language teachers can also use songs in introducing new vocabulary to the pupils. Songs are almost always directed to the native-speaking population so they usually contain contemporary vocabulary. Hence, pupils could learn vocabulary indirectly through the songs. Lastly, the researcher believes that games could also help the teachers to introduce vocabulary in a fun learning environment to the pupils.

REFERENCES

- Aebbersold, J., & Field, M. L. (1997). *From reader to reading teacher: Issues and strategies for second language classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Allen, David and Vallette, R. M. (1997). *Classroom Foreign Language and English as a Second Language*. New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich.
- Chall, J. S. & Jacobs, V. A. (2003). Poor children's fourth-grade slump. *American Educator*, Spring, 2003. American Federation of Teachers.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational Research; Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Qualitative and Quantitative Research* (4th. ed., p. 3). University of Nebraska–Lincoln: Pearson.
- Goodman, K. (1970). *Reading as a psychologicistic guessing game*. In H. Singer and R. b. Ruddell . (Eds). *Theoretical models and Processes of Reading*. Newark, N.J.: International reading Association.
- Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (Eds.). (1988). *The action research planner*. Victoria, Australia: Deakin University Press.
- Manning, M. (2002). *Visualizing when reading*. *Teaching PreK-8*, 32(8), 89-90.
- Ormrod, J. (2008). *Human Learning* (5th. ed.). New Jersey, NY: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Rumelhart, D. E. (1994). Toward an interactive model of reading. In Ruddell, R. B., Ruddell, M. R., & Singer, H. (Eds.). *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (4th. ed., pp. 864–894). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Salomon, G. (1994). *Interaction of media, cognition, and learning*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Wilkins, D. A. (1972). *Linguistics and Language Teaching*. London: Edward Arnold.

ENHANCING READING COMPREHENSION OF NARRATIVE TEXT THROUGH THE USE OF PICTURES IN A PRIMARY YEAR 3 ESL CLASSROOM

By:

TAN LI ANN
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this action research was to determine if pictures are effective in enhancing Year 3 students' reading comprehension of narrative text. For the purpose of this study, five participants of 3 Nilam, SK Alam Damai who had weak reading comprehension skills were selected. Preliminary investigation showed that the students found answering reading comprehension questions difficult. This indicated that they did not comprehend the text fully and required assistance in their reading comprehension. As such, pictures were used together with the reading text to meet the purpose of this research. Questioning and discussion were conducted during the intervention to assist students in exploring the details in the pictures to comprehend the stories better. This research was conducted in two cycles, and three methods of data collection were used. They are comprehension assessment (pre-test & post-test), questionnaire and interview. Comprehension assessment were conducted before and after the intervention sessions while the students' perceptions towards the intervention were obtained using questionnaire and interview. Results of the study showed that students' post-test scores improved after the intervention sessions and students responded positively towards the intervention in the questionnaire and interview. Hence, it can be concluded that using pictures is indeed useful in enhancing students' reading comprehension of narrative text. In conducting this research, the researcher realised that it had indirectly helped to solve one of the reading problems faced by the students. However, time constraint was one of the limitations in this research whereby the intervention was conducted in a short period of time. One of the suggestions for further research was to conduct this research with a larger group of participants over a longer period of time when more time is available.

Key terms: reading comprehension, pictures, narrative text

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Nilam Project, which was introduced in 1999 to motivate students to read has shown the importance the Malaysian government places on reading. The National Book Council reported there are more young readers after the implementation of Nilam reading programme in schools (New Straits Times, 2012). Generally, there are two types of reading: extensive reading and intensive reading. This research focuses on intensive reading where the students read with specific aim which compromise comprehension skills. Reading for meaning is very essential whether inside or outside the classroom so that young readers can construct meaning and make sense of the written text.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

During Phase 3 practicum at SK Alam Damai, the researcher realised that most of the students can read fluently but not all of them can interpret and understand the reading text completely. Not all of them truly understood what the text is all about and couldn't answer the comprehension questions correctly. The researcher found out during the practicum teaching experience, if the researcher included pictures in the reading lesson's content, students can understand the reading text better. Hence, the researcher realised that to benefit students in their reading environment, the researcher should make use of their interest in graphic orientation and help them to improve in their reading problem.

1.2 Related theory/literature

Based on Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory (1954), learning should be student-centred. Choy & Oo (2008) states that "Teachers using the cognitive theory of motivation need to understand that students must be intrinsically motivated to learn and be fully involved in the work they are doing in class" (p. 29). Hence, teachers as facilitators should motivate students to accomplish

learning goals through their active discovery. As this research focuses on reading comprehension, it is essential for students to develop their cognitive skills after comprehending what they have read.

The Interactive Reading Model proposed by David E. Rumelhart emphasises on the importance of prior knowledge and at the same time encourages quick and accurate processing of the reading text. This theory summarises the interaction of both bottom-up model and top-down model process simultaneously, which allows students to make meaning and comprehend of what they read by using both word recognition of the text and their background knowledge.

The element in Paivio's (1986) Dual-coding theory (DCT) describes "...words and images have different cognitive representations; hence, the human brain uses separate systems for different types of information: the verbal system and the imagery system" (p. 23). The verbal process comprises the written text while the non-verbal process involves the visuals. In this theory, both written text and pictures in comprehension processes are interconnected but independent in comprehending the reading text.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

Reading comprehension, one of the major skills in language learning, is an active and constructive meaning-making process. However, there are students who face this problem whereby they can read and pronounce the words but fail to understand the text. The consequence of this problem affects the reading lesson in the class. This is because when teachers explore and explain the meaning of a reading text to the low proficiency students, the proficient students may get bored and misbehave easily. Teachers will need to spend more time on classroom management and this leads to time constraint for both the teachers and the students to complete the lesson.

The role of reading in the English Language classroom is also clearly stated out in the Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR). It is vital for teachers to ensure students are able to comprehend what they have read by the time they have completed their primary years. This is to fulfil the KSSR's objectives outlined by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2012), "By the end of Year 6, pupils should be able to read and comprehend a range of English texts for information and enjoyment" (p. 2).

Fortunately, teachers today could benefit from the technology to enhance reading comprehension among students. With different types of visuals used in an ESL reading classroom, young learners can be more engaged throughout the reading lessons. Hence to overcome the issue, this study is conducted to investigate whether pictures are contributing to participants' comprehension of the text by allowing them to explore the details in the pictures and link them with the reading text.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

This section discusses the objectives of this research.

General Objectives:

Enhancing reading comprehension of narrative text through the use of pictures in a primary Year 3 ESL classroom

Research questions:

- Have the Year 3 ESL students' reading comprehension of narrative text improved through the use of pictures?
- What are the perceptions of Year 3 ESL students regarding the use of pictures in helping them to comprehend the narrative text better?

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

A total of five students from 3 Nilam of SK Alam Damai were involved in this research. The participants are all nine years old of mix gender, three boys and two girls of the same race, Malay.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

This section discusses the actions taken in this research.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

The researcher used three data gathering methods in this study. Comprehension assessment as the basis for quantitative data while questionnaire and structured interview provide qualitative data.

Comprehension assessment (Pre-test & Post-test)

Lists of comprehension questions were prepared and given to the participants to measure their understanding on the reading text before and after the intervention of using pictures. Considering these comprehension questions as teacher-made test, the data gathered will give a clear picture in monitoring the participants' results and evaluating the intervention's effectiveness.

Questionnaire

To gather data in a fast and simple way, a set of questionnaire that seeks to answer a range of specific questions is designed and distributed to the participants after the intervention of using pictures. The questionnaire designed contained open-ended questions and clip art figures so that there are less words and less burden for the young learners in providing necessary information.

Structured Interview

A list of questions were prepared ahead in order to obtain further feedback from participants in a structured manner. This will give the participants the time to verbalise their thoughts in giving reasons and elaborate responses. An audio recording device was used to gather the information from the participants due to time limitation in recording the feedback given by all five participants in the study.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

Preliminary investigation was conducted through observation, survey and unstructured interview.

Observation

The researcher was an active participant observer and had observed how students read and respond to the text during the reading lessons in class. Based on the researcher's observation, it is found that some students did not know what they are reading although their eyes moved along with the text. The recorded field notes showed that students who did not understand the story could not answer the comprehension questions correctly, be it verbal or written form.

Survey

The researcher prepared a list of six close-response questions to find out the types of reading materials 3 Nilam students read, how often students understand what they have read and their responses regarding the use of pictures. Based on the results, it indicates that students preferred reading materials like story book and comic that contained visual elements and all of them agreed that they looked at the pictures while reading. Thus, the researcher realised that the visual elements did play an important role in assisting students to comprehend the reading texts.

Unstructured interview

The researcher also interviewed Year 3 Nilam's former English teacher, Puan Ong, 'to verify if the students are weak in reading comprehension. It was evident in the interview that students did encounter problem in reading comprehension in class. The teacher agreed that students often struggle in what they read and could not answer the comprehension questions correctly.

5.3 Action

The action research model that the researcher chose is Kurt Lewin's (1946) model as it describes steps which involve the process in a 'spiral' cyclical process. This model involves a series of steps which composed the process of planning, action and evaluation about the action's results.

In the first cycle of this research, at the planning stage, the stories were modified to suit to the students' proficiency level and the comprehension assessment were created based on Barrett's taxonomy. In the post-test story, the pictures were arranged randomly at both sides of the paper. After planning, the action of pre-test and post-test was conducted. Further data regarding the intervention was collected using questionnaire and individual interview. Based on the observation, some students were able to read out the story proficiently but struggled to answer the comprehension questions. During the interview, students needed much assistance as they were quite passive and reluctant to speak. After reflecting on the results, all students gave positive feedback regarding the intervention. However, some students showed slight improvement while some showed no progress in comparison of the pre-test and post-test, hence the intervention was only moderately successful.

In this second cycle of the research, at the planning stage similar to Cycle 1, the stories were modified and the comprehension questions were created. In this cycle, the researcher made the stories in table form with pictures next to each paragraph to ease the students' comprehension. For action stage, similar intervention was used but two intervention sessions were conducted before the post-test. During the intervention, instead of leaving the students to explore the pictures and the text themselves, the researcher used questioning and discussion to assist participants in analysing the pictures' details to comprehend the text better. Also, questionnaires and group interviews were conducted to elicit responses from the students. Based on the observation during the intervention, students showed better interest towards the stories and did not struggle much compared to first cycle in answering the comprehension questions. Being in groups, they were also more active and spoke more during the interview. To reflect on the data collected, all five participants showed better improvement in their post-test, thus the intervention was more successful compared to the first cycle.

5.4 Findings

In the pre-test in Cycle 1, the scores showed that students did not perform well in their reading comprehension. Therefore, changes were made in the intervention sessions in Cycle 2. This brought about improvement in all of the students' achievement during the post-test. Overall, three student demonstrated 43% improvement and two students showed 28% progression. The comparison of the pre-test and post-test for both cycles is summarised in the bar chart below:

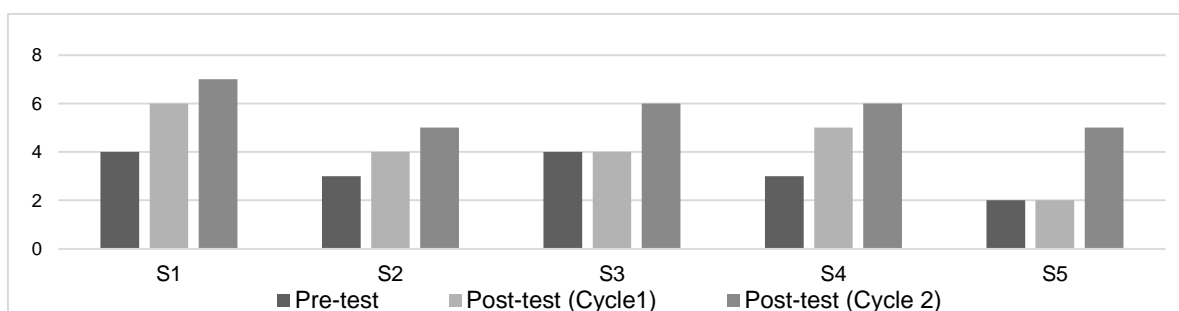


Figure 1: Comparison of Pre-test & Post-test of Cycle 1 & 2

The increase in the level of progression proved that the students did comprehend the narrative text better with the use of pictures. This answered the first research question of this study "Have the Year 3 ESL students' reading comprehension of narrative text improved through the use of pictures?"

To derive a deeper understanding on what the students actually think, the findings from the questionnaires and structured interview were analysed and triangulated. To address the second research question, "What are the perceptions of Year 3 ESL students regarding the use of pictures in helping them to comprehend the narrative text better?", the data from the structured interview has supported the insufficient information in the questionnaires regarding the "Why" and "How" concerns.

The results from the questionnaires shows that all 5 students agreed that they liked the pictures in the story. Similar feedback was also shown in the structured interview sessions with the support of reasons why students liked the pictures. Pertaining to the effectiveness of pictures to assist students' comprehension, in the questionnaire, students responded the pictures did assist them to understand the story better. Further opinions on how the pictures helped them in their reading comprehension were gained in the interview. The students could provide descriptions of the plot, characters, setting and vocabulary in the narrative text. Also, all 5 students responded that they would not understand the story if the pictures were removed. With the absence of pictures, they stated that they couldn't see on the flow of the story and the story would be less funny. This demonstrated that with the help of pictures, students' comprehension is enhanced and the intervention was effective in this research.

5.5 Conclusion

Overall, this research has helped the researcher in understanding the learning problems faced by the students in reading. The results and findings in this study proved that the interesting and exciting pictures used have improved students' understanding on the narrative text so that they are more productive in their process of reading. Therefore, it can be concluded that with the use of pictures and the researcher's guidance during the intervention, students' reading comprehension of narrative text was enhanced, which helped them in achieving maximum learning in the classroom.

5.6 Reflection

Conducting this research has helped the researcher to be more aware towards the needs of the students' in their learning and identify ways to improve the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The problem in reading should not be taken lightly as it is a vital skill in the learning process of an individual. Thus, conducting the intervention in this research has indirectly solved one of the reading problem faced by the students and improved the outcome of learning.

The strength in this research is the use of colourful pictures that were arranged side-by-side matching to match the plot of the story while the researcher played the role as the facilitator. This eases the students' reading process as the researcher facilitated the students to explore the details in each drawing to comprehend the narrative text in paragraphs. Besides, the pictures that were relevant, appropriately and cautiously chosen helped in the findings of this study. However, due the lack of interactive hours, the intervention was carried out at a short period of time. If sufficient time is available, rather than group interview, the researcher would prefer to conduct individual interview in order to obtain in-depth ideas from the students.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In line with this, it is recommended that besides pictures, other visual materials such as comic strips, posters, tables, charts, photos that can also be used to assist students' comprehension of reading text. This allows language teachers to select and develop different types of visual materials and studies the various effects on reading comprehension. In addition, besides focusing only on narrative text, future research can also look at other text types so that the effect of visual materials can also be explored and measured in factual and expository text.

Moreover, for the data collection method in future research, the researcher would suggest the use of the observation method to observe how students react towards the use of pictures in their reading text. This is to ensure that there would be data elicited from the researcher as well and not solely dependent on feedback from the students. Since this study focuses on a relatively small sample group, additional research can be conducted to further validate this study's findings with a larger group of participants from various classes and background.

REFERENCES

- Choy, S. W., & Oo, P.S. (2008). *Exploring professional development for educators*. Singapore: CengageLearning Asia Pte Ltd.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2012). *Primary school standard curriculum: English SK year 3*. Putrajaya, Malaysia: Curriculum Development Centre.

New Straits Times. (2012, February 25). Nilam programme boosts reading habit. *New Straits Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nst.com.my/>

Paivio, A. (1986). *Mental representations: A dual coding approach*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

THE USE OF CUISENAIRE RODS IN IMPROVING YEAR 4 PRIMARY STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE ARTICLES IN THE NOUN PHRASES.

By:

WAN MAISARAH BINTI WAN HUSIN
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine if the use of Cuisenaire rods is effective in improving the Year 4 primary students' understanding of articles in the noun phrases. 7 selected students involved in the study. The students sat in a pre-test to see their achievement before the intervention. After the intervention, the students sat for a post-test. It was to measure their achievement after the intervention. The result pre-test and post-test were compared and the findings showed the improvement of the students' understanding of the articles in the noun phrases in the pre-test and post-test result. The findings were supported by the written works in the students' learning log. Furthermore, it also focused on the functions where each article embedded noun phrases according to the sounds. The students were drilled the use Cuisenaire rods in understanding the articles in the noun phrases. The finding also showed effectiveness from the students' perspectives. It is also supported by observation and checklist data.

Key terms: drilled, Cuisenaire rods

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is important for the students to understand the rules of articles in the noun phrases to write and speak accurately. Marlyana Maros ,Tan Kim Hua , Khazriyati Sallehudin (2007) stated that the students find learning grammar hard and boring because they do not understand the grammar rules and functions. They also commented they do not get enough practice. Thus, this study was conducted to improve the students' understanding of the articles in the noun through the use of Cuisenaire Rods.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

I went to a school in Kuala Lumpur for practicum sessions. I was given Year 4 to conduct teaching. During the lessons, I found that the students often omitted the articles in the noun phrases. For example "he set up company with his friends" instead of "He set up a company with his friends" , "Miss Maisarah, may I go to toilet? Instead of "Miss Maisarah, may I go to the toilet? They also positioned the articles wrongly. These are the example I wrote "a mother, a father" but the student copied "mother a, father a". Thus, I concluded that Year 4 students were struggled with the use of articles in the noun phrases.

1.2 Related theory/literature

Behaviourism and deductive approach were used in the study. B.F Skinner in his theory stated that language development is the result of a set habits(Ludescher,2009). This set of habit form from the drilling session. The students were drilled on the use of the articles in the noun phrases through the stimulus (colour-coded Cuisenaire rods).

The deductive approach is teaching grammar in isolation. According to Cross(2002) there were four steps of teaching in isolation where it helps the students to notice the grammar rules. First, give explicit instruction where the articles in the noun phrases taught explicitly. Second,frequency is where the repeated practices of the use grammar rules. Third, perceptual salience is highlighting the students' attention to the grammar rules. Fourth, task demands is given the grammar tasks to the students.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The issues of concern in this research is second language learner have problem in using articles in the noun phrases. It is due to the first language interference, Bahasa Melayu. For example, Bahasa Melayu does not have articles in front of noun phrases. This could be a reason why year 4 students always omit and position the articles wrongly. This suggests the students did not understand the rules and functions of articles in the noun phrases. Thus, this study focused on improving the students' understanding of the articles in the noun phrases.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

The aim of this study is to see whether the use of Cuisenaire rods can improve the students' understanding of articles in the noun phrases.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

This research was carried out among Year 4 students. There were 4 Malay females and 3 Malay males. They achieved 40% and below in the diagnosis test administered.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The action used as followed:-

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

Four different methods used in the research: tests(pre-test and post-test), the students' learning log, interview and observation and checklist. All the instruments were used due to its purpose and its effectiveness so that the intended data could be collected.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

To determine students' particular areas of needs, conducted diagnostic test, observation and document analysis. The data collected showed that the students struggled with the use of articles in the noun phrases.

5.3 Action

After the preliminary investigation, I conducted the first cycle in the intervention. I administered the pre-test. Then, I introduced the articles a/an/the by using the colour-coded Cuisenaire rods for 30 minutes. Then, I conducted a drilling sessions with articles in the noun phrases with the Cuisenaire rods. I conducted music chair. The reason of conducting music chair was to integrate fun learning where the students played and learnt at the same time. Lastly, I conducted post-test.

For cycle 2, I conducted two lessons. First, I introduced the articles 'a' and 'an' in the noun phrases and the colour coded Cuisenaire rods. Second, I drilled the students with the articles 'a' and 'an' by the using of the Cuisenaire rods. Third, I introduced a fixed sentence (I have +definite articles+ noun phrases).The purpose of introducing this structure was to prepare them for the post-test. Fourth, I introduced the article 'the' in the noun phrases by using of the Cuisenaire rods. I asked them to be in pairs and demonstrate the position and function of articles in the noun phrases through Cuisenaire rods.

5.4 Findings

Pre-test and post-test

Table 1

Comparison of the Students' Pre Test and Post Test Marks in the cycle 1

Students	Pre test		Post test		Differences in Marks	
	Marks (___/10)	Percentages (%)	Marks (___/10)	Percentages (%)	Marks (___/10)	Percentages (%)
S1	2	20	7	70	5	50
S2	4	40	7	70	3	30
S3	6	60	8	80	2	20
S4	4	40	3	30	-1	-10
S5	4	40	9	90	5	50
S6	2	20	3	30	1	10
S7	3	30	3	30	0	0

Table 1 above shows the comparison of students' pre-test and post-test marks in cycle 1. Based on the table above, the highest mark for pre-test is 60% and the lowest scored is 20%. For post-test, the highest marks is 90% and the lowest is 30%. Five students, S1, S2, S3, S5 and S6 show increment in marks. The highest increment is 50% while the lowest increment is 10%. S7 shows stagnation in mark. S6 shows decrement in mark which is -10%.

Table 2

The level of progress between the Pre-Test and Post Test

Level Of Progress	Number of Students	Percentages (%)
Progression	5	72%
Stagnation	1	14%
Regression	1	14%

There are three levels of progressions shown in the Table 2. 72% of the students are placed in the level of progression. 72% of them show improvement in marks +1 and more. Only one students or 14% remained in stagnation level. One student or 14% is positioned in regression level.

Table 3

Comparison of Students' Pre-test and Post-Test Marks Cycle 2

Students	Pre-test		Post-test		Differences in Marks	
	Marks (___/10)	Percentages (%)	Marks (___/10)	Percentages (%)	Marks (___/10)	Percentages (%)
S1	6	60	10	100	4	40
S2	7	70	10	100	3	30
S3	6	60	10	100	4	40
S4	3	30	10	100	7	70
S5	9	90	10	100	1	10
S6	3	30	8	80	5	50
S7	3	30	10	100	7	70

Table 3 shows the comparison of students' pre-test and post-test marks in the cycle 2. Based on the table above, the highest scored for pre-test is 90% and the lowest is 30%. For post-test, the highest marks by a student is 100% and the lowest is 80%. All of the students show increment. The highest increment is 70% and the lowest increment is 10%. Six students scored 100% in the test.

Table 4*Level of Progress between Pre-Test and Post Test*

Level Of Progress	Number of Students	Percentages (%)
Progression	7	100%
Stagnation	0	0%
Regression	0	0%

Next, there are three levels of progression shown in the Table 4. All students show progression.

Student learning log

Based on the data from the student learning log, Students' answers were analysed and interpreted of total frequency of Yes and total frequency of No.

Table 5*The total frequency of Yes and No*

Items	Total Frequency Yes ($\frac{\quad}{7}$) (%)	Total Frequency No ($\frac{\quad}{7}$) (%)
1) What have we learnt today?	100	0
2) What does the green rod represent?	100	0
3) What does the pink rod represent?	100	0
4) What does the yellow rod represent?	100	0
5) What does the red rod represent?	100	0
6) What do you understand about the articles in a noun phrase?	100	0
7) Can you write on the arrangement of the Cuisenaire rods?	72	28

The table above show all the students answered items 1,2,3,4,5,6 correctly. These items related to the matching of the colour rods to articles. All the students answered correctly the colour of the Cuisenaire rod with the definite articles in the noun phrases. All of them understand the green rod represented article 'a', the pink rod represented article 'an', the yellow rods represented article 'the' and the red rod represent noun phrase. Item 2,3,4, and 5 clearly show the students understand the association and the connection of the colour with the each definite articles in the noun phrases.

Whereas the item 6 and item 7 visibly showed the students' understanding on the articles and noun phrases and the position of each article in the noun phrases. For the item 6, 100% or all the students answered the items correctly. For item 7, 72% were able to answer the item correctly and 28% answered it incorrectly. 28% were not able to arrange the Cuisenaire rods in the correct order.

Interview

Based on the interview data the students agreed the use of Cuisenaire rods helped in improving their understanding. They claimed that the use of Cuisenaire rods are effective as it is a versatile instrument. They can touch and manipulate the Cuisenaire rods. They also commented that Cuisenaire rods facilitate their learning. In addition, it promotes fun learning.

Observation and checklist

Based on my observation, I agreed that the use of Cuisenaire rods were effective. The students' responded better during the session. They also showed their understanding of articles in the noun phrases during demonstration sessions. They also remembered the positions and functions well.

5.5 Conclusion

The intervention aimed to improve the students' understanding of the noun phrases. The findings showed the use of Cuisenaire rods was effective and the objective of the study was achieved. The objective was to improve the students' understanding of the articles in the noun phrases by the use of Cuisenaire rods was achieved as the findings showed improvement in the achievement pre-test and post- test.

5.6 Reflection

From the findings, using Cuisenaire rods in improving the students' understanding of the articles in the noun phrases appears to be effective. However, there were few limitations that the researcher noticed throughout the process of conducting this study. First, the instrument used, observation and checklist. I found that I need to see the students' responses in more details. Then, the students have limited vocabulary. It affects the tasks given where the students were not able to come up with their own vocabulary during demonstration sessions. Lastly, my instruction in when asking them to answer the students learning log was confusing. Thus, they answered it wrongly.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study has successfully proved that the use of Cuisenaire rods were effective to the students in improving their understanding of articles in the noun phrases. As such, to collect richer data instrument like observation and checklist should be modified. Besides, the teacher needs provide more vocabulary to the students before the intervention. Teacher should plan the instruction that will help the learner understand. Lastly, use other variation coloured in the future research. For example used different colour to represent the noun phrases: black-consonant, brown-vowel.

REFERENCES

- Cross, j. (2003) . Noticing in SLA: it a valid concept. *Tesl ej*, 3.
- Ludescher, (2009). Language acquisition. *Behaviorism*. Retrieved from:
[Http://www2.vobs.at/ludescher/ludescher/lacquisition/behaviourist/seite6.htm](http://www2.vobs.at/ludescher/ludescher/lacquisition/behaviourist/seite6.htm)
- Marlyana Maros ,Tan Kim Hua , Khazriyati Sallehudin (2007) . **Interference** in learning English grammatical errors in English essay writing among rural Malay secondary school students in Malaysia. *Jurnal e-Bangi*, 15.

USING PICTURES IN A NARRATIVE TEXT DURING SHARED READING TO IMPROVE YEAR 4 MOONS' READING COMPREHENSION

By:

FARAH RUSDIANA BINTI SULAIMAN
ENGLISH STUDIES DEPARTMENT

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to identify how far pictures help to improve Year 4 Moon pupils' reading comprehension skills by using pictures as well as to improve their reading comprehension skills in a narrative text during shared reading activity. A total of five Year 4 Moon pupils (10 years old) were involved in this research. The pupils' works showed that they have the disability to comprehend the plain text which hindered them from answering the comprehension questions. The focus of this research is to improve the pupils' reading comprehension skills by using pictures. As such, pictures were provided in every paragraph to meet this purpose. A few sessions were conducted in the classroom which aimed to improve pupils' reading comprehension skills during shared reading by using the narrative text. The data was collected from the pre-tests and post-tests which were given before and after the interventions to the target pupils. The findings revealed that the pupils' reading comprehension skills have indeed improved and have eventually helped them in answering the comprehension questions given.

Key terms: Reading comprehension, pictures, shared reading.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the essential skills for primary school pupils to acquire in order to gain knowledge from printed materials. Reading provides opportunities to study language: vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and the way we construct sentences, paragraphs and texts. Pupils connect their thoughts with the pictures provided to stimulate their thinking the way they should understand the literature (Ambigapathy, 2002). She proposes the importance of making the pupils understand what they read so that they will not only know how to pronounce the words but will also comprehend the text.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

This researcher carried out her practicum in Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Sempurna. She taught the class Year 4 Moon. Initially, the researcher conducted a reading lesson with her pupils using stories on the topic of 'Care for The Sea'. But the researcher noticed that although the pupils could pronounce every word in the text very well. The pupils could not relate the text with the meaning inferred or comprehend the content of the text. Some pupils gave her chunks of what they understood from the text while some of them just stared blankly and pretended not to look at the researcher because they were afraid she would ask them to tell me what they understood from the text they had just read.

1.2 Related theory/literature

In order to figure out the best way to overcome the problem of this study, the researcher used theory of cognitive and will be supported by top down approaches.

2.0 FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The issue of concern in this research is that a minor group of pupils in Year 4 Moon had not yet acquired the identifying skill in reading. The pupils could pronounce the words from left to right with the correct pronunciation. However, they could not understand what actually the text was all about and when they were asked about the text, they could not answer the questions given. This happened because they did not have the framework of knowledge about the texts like the words used for example which lead to the difficulty of processing the information and thus they can complete the

questions given. This problem started to become an issue as the pupils have to understand the text that they read because eventually they have to continue with the follow up activities later like completing the comprehension questions, sequencing the events and predicting. Accordingly, this study focuses on how to improve Year 4 Moons' reading comprehension skills using pictures in a narrative text during shared reading.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

To identify how far pictures help to improve pupils' reading comprehension skills in a narrative text during shared reading activity.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

Five pupils from Year 4 Moon of Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Sempurna were involved in this research. There were three boys and two girls and all of them are Malays.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The following actions were taken to conduct this research:

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

Three different kinds of instruments were used in this research to help the researcher to collect the data. They were tests (pre- test and post-test), observation field notes and questionnaires. All the instruments were used due to its purpose and its effectiveness so that the intended data could be collected.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

In order to determine pupils' particular areas of needs, the researcher conducted observations, interviews and document analysis. Both data collected from those methods conducted proved that the pupils really have the problem of comprehending the text.

5.3 Action

After conducting the preliminary investigation, the researcher conducted her first intervention (Cycle 1) which was using a narrative text entitled "Wildo and the Desert Island Adventure". The researcher allocated 15 minutes for every session which included the shared reading activity followed by seven comprehension questions to the pupils. The researcher observed the pupils during teaching and gave questionnaire to the pupils after the lesson. The pre-test used an open type of questions while the post-test used the multiple-choice questions.

For the Cycle 2, the researcher used a story entitled 'Finbo'. The researcher allocated 15 minutes for every session. The pre-test and post-test both used multiple-choice type of questions but different questions. 10 minutes were allocated for the shared reading and five minutes for the pupils to answer the comprehension questions.

5.4 Findings

Pre-test and Post-test

Cycle 1

Table 1
A comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test

Pupils	Pre-test		Post-test		Difference	
	Number s of correct answers	Marks (%)	Numbers of correct answers	Marks (%)	Numbers of correct answers	Marks (%)
P1	3	43	7	100	+4	+57
P2	4	57	7	100	+3	+43
P3	0	0	5	71	+5	+71
P4	0	0	7	100	+7	+100
P5	0	0	7	100	+7	+100

Table 1 shows the comparison of pre-test and post-test of the pupils' reading comprehension skills. In pre-test, P1 has answered 3 out of 7 questions correctly which carries 43% of the mark. P2 answered 4 out of 7 questions correctly which carries 57% of the mark. P3, P4 and P5 could not answer any of the questions given. In the post-test, P1, P2, P4, and P5 basically scored 7 marks during the post-test which carries 100% of the mark. Their marks are the highest. However, P3 only scored 5 marks out of 7 marks which carries 71% of the mark.

Cycle 2

Table 2
A Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test

Pupils	Pre-test		Post-test		Difference	
	Numbers of correct answers	Marks (%)	Numbers of correct answers	Marks (%)	Numbers of correct answers	Marks (%)
P1	1	14	7	100	+6	+86
P2	2	29	7	100	+5	+71
P3	2	29	6	86	+4	+57
P4	2	29	7	100	+5	+71
P5	3	43	7	100	+4	+57

Table 2 above shows the comparison of pre-test and post-test of the pupils' reading comprehension skills. In the pre-test, P1 has answered 1 out of 7 questions correctly and carries 14% of the mark which is the lowest mark for pre-test. The P2, P3 and P4 has answered 2 out of 7 questions correctly which carries 29% of the mark. P5 has answered 3 out of 7 questions correctly which carries 43% of the mark. In the post-test, P1, P2, P4, and P5 basically scored 7 marks during the post-test which carries 100% of the mark. Their marks are the highest. However, P3 only scored 6 marks out of 7 marks which carries 86% of the mark which are the lowest mark of them all.

Field notes

Table 3
The Criteria of the Observation Field Notes

NO.	CRITERIA	P1		P2		P3		P4		P5	
		S1	S2	S1	S2	S1	S2	S1	S2	S1	S2
1.	Describe some pictures by using their own words	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
2.	Come out with their own words learnt previously to describe the pictures	/									
3.	Give their own opinions towards the pictures showed			/		/					
4.	Describe the characteristics of the character/ objects			/						/	
5.	Answer questions given with some help from teacher'					/				/	
6.	Paraphrase the sentences in the story by using their own words				/						
7.	Answer questions given with the help of the pictures				/						
8.	Predict the next event with the help of the pictures							/			
9.	Do some gestures to show understanding									/	/
10.	Give full attention during the reading activity	/		/		/	/	/	/	/	
TOTAL		3	1	4	3	3	2	2	3	5	2

From Table 3, all the responses given by the pupils were categorized into ten responses. The first 8 responses are the oral responses while the second 2 last responses are the body language responses. The table is used for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 to see the responses that the pupils gave during the shared reading towards the story read.

Questionnaire

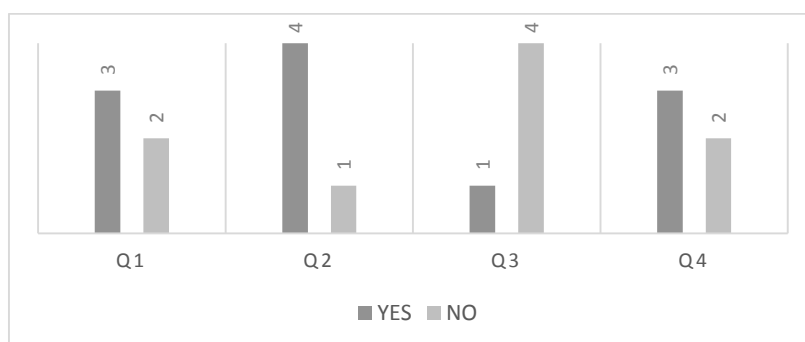


Figure 1 : The level of agreement and disagreement for the questions

Figure 1 above shows the level of agreement and disagreement towards the questions given in the questionnaire. The questionnaire is given to the pupils after they had finished both sessions.

5.5 Conclusion

Based on the findings, those methods used have answered the research questions designed. For the first research question, it showed that the pupils' reading comprehension skill increased after I used the pictures to teach narrative texts during shared reading by referring to the scores in their pre-tests and post-tests. For the second research question, it showed that the pupils were engaged actively in the lesson, could identify the main points of the lesson and the pictures used were effective in making the pupils comprehend the text.

5.6 Reflection

There are strengths and weaknesses in the study that I have conducted. The strength of my study is the pupils were able to participate actively in the activities that I have planned. They gave full cooperation and paid attention to my class because they loved to see the images that I had added on in the text. The next strength of the study that I conducted is that it has answered my research questions. This shows that the strategy of using pictures in the text ~~is~~ worked as the pupils were able to relate the pictures with the text. The teacher from the school also helped me to gather data that I wanted.

The weakness from this study is the planning of the action. For example, as the time given was limited, I did not really have time to collect enough data. In fact, during the holiday, I even had to go to the school to collect more data in order to answer the research questions. The next weakness is the unsuitable instruments that I first used.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Some suggestions for further research would be to improve the supporting feature from still photos to animation or moving images and to find ways to be time-effective.

REFERENCES

Ambigapathy, P. (2002). English language teaching in Malaysia today. Asia Pacific

ENHANCING YEAR 5 KEPUJIAN READING COMPREHENSION BY USING PICTURES, WORD CARDS AND DRILLING

By:

FATIN NABILAH BINTI NOORDIN
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension is very essential as the ultimate goal for every reading is comprehension. A child should know 90 to 95 percent words or vocabulary meaning in a text to be able to derive meaning from the text. If they failed to do so comprehension would be possible to happen. However the introduction and explanation on the familiar vocabulary inside the text could help the students' to comprehend the text. The familiar vocabulary inside the text would help the students to guess and understand the meaning of the words, phrases and sentences thus allowed the students to comprehend the overall meaning of the text. This study investigates the usage of pictures, word cards and drilling in introducing and explaining the familiar vocabulary inside the text to help the students in comprehending the text. This study is administered among 7 out of 26 students who are poor readers inside the classroom. The preliminary investigation by using the observation, formative assessment and unstructured interview are conducted to identify the participants for this study. Based on the results of the pre-test and post-test, formative assessment, observation checklist and questionnaire yield that the usage of pictures, word cards and drilling helped the students in comprehending the meaning of the familiar vocabulary inside the text. However it is not very effective in helping all of the seven participants in comprehending the overall meaning of the text.

Key terms: Comprehension, pictures, word cards, drilling

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Each year, students were introduced to a certain number of vocabulary. If the students' failed to master the vocabulary, they may encounter difficulties in reading comprehension. The introduction and explanation on the familiar vocabulary inside the text could help the students' to comprehend the text. The familiar vocabulary inside the text would help the students to guess and understand the meaning of the words, phrases and sentences thus allowed the students to comprehend the overall meaning of the text.

1.1 Reflection on Teaching Experience

During my previous practicum, I found out that some of my students were facing with reading comprehension problem. They were unable to understand the text they read as they were having difficulties in understanding the meaning of the vocabulary inside the text. The failure to understand the text read hindered their ability to answer the comprehension questions given correctly. It was obvious that the ability to answer the comprehension questions correctly showed that the students understood the text well. The students were often uninterested during the reading lesson. They were reluctant to read the text given and participated in the discussion of the text at the reading stage. Every time I asked them to explain the meaning of the sentences or paragraph in the text, they would only remained silent. Besides that they were also unable to answer the comprehension questions given correctly. Sometimes it was obvious that they were randomly choosing the answer for the comprehension questions. This strengthened my believed that these students' were having a problem in reading comprehension.

1.2 Related Theory/ Literature

Two underlying theories which were Behaviorism and Multiple Intelligence theory were used in this study. Behaviorist as stated by Skinner in 1938 proposed that a good way to learn vocabulary well was by using it repeatedly (Zhang, 2011). Learner form associations between words and objects or events in their environment. These associations become stronger as soon as experiences are repeated (Amelsvoort, 2012). Garder (1991) stated that students possessed different kind of minds and therefore learn, remember, perform and understand in different ways. Thus the usage of pictures

and word cards was one of the ways in addressing the students' problem in reading comprehension.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

Some of the students in my class were dealing with a problem in reading comprehension. They were unable to understand the overall meaning of the text due to the inability to understand the vocabulary inside the text. This problem hindered them to answer all the comprehension questions given to them correctly. It was very crucial to address this problem immediately in order to meet with the requirement for standard five syllabus whereby the students were required to read various type of text and comprehend it well. Preliminary investigation was conducted and 7 students were identified as the poor readers in the classroom.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

This research aimed on helping the poor readers, the seven students identified earlier in enhancing their reading comprehension by using pictures, word cards and drilling.

3.1 Research Questions

- Were pictures and flashcards able to enhance the poor readers reading comprehension?
- What were the poor reader's perception in the use of pictures and flashcards in enhancing their reading comprehension?

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this research were the students from Year 5 Kepujian as I was teaching their class during the practicum. Seven students out of 26 students were identified as poor readers after the preliminary investigation was conducted.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

This section discussed on the model used in the research which was Kemmis and McTaggart Action Research Model. The steps taken in both cycles which were planning stage, action stage, observation stage and reflection stage.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

Three data gathering methods were used in the first cycle which were the pre-test and post-test, formative assessment and observation checklist. One data gathering method which was the questionnaire was added in the second cycle.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

The preliminary investigation by using the observation, formative assessment and unstructured interview were carried out to gather the evidence of reading comprehension problem among the students in my class. Seven out of 26 students were identified as the poor readers based on the result of the preliminary investigation.

5.3 Action

Before the intervention was carried out, the pre-test was administered among the participants to find out their ability in comprehending the reading text. The ability to answer the comprehension questions indicated their level of understanding on the text. The familiar vocabulary in the text were introduced and explained to the students. Drilling on the meaning of the vocabulary was done in the pre reading and reading stage. After that discussion on the text was carried out with the students. During the discussion, I tried to use the familiar vocabulary to help the students to guess and understand the meaning of the phrases and sentences in the text. Based on the result of the first cycle the level of the text was reduced as it hindered the students to comprehend the text well

even after the intervention was carried out. Similar procedure was carried out in the second cycle.

5.4 Findings

The findings yield the effectiveness of the intervention after the first and second cycle to the participants of this study.

Pre-Test and Post-Test

Table 1

Differences of Marks in the Pre-Test and Post-Test

Cycle 1				Cycle 2			
Student	Pre-Test Mark	Post-Test Mark	Differences In Mark	Student	Pre-Test Mark	Post-Test Mark	Differences In Mark
A	1/7	1/7	0	A	1/7	1/7	0
B	1/7	1/7	0	B	1/7	1/7	0
C	3/7	4/7	1	C	4/7	6/7	2
D	4/7	3/7	-1	D	3/7	2/7	-1
E	4/7	3/7	-1	E	3/7	absent	absent
F	3/7	5/7	2	F	5/7	7/7	2
G	3/7	5/7	2	G	5/7	6/7	1

Table 1 showed the result of the pre-test and post-test of the students after the intervention. In the first cycle, three of them which were students C, F and student G showed improvement in their post-test mark after the intervention. Student A, B and D showed no progression and remained with the same mark as their pre-test mark. In cycle two, student C, F and G showed that the intervention was effective in enhancing their reading comprehension. The progression of student E could not be analyzed as she was not present during the day when the post-test was carried out.

Formative Assessment

Table 2

Comparison of Students Ability in Session 1 and 2

Student Question	Cycle 1													
	Session 1							Session 2						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	√	√						√	√					
B	√	√						√	√					
C	√	√		√	√		√	√	√			√		
D	√	√			√			√	√					
E	√	√						√	√					
F	√	√	√	√	√			√	√	√	√	√	√	
G	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√			

Table 2 showed the comparison of the students' ability in answering the comprehension questions in the first and second session of the intervention in cycle one. All students were able to answer the first, second and third questions correctly in session one and session two of the intervention as the answer could be found straight in the text. As for the other questions only students C, F and G who were able to answer the questions correctly as it required their understanding on the overall text to tackle it. The similar result occurred in cycle two.

Questionnaire

Table 3
Analysis of students answers in the questionnaire

Aspects	Cycle 2											
	Basic Skills in Reading			Skills in Reading Comprehension			Effectiveness of The Intervention					
Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Question	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
A	√		√		√	√		√		√	√	
B	√		√		√	√		√		√	√	
C	√		√		√	√		√	√		√	
D	√		√		√	√		√		√	√	
E	√		√		√	√		√		√	√	
F	√	√		√		√		√	√		√	√
G	√	√		√		√		√	√		√	√

Table 3 showed the analysis of students answers based on the questionnaire gave to them after the second cycle ended. The questionnaire consisted were divided into three aspects. Based on the questionnaire all the students agreed that they lack in the basic skills in reading and reading comprehension. Out of seven students, three of them agreed that the intervention helped them to understand the text compared than before. The remaining four students stated that the intervention helped them to understand certain sentences inside the text especially the sentences which consisted the familiar vocabulary taught.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Analysis of data in the findings showed that the intervention was effective in enhancing the students' reading comprehension. Three out of seven students who were the participants in this research showed the improvement in the reading comprehension after the intervention ended. The other three students were unable to comprehend the overall meaning of the text due to lack of vocabulary knowledge from the previous standard. All the selected vocabulary were the vocabulary from year 5 syllabus only. Thus the failure to have the adequate vocabulary knowledge from the previous standard will hinder the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing their reading comprehension. The effectiveness of the intervention towards student E could not be investigated as she was not present on the second session of the intervention and the day of the post-test in cycle two.

5.6 REFLECTION

The hindrance of this study is the lack of vocabulary knowledge from the previous standard among the students. The failure to understand the meaning of the vocabulary taught in the previous standard hindered the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing some students who were the participants in this study reading comprehension.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Firstly to cater to students A, B and D inability to comprehend the overall meaning of the text, the teacher might add the composite picture in the intervention. Composite picture conveyed the overall meaning of the text to the students. The teacher could take out the vocabulary and explained it by using the pictures and flashcards. Even if the students were unable to comprehend the meaning of the whole text, they could refer to the composite picture used to understand the text. Besides that, the similar intervention used in this study could be used in addressing the problem in vocabulary teaching to the students. The findings revealed that the intervention helped all of the students to comprehend

and recognize the meaning of the familiar vocabulary taught to them. Lastly, this intervention could be effective to the students' who had mastered enough vocabulary in the previous standard like students C, F and G as it helped in enhancing their reading comprehension. Thus the teacher may consider the students vocabulary knowledge in order to carry out this intervention to them.

REFERENCES

Amelsvoort, R. (2012). Word Study and Reading Comprehension: Implications for Instructions, 1-7.

Gardner, H. (1991) retrieved from <http://infed.org/mobi/howardgardner-multiple-intelligences> -and
education/

Zhang, B. (2011). A Study of the Vocabulary Learning Strategies used by Chinese Students, 1-40.

USING TEACHER-DIRECTED QUESTIONING STRATEGY TO IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF A YEAR 4 LOW PROFICIENCY ESL CLASSROOM IN COMPREHENDING PICTURE BOOKS

By:

JANISHA KATHLEEN A/P GILBERT
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to improve students' understanding using Teacher-Directed Questioning Strategy in helping low proficiency students in comprehending picture books. For this research purposes, 4 students from a school in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur were chosen to be the participants. These four participants had similar problem in reading where these students were able to read but could not comprehend the text read. Preliminary investigation showed that students had trouble answering questions about the text they read. The focus of this research was to help students in comprehending texts read and also to know which level of Bloom's Taxonomy students were able to achieve when questions were asked. The data was collected using video recording, checklist and teacher's journal. The results of the data showed that Teacher-Directed Questioning Strategy helped students to answer knowledge and comprehension level questions in Bloom's Taxonomy. Besides that, students were able to answer when the questions asked were arranged from low level to high level questions. Lastly, when the questions accompanied with the pictures in the picture books were fully utilized, students could comprehend better the text read. One of the suggestions for further research is to apply this intervention together with written comprehension. Another suggestion is to apply the strategy using different genres of books to familiarize students with a variety of texts.

Key terms: Reading comprehension, Teacher-Directed Questioning, picture books.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the KSSR syllabus, the reading objective that the Education Ministry would want to achieve at the end of Year 6 is that students should be able to read and comprehend a wide range of text for information and enjoyment. However, these functions cannot be fulfilled if comprehension is not successful. Therefore, students need to be able to comprehend any reading material as it will help them to fulfill the functions stated in the document standard and at the same time help to communicate information that has been read. So in order to have meaningful information transferred to an individual, comprehending reading text is important.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

During teaching experience, the researcher noticed that students in the lower primary have trouble comprehending meaning of words read. Through observations in class, the researcher found out that students are unable to understand any text read. The students were able to read the words on printed text however; when they are asked questions based on what has just been read these students were unable to answer. Besides that, through reading activities and observations in class, the researcher noticed that students have limited ability to comprehend different reading text. With this problem in mind, which is having limited ability to comprehend different reading text, the researcher feared that the interest in reading story books might diminish over time.

1.2 Related theory/literature

The best theory to address this problem is the schema theory. The goal of schema theory is to describe interaction between what is in the text and how that information is shaped and stored by the reader. The interaction the reader has with the printed material is influenced by the reader's background, knowledge and also beliefs. Thus interpretation of a text is highly dependent on the reader. Cognitive energy in information processing model talks about the amount of energy a person spent for decoding and comprehending meaning. The amount of energy spent for both decoding and comprehension should be equally distributed. Problems occurs when unequal distribution of the cognitive energy when decoding and comprehending a text. Due to this, Teacher-Directed Questioning is used to help students in comprehension because they only have problem in

comprehending and not decoding. In order to construct good questions, the most suitable taxonomy used was Bloom's Taxonomy. As Owen (1976) and Abdel Salam (1996) points out, *"The use of questions has been shown to be an effective way to increase the learning and retention of written prose in a large number of studies."* Therefore, 4 levels of cognitive questions from Bloom's Taxonomy which includes knowledge, comprehension, analysis and synthesis were effective to be used in the questioning strategy by the teacher. The tool used for the intervention was picture books. According to Bodmer (1992), illustrations serve to explain, interpret, or decorate a written text. Thus pictures will aid students in comprehension of the story book read

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The focus of investigation in this research was the students' inability to understand text read. Students read the words blindly without comprehending it. This was a problem because if students cannot understand what they had read then they may not be able to answer comprehension questions. The words read were meaningless to them as they could not grasp the meaning of the words or strings of words written. The inability to understand reading may be due to several factors. Some of the factors might be because little emphasis was given to reading comprehension during low level primary, too much emphasis was given on fluency or maybe students were slow in picking up with their other friends that they were left out at the end. Unable to comprehend reading is considered a major problem because comprehension helps in the dissemination of information. Much information around us are written and needed to be read. Without comprehension, information read is not absorbed by the reader. Thus, it limits them to obtain knowledge that can help to improve one self. Therefore, this problem should be addressed.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

The objectives for this research are stated as below. The objectives were based on the purpose of the research conducted.

3.1 General Objective

The main objective of this research is to improve students' reading comprehension using Teacher – Directed Questioning Strategy of picture books read.

3.2 Specific Objectives

- To improve students understanding of a text read.
- To help students to answer different level of comprehension questions of Bloom's Taxonomy.
- To improve students' comprehension using picture books.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

For research purposes the researcher only used four students from the class that she taught. These students were chosen from observations and reading activities conducted by the researcher in the class. The students that were chosen consist of three girls and one boy. These students are chosen because they can read however; they do not understand the text read. This is shown through the answer given during classroom reading activities. Besides that, students' exercise books were collected. The researcher used students reading comprehension exercises as an evidence of their limited understanding in comprehending a reading text.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The model that was chosen to represent this research was Elliot's Model. This model goes through a repeated cyclical process of planning, action, observation and reflection. Each cycle is conducted based on the basic steps. The Elliot's Model fits perfectly into the research because the series of action steps conducted were in line with the model proposed. According to Koshy (2005) every action researcher should adopt the model that suits his or her purpose most. Due to that, this model was chosen to represent the research conducted.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

The researcher used three types of data gathering methods which were video recording, checklist and teacher's journal. These three methods have been useful when the researcher analyzed the data that has been collected. The first method was video recording. The researcher recorded the whole sessions that were conducted for the intervention. With the video recorded, the researcher transcribed the video to answer the research questions. The researcher also did a checklist based on the questions that were asked to the students. This checklist is to see the amount of correct questions students were able to answer based on the various levels in Bloom's Taxonomy. Lastly the researcher used teacher's journal to record the process and thoughts of the whole intervention conducted. The journals then were used to identify emerging issues that were pertinent to the research and could answer the research questions.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

The researcher collected the students' work to measure their comprehension based on the reading exercise given in the classroom. Besides that, the researcher also collected data based on reading activities in the classroom. The researcher found out students ability to read, reluctance to read and inability to answer simple questions. The researcher used the data received in these observations and compared it to the data collected during the intervention to measure the effectiveness of Teacher-Directed Questioning Strategy (TDQS).

5.3 Action

During Cycle 1, the researcher planned to carry out the research after school hours so that it won't disturb lessons in the class. Besides that, the researcher also planned on using picture books as the tool to aid in the intervention conducted. After the planning, the researcher conducted the intervention. It was conducted for 30 minutes. The researcher started off by talking about the cover of the book to the students then she moved on by getting students to read the sentences in the book. After that, the researcher asked questions based on the text that they have just read. This continued until the center page of the story. The researcher stopped the session because the second half of the book was used for the second session which was the next day. After both sessions were conducted, the researcher reflected on the intervention. The researcher found out that the questions asked during this cycle were too high level for the students. Due to that, students could not answer most of the questions asked. Besides that, there was too much of emphasis on the text that the pictures were not utilized. Due to that, the students did not give much attention to the pictures that would have helped them in answering the questions. After reflecting on the intervention, the researcher modified and amended the plan to be conducted for the second cycle.

During Cycle 2, the researcher made modification to the original plan. The modification was to overcome the weaknesses during the first cycle. In this cycle the researcher prepared the questions before the intervention. The questions prepared are from low level to high level questions. When the intervention was carried out, the researcher used the pictures in the story book to aid students in answering the questions asked. In this cycle, the researcher also carried out the action in 2 sessions. This is similar to the sessions conducted in the first cycle. After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed to measure the effectiveness of the intervention used.

5.4 Findings

The videos were analyzed by looking at the students' reaction given during the sessions. The common features that were discovered through the videos in both cycles were students' answers in loud voices, students' answers in low voices, following their friend's answers and nodding when options were given by the researcher for specific questions. There were differences from the first cycle to the second cycle. The differences in frequency observed for the some level of questions could be because students were not confident in answering the questions. When they were confident in answering the questions is because the pictures in the book helped students to answer the higher level questions.

Besides that, the checklist was tabulated into a data to measure the number of questions students were able to answer in both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. The questions were analyzed using Bloom's Taxonomy where the questions were asked from the lowest level which is knowledge to the higher level which is analysis level. The result of the tabulated checklist is shown below.

Table 1
Comparison of both Cycle 1 and 2

Bloom's Taxonomy (Levels)	Students							
	CYCLE 1				CYCLE 2			
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S1	S2	S3	S4
Knowledge	2/8	1/8	5/8	5/8	9/11	8/11	7/11	11/11
Comprehension	10/14	8/14	8/14	8/14	10/15	7/15	9/15	9/15
Application	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Analysis	6/9	1/9	0/9	3/9	2/6	3/6	2/6	1/6
Synthesis	2/2	1/2	0/2	½	0/1	1/1	1/1	0/1

As shown the number of questions in knowledge and comprehension levels asked in Cycle 2 were much more compared to Cycle 1. This is because the questions asked in Cycle 2 were prepared before the intervention conducted meanwhile in Cycle 1, the questions were only thought at that time by the researcher. Due to that, the questions asked in Cycle 1 were more in comprehension and analysis level. As it can be seen the second most asked questions in Cycle two is knowledge level unlike in Cycle 1 second most frequent questions was from the analysis level. In Cycle 2, student 4 was able to scored 100% in regards to these knowledge level questions. Besides that, all students were able to achieve 70% or more in these knowledge level questions. This could be because the researcher had arranged the level of questions from the lowest to higher level of questions. By asking more of low level questions, students were able to understand the read text thus achieving a higher score for the knowledge level of questions.

Lastly, the teacher's journal was analyzed and common emerging issues were identified in all the journals written. The emerging issues identified were student listening and finding clues from the question asked, imitating correct answer given by friends and making connection with the pictures seen, text read and questions asked. For the first issue, the students would listen to the questions asked and find the clues as there were some clues in the questions that can help in answering the question. For the second issue, some students would agree and imitate their friends answer only when they think the answer given by that particular friend is correct. The last issue is making connection. When a question is directed to the students, they make connection with the questions asked and the pictures. The students concentrated on the picture and tried to find answer with the picture provided. Then when they are able to make the connection based of the picture with the question asked, it was followed by looking at the text that they have read to answer the questions. The text provided the exact answer that is needed for the question. By doing that, students were able to make connection with the questions, text and pictures. Therefore, these were the findings obtained from the research conducted.

5.5 Conclusion

Through this research and intervention conducted, the researcher has gained insights on the need of organization of questions, the power of picture books and the frequency of low level questions. The researcher discovered that the organizations of questions asked to students are important in order to make them understand the text that they have read. Students need to know the basic knowledge level of a certain text before they are able to make meaning beyond the text. These knowledge and comprehension levels of questions are the basic foundation in understanding a text read. When students answered questions loudly it showed that they were confident with the answer given. Besides the organization of questions, the researcher also discovered that picture books with question helped students in comprehension. Students gave more attention to the pictures and the pictures actually aided in most of the knowledge and comprehension questions asked. According to Lawrence and Snow (2011), "The questions posed are based on clues that are found in the text and are generated to spark curiosity that focuses the reader's attention on investigating, understanding, and connecting to the text." The clues here could also be the pictures in the picture book that aided

students' comprehension. Therefore, when low level questions were asked, students concentrated on the pictures and the text to get the answers.

Apart from that, when the pictures were accompanied with questions from low level questions, students were able to answer correctly. As can be seen in Cycle 2, students scored more than 70% for all the knowledge and comprehension questions. These questions were usually accompanied by pictures from the text. Therefore, it shows that questions and pictures helped student in improving their comprehension. Lastly, the frequency of the low level questions asked also helped students in comprehension. Out of 33 questions in cycle 2 the bulk of 21 questions came from knowledge and comprehension level questions. When questions were from these level, students were able to make connection with the text read, picture seen and question heard. According to Harvey and Goudvis (2000), one type of comprehension is making connection. This showed that through these connections made, it helped students to understand and answer the questions directed to them. Therefore, frequency of low level questions accompanied with making connection had helped in comprehension of a reading text.

5.6 Reflection

One of the limitations of this research was that the whole intervention was based on teacher's oral questions and students' oral answer. Due to this, students' comprehension problem is only solved orally. There was no practice of answering comprehension questions on paper that would make their understanding more concrete. Another limitation that was identified in this research is that the intervention is only applicable to a small number of students. It did not apply to a whole classroom setting. Due to that, other students who were not selected did not get the advantage of improving their comprehension skill. These were some of the limitations of the research conducted.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are a lot of improvements that can be carried out in future if this research is to be extended. One of it is incorporating written comprehension questions for students. This will help to enhance further their comprehension skill. Besides that, another improvement that can be made to further carry out this research is to conduct it to a whole classroom of students. This can be done by using ICT to introduce the story to students. Apart from that, another suggestion to further this research can be the use of other form of texts. One of it could be the use of texts in the text book. The usage of the text book will help students to familiarize the technique to find information or answers in the text. Besides that, it will also aid students in answering comprehension questions in class. Therefore, the use of different form of texts will help students to vary their reading material and at the same time improve comprehension.

REFERENCES

- Bodmer, G.R. (1992). *Approaching the illustrated text*. NY: The Modern Language Association of America.
- Harvey, S. & Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Koshy, V. (2005) *Action research for improving practice: A practical guide*. Great Britain: Sage Publication Inc.
- Lawrence, J. F. & Snow, C. E. (2011). *Oral discourse and reading*. Handbook of reading research. 4, (320-337). New York: Routledge.
- Owen W. (1976) & Abdul Salam, (1996). *Effects of Three Questioning Strategies on EFL Reading Comprehension*. Retrieved January 13, 2014, from https://www.academia.edu/3694886/Effects_of_Three_Questioning_Strategies_on_EFL_Reading_Comprehension

IMPROVING VOCABULARY LEARNING THROUGH THE USE OF CONTEXTUAL CLUES AMONG YEAR 2 INOVATIF PUPILS

By:

JOLINA CHANG YIAN LING
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to investigate if the use of contextual clues can improve pupils' vocabulary learning. The target participants were five Year 2 pupils from a school in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur. The preliminary investigation using classroom observation and casual conversation with several teachers showed that these pupils had similar problems in vocabulary learning. They were not able to decode new words they read or understand the meaning of a new word they encounter. This subsequently hindered their ability to derive meaning from a text. The intervention of using contextual clues through an interactive game was then carried out. Tests (pre-test and post-test), document analysis and semi-structured interview were used as data collection methods in this research. The results from the tests showed that the use of contextual clues had a positive impact to pupils' vocabulary learning. Data obtained from the document analysis showed that the use of contextual clues had improved word retention, enabled pupils to draw connections to personal experiences and set contexts in which pupils could relate to. The interview carried out with the five participants revealed that the use of contextual clues helped them comprehend difficult words, enabled them to guess the meaning of words and grasped the interest needed to get pupils to associate words with their meaning.

Key terms: Contextual clues, vocabulary

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Wilkins' 1972 study (as cited in Lessard-Clouston, M., 2012) sums up the importance of vocabulary by stating that "... while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (pp. 111–112). The essence of vocabulary is to convey meaning and without it, one will not only face difficulty conveying ideas, one will be unable to comprehend texts. It is difficult to create meaning from a text if one lacks the necessary vocabulary knowledge (Klare, 1984). Inadequate vocabulary will inevitably affect a pupil's comprehension of text. This happens because pupils cannot decode new words they read, or understand the meaning of a word they encounter. Subsequently, this hinders their ability to derive meaning from a text. When one is unable to understand a text, it will cause frustration and naturally affects the pupil's motivation to read and later on, learn. Thus, it is crucial for pupils to have a good grasp of vocabulary.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

During the three-month practicum in one of the cluster schools in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, I was assigned to teach English. During my lesson, I realized pupils were not able to use vocabulary items that were basic requirements for their level. Pupils did not seem to understand the words although they were able to articulate the vocabulary items. It was also realized that most teachers in schools still use the traditional way of teaching vocabulary that is teaching vocabulary in isolation through drilling and translation. These vocabulary teaching techniques make the lesson boring and less meaningful for pupils; hence, pupils lose interest in the learning of new words and expanding their vocabulary bank. Based on my experience and reflection, this is a concern as pupils are not able to apply appropriate vocabulary learning strategies to help them understand text and be independent readers.

1.2 Related theory/ literature

The intervention strategy used in this research of using contextual clues to improve vocabulary is built on Jean Piaget's Cognitive Constructivism Theory (1967) and the inquiry-discovery learning approach. Jean Piaget's Cognitive Constructivism Theory suggests that people learn by actively constructing knowledge instead of having information presented to them (Brooks and Brooks, 1993).

It builds around the idea of a teacher's role as a facilitator; hence, teachers should ask more questions to activate pupil's cognitive thinking to discover and construct their own conceptualization and in this case, understanding of vocabulary. Inquiry-discovery learning is a concept of discovery learning that ties in very closely with Piaget's Cognitive Constructivist Theory as it shares the same nature of inquiring and forming one's own knowledge. Inquiry is a process that involves individuals to convert information into useful knowledge. Furthermore, it encourages pupils to use strategic thinking and smart guesses (Hammer, 1997). Therefore, in this case, it requires pupils to identify and convert contextual clues to help them understand the meaning of a vocabulary item. The skill of using contextual clues encourages pupils to learn to make sense of a word or text by looking into clues that are present in the context.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The focus of this research is to teach pupils who face difficulties in understanding vocabulary the skill of using contextual clues to improve their vocabulary; hence, help them comprehend texts better. Besides, it is also a requirement that at the end of the primary schooling years that pupils are able to read widely and independently (Malaysian Primary School Curriculum Standard Document for English Language, 2011). This is also in line with our aspiration as stated in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 to produce pupils who are bilingually proficient, it is important that pupils are able to understand vocabulary items and comprehend texts in English as much as they are able to do the same in their first language, Bahasa Malaysia. Thus, I believe this is an area that can be studied and is significant in contributing towards improving pupils' vocabulary and ultimately, text comprehension in English.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

Objectives play a major role in a research as they summarize what the study aims to achieve. The general and specific objectives of this research are as below:

3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this research is to discover if applying contextual clues helps improve pupils' vocabulary learning.

3.2 Specific Objective

The specific objective is to study how contextual clues can improve pupils' vocabulary learning and find out what students' opinions are about the technique of contextual clues on their vocabulary learning.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this action research were pupils from Level 1, more specifically five pupils from a Year 2 class. The school is located near a low-cost housing area; hence, majority of the pupils are mostly from low socio-economic status (SES) communities. These five pupils (three girls and two boys) are from different races and their English Language proficiency ranges from low to intermediate level. These pupils often faced more learning difficulties and struggled with reading as compared to those of higher SES households because they did not receive equal exposure to reading texts in the targeted language and the English language is hardly used at home.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

This section discusses the data gathering methods, preliminary investigation, action, findings and conclusion of this action research.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

The data gathering methods used in this action research were tests (pre-test and post-test), document analysis and semi-structured interview. Pre-test was conducted before intervention was implemented and post-test was administered after the intervention was introduced. Results obtained

from pre-test and post-test were then compared to find out if the use of contextual clues improves pupils' vocabulary learning. Document analysis was done after each intervention session through a reinforcement activity to identify how contextual clues helped pupils learn vocabulary. The semi-structured interview was carried out after the intervention to gain pupils' perspective on how contextual clues helped in their vocabulary learning.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

A classroom observation was conducted during a one-hour Year 2 English lesson to observe pupils' vocabulary learning and teacher's teaching instructions in the classroom. Casual conversations were conducted with two English teachers to gain their perception on the current issue of Year 2 pupils lacking vocabulary and the possible reasons for it. Findings from the investigation have confirmed the problem that pupils are facing difficulty in vocabulary learning.

5.3 Action

This action research was conducted based on Kurt Lewin's model. It followed the spiral model of identifying a general idea, fact-finding, planning and implementing first action step, evaluation and then amending the plan for second action step. During Cycle 1, a pre-test was conducted prior to the intervention. After which, the intervention was conducted through the Word Meaning activity to introduce contextual clues and its use to pupils. A post-test was then conducted after the intervention to compare results with the pre-test disseminated. In Cycle 2, an improved pre-test was conducted after reflection from Cycle 1. The intervention which is the Millionaire Game, had also been improved so that it was more interactive and hands-on for the targeted pupils. After each intervention session, a reinforcement activity was conducted which also was my data collection source for document analysis. A semi-structured group interview was carried out after the intervention.

5.4 Findings

This section will present all the findings obtained from pre-test, post-test, document analysis and interview.

Pre-test and post-test

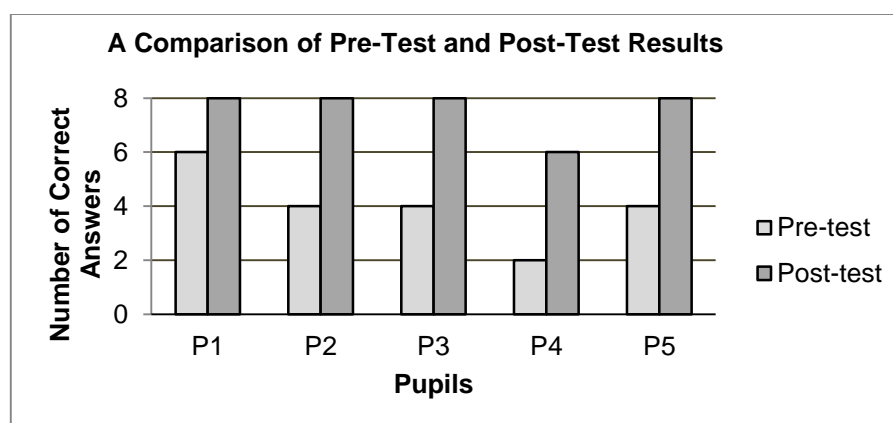


Figure 1: A Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test results

The results showed an improvement in pupils' vocabulary learning. A total number of 8 questions were given in both pre-test and post-test. All 5 pupils achieved different scores in the pre-test with the lowest scoring 2 out of 8 (25%) and highest scoring 6 out of 8 (75%). Nevertheless, they all made marked improvement and majority managed to score 8 out of 8 in the post-test. Hence, the findings show that all pupils managed to improve their vocabulary through the intervention introduced.

Document Analysis

Table 1
A Quantitative Analysis of the Post-Intervention Activity

Pupils	Word Association				Total number of correct answers	Word Association				Total number of correct answers
	Session 1					Session 2				
	summer	rake	winter	autumn		cousin	meat	tadpoles	orchard	
P1	✓	✓	✓	✓	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
P2		✓	✓	✓	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
P3	✓	✓	✓	✓	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
P4	✓	✓		✓	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
P5	✓		✓	✓	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	4

Table 1 shows the results of two sessions of post-intervention activity conducted. The table shows that pupils were able to associate words learnt as contextual clues to the targeted vocabulary. This is apparent when pupils managed to provide a minimum of two other words related to the vocabulary to show understanding of the targeted vocabulary. Besides that, from the document analysis, pupils included examples and words related to their personal experiences to describe the targeted vocabulary. This clearly shows that the use of contextual clues improves pupils' vocabulary learning by improving word retention and setting words in contexts pupils can relate to.

Interview

The data collected from the interview conducted with pupils were transcribed and analyzed based on emergent themes. Based on the findings from the interview, contextual clues helped pupils make associations and hence derive meaning of the vocabulary items. Pupils mentioned that the use of contextual clues helped them comprehend difficult words by allowing them to guess the meaning of words. Besides that, the intervention used to introduce contextual clues which was the Millionaire Game developed pupils' interest in learning. From the analysis of the interview, pupils were very positive about the game and this was further supported by their interest and participation throughout the intervention session.

5.5 Conclusion

The findings showed that the use of contextual clues can improve pupils' vocabulary learning. Besides, it is also a skill to help pupils set words in contexts and draw connections to personal experiences. Pennock (1979) states that even in situations where pupils lack experiences or prior knowledge on the vocabulary, "the use of contextual clues might elicit a general notion of word meaning which will contribute to overall comprehension". This will contribute to pupils' overall word retention as learning is made meaningful. Given the facts from the data collected and feedback garnered from pupils during the interview, it can be concluded that the technique of using contextual clues had a positive impact on pupils' vocabulary learning. It can also be concluded that a fun and non-threatening environment, for example, the use of a game-like activity can increase pupils' enthusiasm for learning. This research has shown the effectiveness of the technique of contextual clues for vocabulary learning. Thus, teachers can consider this technique in future vocabulary instructions as this will teach pupils to be independent readers who are able to make meaningful guesses when they encounter unknown vocabulary items when reading.

5.6 Reflection

The use of contextual clues through the Millionaire Game enabled pupils to learn in an interesting and non-threatening environment. The interactive, game-based intervention managed to capture pupils' interest, making them enthusiastic and interested to learn. Hence, this made the vocabulary learning process more meaningful for pupils as they knew how to relate it to useful contexts and personal experiences. However, the number of the intervention sessions conducted could be increased to ensure pupils are given more opportunities to reinforce what has been learnt and this will, at the same time, increase the reliability of the data collected.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

One area that warrants further research is the feasibility and effectiveness of this research on a different set of pupils. This action research was conducted on Year 2 pupils. Their achievements, as concluded from the results, were very encouraging. Nonetheless, will the same technique of using contextual clues bear similar results for pupils in Level 2? Another area that can be looked into for future research is the effect on how using contextual clues to improve vocabulary learning impacts reading comprehension. In this action research, the findings does not relate to the increase in reading comprehension although in order to comprehend texts, pupils need to understand vocabulary. Thus, a suggestion is to complement the research by getting pupils to complete comprehension tasks; hence, measuring the effect of the technique of using contextual clues on pupils' reading comprehension. Lastly, a comparative study can be done to look into the extent of whether learning to use reading strategies like contextual clues is more important or teaching pupils to acquire more English vocabulary (skill vs. knowledge) and how this might contribute to the comprehension of texts.

REFERENCES

- Brooks, J., & Brooks, M. (1993). *The Case for the Constructivist Classrooms*. Alexandria, Va: ASCD.
- Hammer, D., 1997. *Cognition and Instruction, Discovery Learning and Discovery Teaching*. Volume 15, Issue 4, 1997. Retrieved from http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s1532690xci1504_2?journalCode=hcgi20#.UyTjt5L_DkY on 16th March 2014.
- Klare, G.R. (1984). *Readability: Handbook of Reading Research* (pp. 681-794). New York: Longman
- Lessard-Clouston, M. (2012). *Vocabulary Learning and Teaching: Pedagogy, Research, and Resources*. USA: (n.p)
- Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.my/userfiles/file/PPP/Preliminary-Blueprint-Eng.pdf> on 26th August 2014.
- Malaysian Primary Education Curriculum (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.my/v/pelajaran-rendah> on 8th March 2014.
- Pennock, C. (1979). *Reading Comprehension at Four Linguistic Levels*. Madison: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data.

HELPING YEAR 5 KECUBUNG (REMEDIAL) PUPILS TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF NEW VOCABULARY USING WORD ATTACK SKILL THROUGH PICTURE CUED STRATEGY

By:

MOHD HAFIZ AL-ADZIM BIN MOHD FAUZAN
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to help Year 5 pupils with low proficiency level in understanding the meaning of new vocabulary by using the word attack skill through picture cued strategy in one of the schools in the district of Kuala Lumpur. There were five pupils selected in this study comprising of two males and three females. Preliminary investigation was administered through the use of interview, pre-test and document analysis. The results gathered showed that the pupils were having problem in understanding the meaning of new vocabulary. Picture cued strategy was implemented to intervene the problem. Instruments used in data collection method were pre-test, post-test, formative tests and video recordings. The result of data analysis of the post-test showed progression amongst all the participants compared to the pre-test. The result of the formative tests also showed progression amongst the participants. The data gathered through the analysis of the video recordings also showed that participants were performing on-task behaviour which indicates that they understand the meaning of the words learnt. The result thus proved that the picture cued strategy was able to help the pupils to understand the meaning of new vocabulary amongst the Year 5 Kecubung (remedial) pupils.

Key terms: *picture cued strategy, vocabulary*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This section discussed on the reflection of teaching experience and related theory/literature.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

Based on the teaching experience during 3 months practicum in the school, researcher was having problem with the low mastery of vocabulary amongst the pupils. Researcher was having difficulties in teaching the meaning of the new vocabularies to pupils as they were unable to understand the explanation given in the target language. Researcher was forced to use direct translation in teaching the meaning of the words as the pupils were unable to understand the meaning given in the target language. Vocabulary mastery is very important in ensuring their success in learning the second language. Limited vocabulary will hinder their progress in all the 4 skills; listening and speaking, reading and writing.

1.2 Related theory/literature

The theories involved in this study were Theory of Cognitive Development by Jean Piaget (1954) and Interactive Reading Technique proposed by Rumelhalt and McClelland (1981). Theory of Cognitive Development is a theory that describes how humans go about making sense of their world by gathering and organizing information (Piaget in Woolfolk, 2010). In understanding or learning new things, Piaget has mentioned that we rely on two tendencies in thinking which is the tendency toward organization – the combining, arranging, recombining, and rearranging of behaviors and thoughts into coherent systems and the tendency toward adaptation, or adjusting the environment (Woolfolk, 2010). On the other hand, Interactive Reading Technique is the combination of both the bottom-up and top-down processes in reading. When the reader relies primarily on textual features and information to comprehend, this is called a data-driven or “bottom-up” mode and when the reader focuses primarily on what he or she already knows, this is called a concept-driven or “top-down” mode (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978).

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The research focusses on the use of picture cued strategy in teaching the meaning of the vocabulary. The competency in vocabulary will help the pupils to improve in their second language

learning. It has been recognized as crucial to language use in which learners' insufficient knowledge of vocabulary may lead to difficulties in their second language learning (Azadeh Asgari and Ghazali Mustapha, 2012). The picture cued strategy used was able to help the learner to learn the meaning of the words through the pictures used. It will help the researcher to teach the meaning of the words without having to explain as pupils were unable to understand the explanation given in L2. Through the use of the strategy, researcher can also avoid the use of direct translation as it is not the best technique as translations may not always convey the exact meaning of a word and pupils must not be encouraged to use L1 as a frame for learning the target language (Nesamalar Chitravelu et al. 2005).

3.0 OBJECTIVE

General objective

Helping Year 5 Kecubung (remedial) pupils to understand the meaning of new vocabularies using word attack skill through picture cued strategy.

Specific objective

- Pupils were able to understand the meaning of new vocabulary through the use of picture cued strategy by showing progression in the post-test and formative tests.
- Pupils were able to show on-task behaviors when the picture cued strategy use.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The participants comprised of two Malay boys and three Malay girls from Year 5 Kecubung. The participants were labelled as P1 to P5 in this research. Their level of proficiency were at low level. Purposive selection was used by researcher in selecting the participants. The basis for the selections was to choose the pupils who considered as having the lowest vocabulary range and this was done by selecting the pupils who scored below than 50 percent of the total marks in the diagnostic test administered during the preliminary investigation.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The following actions were taken in conducting this research.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

Tests

There were two types of tests administered in this research which are pre-test and post-test and formative test. The pre-test was administered to see the starting point and measuring participants' pre-existing knowledge (Mills, 2014) before the implementation of the interventions. Post-test was administered after the intervention was done to measure how well the participants were responding (Mills, 2014) to the intervention implemented. By looking at the comparison of the results from both the tests; pre-test and post-test, researcher could see the effectiveness of the intervention implemented. The formative tests were also administered in order to see the improvement of the participants' understanding throughout the learning processes.

Video recordings

The video recording was chosen as it provides researcher with another data source when the researcher is fully engaged in teaching but still wanted to capture classroom events and interactions (Mills, 2014). Moreover, Mills (2014) said that the method helped researcher to capture the demonstration of knowledge and skill in analysing the pattern of how participants would respond when they understood the meaning of the new vocabulary.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

Preliminary investigation was carried out to further study the problem faced by the pupils. The instruments used were interview, diagnostic test and document analysis. Based on the preliminary

investigation carried out, it was confirmed that the pupils were having problem in understanding the meaning of new vocabulary. There were 5 pupils selected as in this research was based on their scores in the diagnostic test. Therefore, to intervene the problem, picture cued strategy was introduced.

5.3 Action

Based on the preliminary investigation, researcher has carried out the intervention with the participants. There were 3 sessions of interventions and researcher has allocated one hour for each session. The session was carried out outside the lessons so that researcher can give more focus to the participants and to avoid disturbance from othe pupils. There were 30 words selected from three different topics in the textbook. Researcher used Powerpoint Presentation in order to provide pictures that functioned as cues to the pupils.

During the first session, there were 10 words used. In the slides, the first word was shown and followed by two pictures related to the word. The pictures were shown for 15 seconds each and participants were allowed to ask the researcher to show the pictures again until they understand. In each session, a video recording was done in order to record students' verbal and non-verbal responses to the picture cues in the interactive activity and also their verbal and non-verbal responses when answering the formative test that was administered at the end of every session. The whole steps were repeated in the second and third sessions.

5.4 Findings

The data gathered from the pre-test and post-test administered have provided the researcher with concrete evident as all the participants showed more than 50% of progression in marks scored in post-test compared to the pre-test. Table 1 shows that in the post-test, 4 out of 5 participants (P2-P5) scored full marks, which are 100%. Only one participant, P1, scored below than full marks which is 87%. It proved that picture cued strategy does help the Year 5 Kecubung pupils in learning the meaning of new vocabulary.

Table 1
Pupils' Pre-Test and Post-Test Result and The Marks Differences in Both Tests

Pupils	Pre-test		Post-test		Difference (Post-test – Pre-test)	
	Number of correct answers	Marks (%)	Number of correct answers	Marks (%)	Number of correct answers	Marks (%)
P1	9	30	26	87	+17	57
P2	12	40	30	100	+18	60
P3	12	40	30	100	+18	60
P4	13	43	30	100	+17	57
P5	14	47	30	100	+16	53

The data collected from the video recordings and formative tests have also provided the researcher with the evident of how the participants learn the meaning of the new vocabulary and thus answered the second research question. This was based on the frequency of behaviour occurrences observed in the video recording. The video recordings were analysed using a structured checklist and to confirm the finding, the data from the checklists were triangulate with the data from formative test (refer to Table 2). Based on the triangulation, a correlation has emerged as the higher the participants scored in the tests, the more frequent on task behaviours or responses could be observed. Those responses were; when asked to tell the word related to pictures shown, pupils will respond quickly and perform self-initiated talk or peer-initiated talk. Then, when they attempted the work sheet on vocabulary meaning, the pupils who know the meaning will sit at the middle of the chair, performed almost zero head movement, showed neutral facial expression and not performing any self-initiated talk or peer-initiated talk. This was verified by Dragon (2008), who stated that observing on/off task behaviour helps researcher to predict post-test performances.

Table 2
Pupils' formative tests results

Pupils	Formative Test (number of questions for each session: 10)		
	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
P1	5	8	10
P2	10	10	10
P3	10	10	10
P4	10	10	10
P5	10	10	10

5.5 Conclusion

Based on the data collected, it can be concluded that the intervention implemented has successfully catered the problem identified and thus achieved the objective of the study to help 5 pupils with low proficiency level to understand the meaning of new vocabularies by using the word attack skill through picture cued strategy. This has been showed by the comparison of the participants' scores in both the pre-test and post-test. It shows the progression in the participant's scores in the post-test. In addition, the participants' scores in the formative tests also showed progression in all the tests administered. Lastly, based on the video recording analysis, the participants also have shown on-task behaviours or responses and thus concluded that they were able to understand the meaning of the words.

5.6 Reflection

After completing the research, researcher feels that this study can be applied in the classroom practices, especially in teaching remedial class. This is because, the strategy used was suitable with the low level proficiency pupils. Teacher or researcher who wants to adapt this research can improvise the implementation by giving more pictures and repeat the session to drill the pupils with the targeted words. Teacher may also have the pupils to be seated in pairs or group and allow discussion to promote better comprehension. Besides that, it is also recommended that more time should be given for the researcher to gather more data. To better measure the effectiveness of the strategy and observe the responses or behaviour of the participants.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In future research, researcher wants to test the effectiveness of the synonym and antonym strategy in enriching the pupils' vocabulary. The research participants will be from the advance learners as the strategy is suitable with that kind of participants. The research will study on the word retention among the participants by using the strategy.

Apart from that, researcher also would like to study the effectiveness of the strategy used in a reading lesson. This was to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy used in pre-reading in helping the pupils to understand the reading materials used in the lesson.

Lastly, researcher would also like to study the effectiveness of the strategy used with the participants from the rural area and thus be able to compare the findings with the findings in this research. This will provide the researcher with the data on how far the strategy was effective with the learner who have limited prior knowledge and thus provide an opportunity to the researcher to further study on how to increase their prior knowledge.

REFERENCES

- Clem Adelman (1993) Kurt Lewin and the origins of action research, educational action research, 1:1, 7-24, DOI: 10.1080/0965079930010102
- Dragon, T. (2008). Viewing student affect and learning through classroom observation and physical sensor. 1-11.

- Kaur, N. (2003). the need for autonomous vocabulary learners in the Malaysian ESL classroom. *Journal of language studies*, 7-16.
- Kintsch, W. and VanDijk, T. A. (1978). Toward a model of text comprehension and production. *Psychology Review* Vol. 85 (5): 363-394.
- Joklová, K. (2009). Using pictures in teaching vocabulary. Bachelor's thesis, 1-53.
- Mills, G. E. (2014). A guide for the teacher researcher. Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited.
- Ghazali Mustapha, Azadeah Asgari. (2012). Vocabulary learning strategies of Malaysian ESL Students. *Social Science and Humanities*, 751-764.
- Nesamalar Chitravelu, S. S. (2005). *ELT methodology principles and practice*. Shah Alam: Oxford Fajar Sdn. Bhd.
- Piaget, J (1981) *Intelligence and affectivity: Their relationship during child development*. (Trans & Ed T. A. Brown & C. E. Kaegi). Oxford, England: Annual Reviews.
- Said, A. M. (2009). *English Year 5 textbook*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

USING READING ALOUD STRATEGY TO IMPROVE READING FLUENCY OF YEAR 3 PERMAISURI 4 (3P4) PUPILS

By:

MUHAMMAD REDZUAN BIN ISHAK
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to develop students' fluency using reading aloud strategy. This study includes 5 pupils with low level of proficiency in one of the primary schools in the district of Kuala Lumpur. The results gathered in the preliminary investigation showed that five pupils were having problems in reading few texts given during reading lesson. The researcher used two instruments which are diagnostic test and observation through field note. In the preliminary investigation, the results did not achieve the targeted score since all five pupils only managed to obtain below 8 out of 24. The researcher only used one cycle in this study. At the end of the cycle, it showed that all five pupils managed to demonstrate great improvement in their post-test compared from their results in the pre-test. All five pupils managed to achieve the targeted words read which are 114 words are in a minute. The final results gathered in the post-test showed that reading aloud strategy is effective in developing pupils' reading fluency. The researcher has listed few suggestions for further study which are using reading aloud in developing other aspects of English language, be more creative which includes two ways communication and using other types of text in the reading aloud intervention.

Key terms: Reading aloud, reading fluency

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This section discussed on the reflection on teaching experience and related theory/literature.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

During reading classes, some of the pupils were not able to pronounce some words fluently which initially affected their reading. Based on the observation, the researcher found that their reading became slow and filled with pauses. Whenever the pupils encountered low frequency words, they tried to slow down their readings and lowered their voices too. This showed that they were not confident enough to pronounce the words even though they know their meaning as they never used the words before and they did not know how to pronounce the words correctly even they had encountered the words before.

The researcher needed to utter the correct pronunciation of the words a few times before letting the pupils say it back again. Most of the pupils did not know how to pronounce the words but they could give the meaning of the words in their native language which is Malay language. Surprisingly the pupils have encountered the words but have forgotten the sound of the words. Some of the pupils said the reason why they could not pronounce words correctly because they rarely pronounced the words on their own and lacked of reading and communications with their peers in English. They have very few opportunity to use the language except in the English Language classroom. This is another factor which contributed to this problem.

1.2 Related theory/literature

Behaviourist theory and bottom-up approach were closely applicable to be applied and reflected in the intervention used in this study. According to Chitravelu Sithamparam & Choon (2005), the behaviourist theory of learning offers a set of simple principles and procedures to be implemented in the classroom. I found that drilling is the most suitable method in teaching pronunciation of the pupils. Repetition drill is the most basic type of drilling and this is the key for the pupils to know exactly what it is that they should be repeating (Fraser, 2000). As for bottom-up approach is one of the approaches that could be implemented to teach correct pronunciation of words in reading for weaker pupils. According to Aebersold (2005), bottom-up approach will provide the pupils with transitional phase where they are given a chance to develop automatically in letter recognition and word

identification. The researcher focused more on the bottom-up approach because the pupils were modeled with correct pronunciation of the words before they could continue reading a short text smoothly and without mispronunciation of the words.

2.0 FOCUS OF INVESTIGATION

The focus of the study emphasizes on the pupils' reading fluency using reading aloud strategy. The pupils were having difficulties in their reading which affected their reading fluency. They could not pronounce words correctly which led their reading became slow and full with pauses even they could give the meaning of the words in their native language. Hence, the researcher has planned a suitable strategy to be implemented to the students in order to improve their reading fluency.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

The researcher has identified an objective of this study in order to ensure the implementation of focus of investigation is aligned with the objective. The specific objective of this study is to use reading aloud technique as a strategy to improve and enhance pupils' reading fluency in English language.

4.0 TARGET GROUP / PARTICIPANTS

The target group was Year 3 pupils in one the primary school in Kuala Lumpur. The class was not streamed where it included mixed abilities pupils. After the preliminary investigation was conducted, the researcher identified only 5 of them based on the result of the diagnostic test conducted. All five pupils were Malay. The researcher focused on these five pupils because it has enabled him to study them thoroughly.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

This section discussed on the data gathering methods, preliminary investigation, action, findings, conclusion and reflection.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

This research has qualitative and quantitative types of data gathering methods. There are three instruments used in collecting the data of the study; the first one is pre-test and post-test, data tracking sheet and an observation log. The pre-test and post-test were used in the cycle where pupils need to read a selected text given in a minute as the researcher recorded the errors made and the correct words read. The data tracking sheet was used to record the errors made and the correct words read. It has been used to record all the data needed in the pre-test, post-test, and during the intervention. An observation log was used to record the progression of the pupils during the intervention.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

Preliminary investigation needs to be done beforehand in order to carry out the intervention. Preliminary investigation was carried out in order to identify the targeted pupils with the problem. The researcher could find the causes of the problem encountered by the targeted participants.

- i. Diagnostic Test
- ii. Observation using field note

Analysis of Preliminary Investigation

Diagnostic Test

Table 1

Result of Diagnostic Test

Number of scores	Diagnostic Test	
	Number of pupils (n=38)	Percentage of pupils (%)
17-24	5	13.16%
13-16	10	26.31%
9-12	18	47.36%
5-8	4	7.89%
0-4	1	5.26%

Observation using field note

Based on the field note, the pupils mispronounced of certain words such as 'gorgeous', 'climb', 'weird', and 'create'. Then, the teacher modeled the correct pronunciations of the words only once before she continued with the reading activity. As a result, the pupils mispronounced the words again. The teacher did not give enough drilling of the correct pronunciation of the words. The pupils tend to repeat the same mistakes. The pupils should to be given more drills about the correct pronunciation of the particular words.

5.3 Action

During the intervention, the researcher used reading aloud strategy to develop pupils' reading fluency. The researcher selected a few stories from fairy tales to be used during the reading session in the intervention plan. The reason why the researcher chose fairy tales is because the stories were simple and interesting. Moreover, most pupils were familiar with the stories as it could get their full attention during the reading session. The sessions with the pupils were conducted personally to easily identify their errors and record the correct words read. The researcher has selected the story for each pupil to be read in the intervention stage while the stories used in the pre-test and post-test were the same as I wanted to look on the pupils' progression after the intervention was implemented. As in the pre-test and post-test, the researcher asked the pupils to read the text given without modelling the reading to the pupils. Its objective is to measure the actual performance of their fluency level in reading the text given.

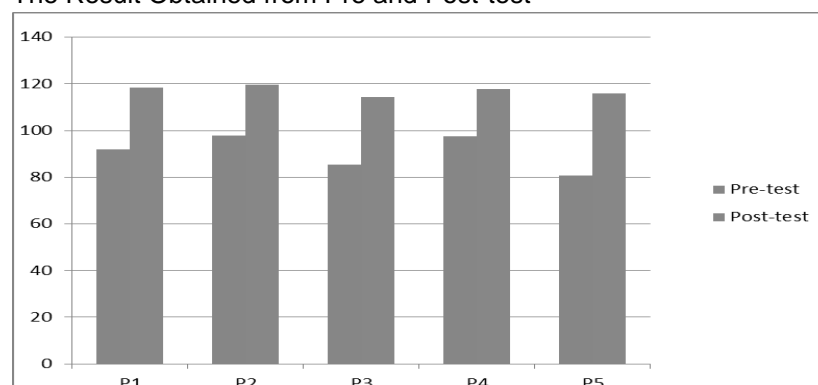
During the intervention, the researcher modeled the reading with correct pronunciation and good intonation before the pupils read the text. This assisted the pupils to be ready to read the text with correct pronunciation, pace and voice of tone to ensure less errors made in their reading and they achieved the targeted words which is 114 words and above per minute. Every pupil need to read the text given four times and the researcher recorded the errors made and the correct words read per minute in every each reading session with an adapted data tracking sheet provided. Whenever the pupils made an error, pauses or difficulties in pronouncing some difficult words, the researcher immediately corrected and drilled them with correct pronunciation or voice tone before letting them proceed with their reading.

In order to identify whether the strategy used is able to develop pupils' reading fluency, the researcher provided three instruments in collecting the data. Throughout the sessions, the researcher used formative test, data tracking sheets and observation log. The use of formative test was to compare the percentage of the pupils who were able to achieve more than 114 words per minute in their reading. The data tracking sheets were used to record the errors made and the correct words read by the pupils in the four reading sessions conducted. In the observation log, the researcher jotted down pupils' responses and feedbacks during and after the intervention based on the emerged themes. The three themes which emerged were pupils' participation in the session, practicing reading aloud during the sessions and the use of drilling.

5.4 Findings

Tests

The Result Obtained from Pre and Post-test



The bar graph above showed that the pupils manage to show a great improvement from the pre-test to the post-test. The result gathered in the post-test for average words read above showed positive improvements. All of the pupils managed to read above the target which is 114 words per minute. The greatest improvement was made by P5 who managed to read an average of 116 words per minute which is 35.3 more words than in the pre-test.

Formative test

Table 2

The percentage of successful reading

Pupil	Reading 1	Reading 2	Reading 3	Reading 4
P1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
P2	No	No	Yes	Yes
P3	No	No	Yes	Yes
P4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
P5	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Total	$1/5 \times 100 = 20\%$	$3/5 \times 100 = 60\%$	$5/5 \times 100 = 100\%$	$5/5 \times 100 = 100\%$

Based on Table 3, it showed great increment in the percentage of successful reading made by all five pupils. At the end of the sessions which were Reading 3 and Reading 4, all the pupils were able to read more than 114 words. Therefore, it is concluded that 100% of the pupils succeeded in achieving the target in the intervention.

Observation log

The data was tabulated in a table quantitatively according to the themes emerged from the logs which are pupils' participation in the session, practicing reading aloud during the sessions and the use of drilling. Based on the three themes listed, the pupils shown positive feedbacks and responses on the intervention made.

5.5 Conclusion

The use of reading aloud strategy which intends to develop pupils' reading fluency had a positive impact and was successfully done. It was very effective as the objectives and research questions of the study were answered and achieved. The result triangulated in the findings has proven that reading aloud strategy used was effective since it managed to help the pupils to achieve the target and realized the objectives of the research. The effectiveness of the strategy can be seen by looking at the process of reading aloud and the progress made by the pupils before, during and

after the intervention. The comparison of the result between pre-test and post-test made clearly showed that there was an improvement made by the pupils in the aspects targeted.

5.6 Reflection

There were a number of implications that have been identified in completing the research. Firstly, based on the result that I triangulated, it can be concluded that reading aloud strategy can help pupils to improve on pupils' reading fluency. Hence, teachers can try to implement this strategy in order to develop pupils' fluency in reading variety of texts. Another implication that the researcher have identified was the intervention should be conducted personally as teachers could identified the errors made easily. Moreover, pupils will get equal opportunity and teachers will treat pupils who participated in the research equally.

On the other hand, there were also limitations in the study. There was only one cycle used to implement the intervention planned. It could be better if there was another cycle but using another type of texts which is more difficult and unfamiliar with the pupils. Furthermore, it will give new knowledge to the pupils in different types of texts read. Overall, this particular research managed to show the effectiveness of reading aloud strategy in developing pupils' reading fluency.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the study that was carried out, there were a few suggestions that can be made for future researches. The intervention can be conducted in a creative in order to have a two way communication between teacher and pupils. Secondly, the reading aloud intervention could be used in developing other aspects of English language such as reading comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary, writing and so on. Instead of using fairytales, other types of text such as poems, songs and nursery rhymes could be used to make the intervention livelier.

REFERENCES

- Aebersold R, Mann M. 2005. Mass spectrometry-based proteomics. *Nature* 422:198–207
- Chitravelu, N., Sithamparam, S. & Soon Choon, T. (2005). *ELT methodology: Principles and practices* (2nd ed.). Malaysia: Oxford Fajar Sdn. Bhd.
- Fraser, H. (2000). *Coordinating improvements in pronunciation teaching for adult learners English as a second language*, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Canberra.
- Penner-Wilger, M. (2008). *Reading Fluency: A Bridge from Decoding to Comprehension*. Auto Skill A helping hand for literacy, 11.
- Smith, M. K. (2001, June). *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*. Retrieved March 2, 2014, from Infed.org: <http://infed.org/mobi/kurt-lewin-groups-experiential-learning-and-action-research/>

THE USE OF MIND MAP IN IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION SKILL OF FINDING MAIN IDEAS AND SUPPORTING DETAILS AMONGST YEAR 4 IXORA STUDENTS WITH LOW LEVEL OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

By:

NORFATIAH BINTI MOHAMMED NAWAWI
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to investigate whether the use of mind map can help to improve students' reading comprehension skill of finding main ideas and supporting details. The participants of this research were seven Year 4 Ixora students. The focus of this research is to help the students to improve their comprehension skill of finding main ideas and supporting details. The data gathering methods used were pre-test, post-test, formative test and document analysis. The findings indicated that the students' reading comprehension skill of finding main ideas and supporting details have indeed improved and eventually helped them to understand the reading text. Hence, this reinforces the fact that the use of mind map helped the students in improving reading comprehension skill in finding main ideas and supporting details.

Key terms: mind map, reading comprehension skill, main ideas, supporting details

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The World Education Report stated that Malaysia continues with the lowest literacy rates compared to other Southeast Asian neighbours. Moreover, Malaysian' s performance in the recent PISA showed that almost 41% of Malaysian students did not achieve the minimum proficiency level in reading whereby they were unable to locate specific information such as main ideas from text. Because of the alarming fact about Malaysians' rate of reading, our government had analysed many efforts to improve and develop literacy as one of them is the modification of curriculum from KBSR to KSSR. Therefore the new English language curriculum (KSSR) stresses on the development of the critical literacy that is essential in producing personal growth and confidence in reading skills among Malaysian students.

1.1 Reflection on teaching and learning

Throughout my experience in teaching Year 4 Ixora, I noticed that some of the students struggled to understand the reading text. They could not answer the questions asked orally about the important information found in the text. This situation indicated that they were not able to find the main ideas and supporting details. Furthermore, when they did the reading comprehension exercise, I found that the students just copied down the questions and they simply wrote anything in the spaces given. Apart from that, the students kept asking me to translate all the questions into Bahasa Malaysia. It was probably because of limited exposure to the English language. However, after I marked their work, I found that most of the students still failed to answer all the questions correctly regardless of the translation made. Thus, based on their results in the exercise given, it was clear that the students were not able to comprehend the reading text as they were weak in reading skill of finding main ideas and supporting details. As stated in the curriculum specification of Year 4, the students' understanding was measured through their results in answering questions.

1.2 Related theory/ literature

There were two theories related to this research which were cognitive and schema learning theory. Cognitive learning theory emphasizes on the use of "advance organizer" which can be in the form of mind mapping that provides a clear organization of contents. It is helpful in processing reader's understanding when difficult and complex materials are introduced. The students are able to identify main contents of reading text such as main ideas and supporting details and organize them accordingly which actually help them to comprehend text better. Schema learning theory deals with prior knowledge which is useful to help readers understand text better. Fisher and Frey (2004)

mentioned that by providing students with background concept of the use of mind map, they can relate the reading text and which would then improve reading comprehension.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The problem faced by the students was that they could not answer the exercises given as it was one of the tool in measuring their understanding. Although the questions used were only at the basic level of understanding which requires them to recall and organize points in the text, they still failed to answer correctly. Besides, they also brought up some irrelevant information when answering questions that demonstrated their understanding of the text. This showed that they could not locate specific ideas found in a text. This made me curious to find the best strategy in improving their reading comprehension skill to fulfil the expectation of Year 4 English Curriculum Standard as pupils are expected to comprehend a text effectively and efficiently so that they become avid and independent readers.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research is to determine whether the use of mind map can improve reading comprehension skill of finding main ideas and supporting details amongst Year 4 Ixora students.

3.1 Research questions

The action research is grounded based on two research questions.

- Does the use of mind map help to improve reading comprehension skill of finding main ideas and supporting details?
- How does mind map help to improve reading comprehension skill of finding main ideas and supporting details?

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The target participants involved in the research were seven students from year 4 Ixora class. I labelled them as student A, student B, student C, student D, student E, student F and student G. The makeup of the participants were five boys and two girls and all of them were Malays.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The model used for this research is Kemmis's model. The cycle consists of a series of steps which includes plan, action, observe and reflect and it usually leads to another cycle, in which it incorporates improvements suggested by the initial cycle.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

Similar data gathering methods were used in the two cycles which included pre-test and post-test, formative tests and document analysis.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

I conducted a preliminary investigation to get a better and specific information regarding the students' reading comprehension problem. Thus, two data gathering methods were used which included formative test and observation through a checklist. The formative test scores showed that the students were not able to locate specific information in answering the questions. The observation checklist indicated that the students did not understand the text as it was reflected through their behaviours.

5.3 Actions

Before the students undergone the intervention, a pre-test was administered in gathering information on the students' initial performance in reading comprehension skill. After that, the

intervention was implemented over a period of four weeks. In the first cycle, I gave key words as guidance in facilitating the students in filling in information in the mind map as they were not familiar with the strategy yet. After that, they sat for the post-test. Based on the result gathered from the first cycle, I revised the intervention and made improvement by not giving guidance whereby they filled in the information from the text on their own. After the revision was carried out, I implemented the second cycle of the action research with the improvement made. Next, again the students sat for the post-test.

5.4 Findings

Pre-test and post-test

The results gathered from the pre-test and post-test indicated that all students showed improvement whereby there was huge increment in the marks from the pre-test and the post-test which represents the effectiveness of the intervention. Figure 1 shows the percentage of the scores for each cycle. In the first cycle, majority of the students' scores in the post-test were moderate while in the second cycle, majority of the students' scores were very high. This indicated that the use of mind map has helped the students to improve their reading comprehension skill of finding main ideas and supporting details.

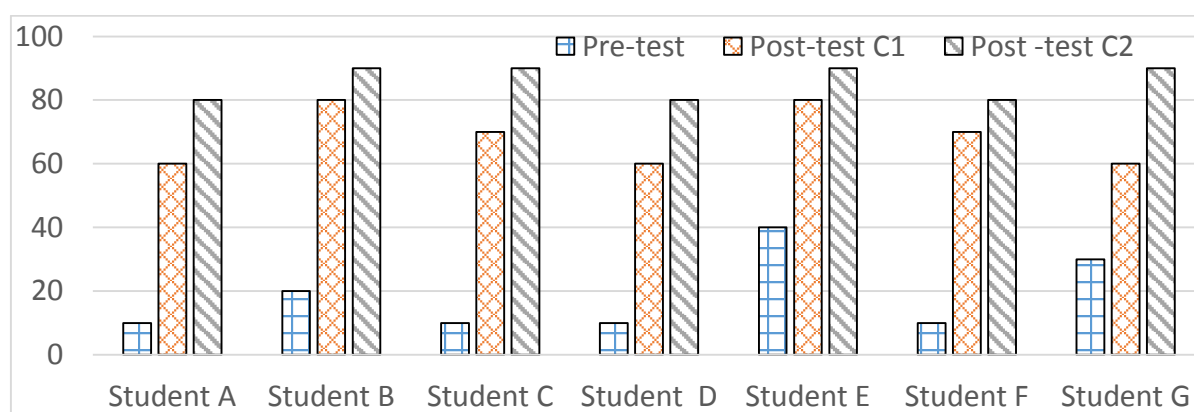


Figure 1: The comparison of the three tests conducted in the research

Formative test

The information gathered from the formative test which was conducted after the implementation of mind map was similar to the ones gathered from the pre-test and post-test. The results in figure 2 indicates that the students' performance increased over the sessions. Moreover, the particular student showed a marked progression whereby he managed to obtain 80% in the third session compared to 40% in the first session which reflected as the lowest score. In fact, some students achieved a maximum of 100% in the second and third sessions.

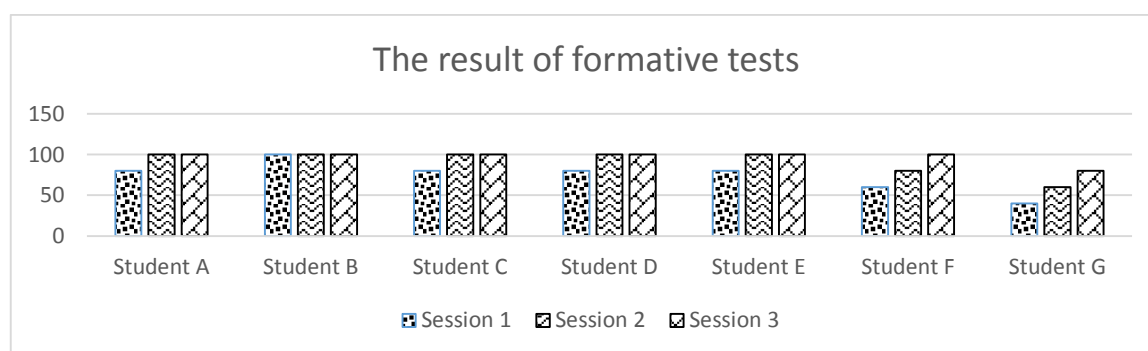


Figure 2: The results of the students' formative tests

Document Analysis

Session	Examples
1 (Text on Colourful Malaysia)	<p>Student F: <i>"There are many celebrations...Chinese New Year is a celebrations for Chinese that lasts for 15 days. Besides that, the East Malaysians celebrate Gawai Festival and Keamatan Festival."</i></p> <p>Student G: <i>"Malaysia..The people a friendly and united regardless of their religions, beliefs and lifestyle. We should be proud to be Malaysian"</i></p> <p>Right way of writing</p> <p>Student A: <u>Many celebrations in Malaysia (main ideas)</u> -Muslim= Hari Raya (after a month of fasting) -Chinese = New Year for 15 days (supporting details) -East Malaysian= Gawai Festival and Keamatan.</p>
2 (Text on Tool)	<p>Student G: <i>About 7000 years ago, humans began to make tools using metals. Metals are harder and stronger By using them, human were able to work faster and better that before... today."</i></p> <p>Right way of writing</p> <p>Student B: <u>7000 years , metal are made from metal (main ideas)</u> -Tools are stronger and harder (supporting details) -To make work faster and better</p>
3 (Text on Ants)	<p>Student D: <u>Workers have different duties to perform</u> -Take care of eggs -Gather food</p> <p>Student G: <u>Unique characteristics of ants</u> -Omnivorous (eat both meat and plants) -Antennae (find way back and food</p>

The examples shown in the table above were the samples of students' work from the first session to the third session. It indicates the students' progression in every session. In the first session, student F and student G wrote a chunk of paragraph from the text. While the other students filled in the information just as like student A did. He wrote and underlined the main ideas followed by the supporting details. In the second session, student G still lifted but in the third session, he was able to identify main ideas and supporting details and write them accordingly in the mind map

5.5 Conclusion

In a nutshell, it was identified that mind map was effective in helping the students to improve reading comprehension skill of finding main ideas and supporting details. This is supported by Taylor (2005) that the use of mind map is a recommended reading strategy to improve students' reading comprehension skill in outlining main ideas and supporting details. Moreover, it develops awareness of the purpose of reading whereby the students need to locate the main ideas and supporting details in order to fill in the bubbles in the mind map given. It is crucial because it aids the students to be more focused on the specific parts of text for identification of the main ideas and supporting details.

5.6 Reflection

There were few limitations found in the research that can affect the finding of the research. The first limitation is that the mind map was not properly designed whereby there were 5 empty bubbles that required for the students to fill in the main ideas together with supporting details. The students needed to write and underline the main ideas to differentiate with the supporting details. They took some time to be familiar with the format of writing in the mind map as they kept forgetting to underline the main ideas. It caused them to spend more time to understand what they had written in the mind map in answering the reading comprehension questions. In improving this limitation, I should provide separate bubbles for the supporting details. So that it will be easier for the students to fill in the main ideas and supporting details accordingly. The second limitation was the time gap between the first and second cycle. It was roughly about three months which it might hinder the findings of the research. In the second cycle, the students forgot about what they should find in order to fill in the mind map. It took some time for me to teach the use of mind map so that they could recall what they had done in the first cycle. This could be seen in the formative assessment in the first session of the

second cycle which the students did not perform well compared to the first cycle. It affected the findings of the research. Therefore, the researcher needs to ensure that the intervention should be conducted within appropriate duration of time.

6.0 SUGGESTION

This is certainly a topic that deserves further research. Therefore, in order to generalize the results for larger groups, the time should be extended and it should involve more participants of different levels. Further explorations using longer training duration before conducting intervention and more extensive reading materials along with participants of different levels of reading abilities are worth considering verifying the relative efficiency of different mind mapping strategy for improving reading comprehension skill. Even given its limitations, this research has provided many ideas for ways to modify teaching practices. It seems that the use of mind map can help to improve the reading skill of finding main ideas and supporting details to be applied while reading. The scope of this research was only limited to reading comprehension. It is suggested that in future research the scope should be expanded in terms of other three important skills; writing, speaking and listening. By making the scope wider, the researchers can get a clear view of the utilization of mind mapping in all aspects.

REFERENCE

Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2004). *Improving adolescent literacy: strategies at work*. New Jersey: Pearson.

Taylor, E. (2005). *Learning store*. Retrieved from Analyzing Quantitative Data:
learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/g3658-6.pdf

ENHANCING YEAR 4 BUDIMAN LOW PROFICIENCY STUDENTS' VOCABULARY RETENTION THROUGH SHARED READING OF GRADED STORYBOOKS

By:

NUR FARHANA BINTI MOHD YUSOF
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

This study aims to enhance Year 4 Budiman low proficiency students' vocabulary retention through shared reading of graded storybooks. There were six low proficiency participants; two boys and four girls' who encountered vocabulary retention problems in Year 4 Budiman from one of the schools in Kuala Lumpur. The focus of the study was to use graded storybooks through shared-reading technique in order to enhance students' vocabulary retention. Preliminary investigation was conducted using several methods such as observation checklist and diagnostic test. The results showed that all participants have vocabulary retention problems during English Reading lessons but there were 6 pupils who showed the lowest scores and needed to be studied. There were three instruments employed to measure the effectiveness of the intervention namely; pre-test, post-test, formative tests and observation checklist. There were 2 cycles of the study. Based on the pre-test result, it showed that 5 pupils scored below 30% and one pupil scored 50%. However, during the post-test in Cycle 2, the pupils showed improvement and all the participants managed to score above 70%; 1 pupil scored 75%, 3 pupils scored 92% and 2 pupils scored 100% during post-test. The results from the data gathered showed that the use of graded storybooks through shared reading technique was effective in order to solve the vocabulary retention problems faced by the participants. The suggestion for further research is by focusing on the use of vocabulary in terms of grammar and the word formation.

Key terms: Shared reading, graded storybooks, vocabulary retention

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Reading skill is a useful skill for pupils to gain better knowledge from written texts. One can have a good understanding of a text if one's vocabulary is substantial. Laflamme (1997) claims that "vocabulary knowledge is the single most important factor contributing to reading comprehension" (p. 372). This shows that students' level of vocabulary knowledge is an important predictor of comprehension for English-language learners. Therefore, a sound of vocabulary knowledge will enable pupils to read English texts well.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

Throughout my teaching and learning sessions, I have encountered several problems in conducting my reading lessons. The pupils could read English language texts however; they did not know the meaning of the words which actually hindered their comprehension of the whole text. Based on several observations made, the pupils refused to take part in reading activities because they did not know how to respond due to their limited vocabulary.

When I gave the pupils short reading passages with simple sentences from one of the topics that they have learned, they did not manage to remember the vocabulary that the teacher taught. When I asked the pupils the meaning of the vocabulary, most of them hesitantly answered and simply said out their answers without thinking. Most of them made guesses without looking at the context and meaning of the passage. However, their answers were inaccurate. Then, I realised that they failed to explain the vocabulary because they have problem in retaining the meaning of the words. Thus, to enhance pupils' vocabulary retention, a study has been carried out to identify whether the use of graded storybooks through shared reading technique can help to improve the pupils' vocabulary retention.

1.2 Related theory/ literature

Vygotsky's social constructivism theory supports my research and it was reflected in the intervention. The theory promotes learning contexts in which pupils can understand concepts and ideas that they cannot understand on their own (Vygotsky, 1978). The use of shared reading in every session helped the pupils to interact with peers and teachers in order to identify the meaning of the vocabulary items. Therefore, they would have a clear concept and idea of the vocabulary items introduced throughout the sessions. The constructivism theory also describes that "learning as a process in which learners construct knowledge and meaning by integrating prior knowledge, beliefs and experiences" (Tennyson and Schott, 1997. p. 90). Thus, the use of graded storybooks through shared reading matches the constructivism theory because it assists pupils in building and extending vocabulary and content knowledge as well as expanding pupils' comprehension skills.

The use of graded storybooks through shared reading to enhance pupils' vocabulary retention incorporated both bottom-up and top-down strategies. The top-down strategy is closely related to this study when the pupils use background information to predict the meaning of the words based on the illustration and the story (Reutzel and Cooter, 2013). The bottom-up strategy can also be used to teach vocabulary especially for low proficiency learners. While the teacher leads the pupils' on the graded storybooks, he/she can use bottom-up strategy to introduce or guide the pupils to the meaning of vocabulary during the reading session. The sessions are also interactive whereby the teacher brings the meaning of the text from the graded storybooks through shared reading technique.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The focus of the study is to enhance Year 4 Budiman low proficiency students' vocabulary retention through graded storybooks using shared-reading technique. The pupils were having difficulties to understand and comprehend the reading texts or passages due to limited vocabulary and the vocabulary learned could not be retained for a long time in their memory.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

The general and specific objectives of this study were set to help the Year 4 Budiman pupils.

3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to develop Year 4 Budiman pupils' vocabulary retention in reading English Language texts.

3.2 Specific Objective

The specific objective was to enhance Year 4 Budiman low proficiency students' vocabulary retention through shared reading of graded storybooks

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

This study involved six students from Year 4 Budiman with low English language proficiency level. They were 4 girls and 2 boys. Most of them encountered comprehension problems because they could not retain the vocabulary learned for a long time. The selected participants were all Malay pupils who use Bahasa Melayu as their spoken language.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

The data gathering methods of this research consisted of qualitative and quantitative data. There were three instruments used in collecting the data of the study; pre-test and post-test, observation checklist and formative assessment. The pre-test and post-test used in the Cycle 1 were matching the words with the correct meaning of the vocabulary items. While, in Cycle 2 I used cloze passage for the pre-test and post-test. There were three different formative tests conducted in each session of the intervention which were multiple choice questions, blank filling and true false questions.

The observation checklist was used in both cycles. There were two emerging themes from the criteria listed; pupils' responses in giving the meaning of words (orally, in written) and pupils' participation to show the effectiveness of the storybooks in vocabulary retention.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

The preliminary investigation was conducted to find out the problem faced by Year 4 Budiman's pupils in English language reading texts. I have used two methods which were observation checklist and the diagnostic test. Based on the preliminary investigation, I have chosen 6 participants for the study. The data gathered from preliminary investigation has also led me to the focus of the study which is to improve the pupils' vocabulary retention in reading.

Analysis of Preliminary Investigation

Diagnostic Test

Most of the pupils were able to get 2-3 over 5 marks from the vocabulary exercise given as shown in Table 1. It clearly shows that majority of the pupils could not answer the multiple choice questions given correctly because they still could not get the idea of the vocabulary introduced in the pre-reading stage of the lesson.

Table 1
Results of the Diagnostic Test

No. of Pupils	Score
2	0-1
4	2-3
0	4-5

Observation checklist

Based on the observation checklist conducted, I have made some conclusions on the pupils' level of vocabulary and comprehension. They had difficulties to understand the reading text because they did not know the meaning of the words and could not retain the vocabulary learned for long time. Based on the first criteria of the checklist 5 out of 6 pupils did not manage to get the correct meaning of the words. While only one pupil managed to retain at least 4 vocabulary items learned in the lesson. For the last criterion, none of the participants showed any curiosity to know the meaning of the words.

5.3 Action

This section will discuss the action that was taken throughout the study. I have chosen Kurt Lewin's model for this study.

Cycle 1 & Cycle 2

There were two cycles of the intervention. The first cycle took five weeks with three sessions conducted. The graded storybooks used entitled "Rapunzel" have three different levels in terms of vocabulary complexity; low, average and high. The graded storybooks would be implemented using shared reading technique where the teacher interacted with the pupils during the reading sessions and guided the pupils in getting the meanings of the vocabulary items. Before the intervention, I conducted a pre-test. In every session, there were vocabulary tests on pupils' vocabulary retention. Each session took one hour to finish. Once the third session was done, I conducted a post-test to check for improvement. The second cycle which has three sessions took four weeks to finish. A different set of storybooks entitled "Rumpelstiltskin" was used using shared reading technique. The pre-test was conducted before the intervention and the post-test was conducted after the intervention. The formative tests were conducted in every session. Each session took one hour to finish.

5.4 Findings

Pre-test and Post-test

Figure 1 showed the comparison of scores of the pre-test and post-test before and after the intervention. Four pupils showed positive improvements by getting high marks in the post-test result whereas two pupils were still in the moderate progress. While in Cycle 2 of the intervention, the result showed that the pupils were in moderate improvement as there were slight difference in marks compared to the pre-test and post-test scores in Cycle 1. This is because, most of them managed to get higher marks in both pre-test and post-test scores.

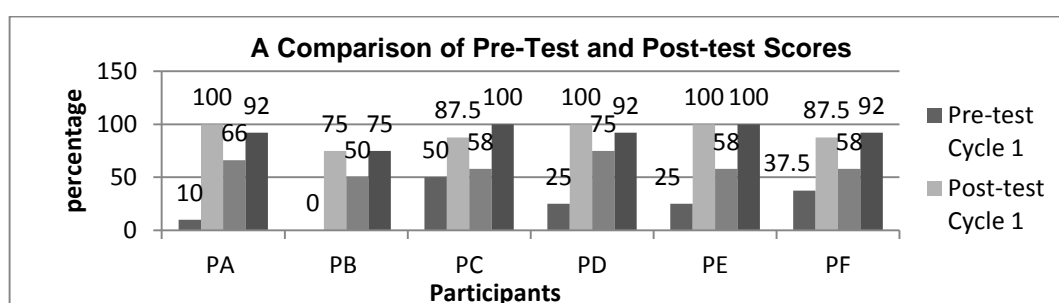


Figure 1: Comparison between pre-test and post-test scores for cycle 1

Formative Tests

Table 2

Level of progress of formative tests in Cycle 1

Level of progression	Number of pupils Scores/Grades		
	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Poor	-	-	-
Average	3	2	1
Excellent	3	4	5

Table 2 shows the students' level of progress for the formative tests conducted. The number of pupils who showed excellent progression increased in the session 3 with 5 pupils showing excellent progression.

Table 3

Level of progress of formative tests in Cycle 2

Level of progression	Number of pupils Scores/Grades		
	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Poor	-	-	-
Average	1	-	-
Excellent	5	6	6

In Cycle 2, overall the pupils have learned the vocabulary introduced and managed to get excellent scores in sessions 2 and 3. All pupils scored between 70%- 100% marks by the end of the session.

Observation Checklist

Based on the data gathered, I could see that there is an increase in response to both emerging issues; pupils' responses in giving meaning of the vocabulary and pupils' participation in the session in both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. The participants were able to give meaning orally and in writing. They also eagerly volunteered to give the meanings of the vocabulary items and answered questions pertaining to the meanings of the words during the sessions.

5.5 Conclusion

The use of graded storybooks through shared reading technique to help the pupils' vocabulary retention had a positive impact. It was very effective as the objectives and research questions of the study were achieved and answered. The students' vocabulary retention had successfully improved as reflected in the pre-test and post-test scores from Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. The students' participation and ability to give the meaning could also be seen throughout the sessions based on the observation checklist.

5.6 Reflection

There were a few implications that could be drawn from the study. Firstly, the use of graded storybooks through shared reading technique helped in retaining the vocabulary as well as increased the number of words learned by the pupils. The use of graded storybooks in the English language reading lessons helped the pupils to remember the vocabulary items because of the frequent repetition.

The limitation of the study was time constraint. The length of the intervention session was not so effective because within 60 minutes I had to read the story together, drill on the vocabulary and administer the formative test. It would be better if the intervention would be implemented with a longer time, so that the participants would benefit more.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Other researchers who have interest in investigating the same topic would find the following suggestions useful.

- Focus on grammar and word formation
The focus of the study was restricted to the retaining of the meaning of the vocabulary items introduced. Thus, the other researcher may extend the focus such as looking at the usage of the words, grammar and word formation of the vocabulary introduced.
- Transfer of vocabulary retained
The researchers may also investigate whether the vocabulary retained has been transferred to other main skills such as listening, speaking, and writing.

REFERENCES

- Laflamme, J.G. (1997). The effect of multiple exposure vocabulary method and the target reading/writing strategy on test scores. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 40(5), 372-384
- Reutzel D.R & Cooter R.B . (2013, July 29). *Education*. Retrieved March 10, 2014, from Bottom-up Theories of the reading process : <http://www.education.com/reference/article/bottom-up-theories-reading-process/>
- Tennyson, R. D. & Schott, F. (1997). Instructional design theory research and models. In R. D. Tennyson, F. Schott, N. Seel, & S. Dijkstra. *Instructional design: International perspective*. Vol. 1, Theory, research, and models. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

USING PICTURE CARDS AND DRILLING TO IMPROVE WORD RECOGNITION SKILLS AMONGST YEAR 3 LOW PROFICIENCY STUDENTS

By:

NUR ILLHAM BINTI AZMI
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the use of picture cards and drilling to improve word recognition skills amongst 11 Year 3 low proficiency students. A diagnostic test was conducted to examine the students' ability to recognize the form and meaning of 20 basic words in the syllabus. It is found that all the students are weak in recognizing the form and meaning of these words. In this study, picture cards and drilling is used to help improve their word recognition. The use of picture cards is a technique that the students are familiar with in their classroom activities. The data gathering methods employed in this research are pre-test and post-test, formative tests, classroom observations and an unstructured interview in order to know the effectiveness of the intervention. The findings show a substantial improvement in the students' ability in recognizing the form and the meaning of the words. From the interview, it is found that the students become more confident in their ability to recognize the forms and the meaning of the words.

Key terms: Picture cards, drilling, word recognition, vocabulary

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In order to communicate in a second language, students need to have sufficient vocabulary to help them to use and understand the message. According to Harmer (1993), "If language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh." Based on this statement, it is clear that vocabulary is one of the most important things that needs to be acquired by the students in order to comprehend and express meaning clearly. Students need to have adequate vocabulary for them to understand the content of the language.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

During my three month practicum, one of the problems that I identified among students was limited vocabulary. This might be caused by weak word recognition skills. It hindered them from recognizing the forms and meanings of the words. In one of my lessons, the students were not able to tell me the meaning of the words that I taught them without being supported by visual aids. For example, the students were unable to give the correct meaning of the word 'cucumber' in the sentences given and they simply guessed it as "kuih". The students were also unable to recognize simple words like the word "eight" to mean the number "8".

In another lesson, the students wanted to answer the questions in English but they could only answer them in their first language due to limited vocabulary in the second language. As a result, students needed to be prompted to repeat the answers in English in order to familiarize the students with the words. By drilling the words, they were able to recognize the forms and meanings of the words at the end of the lesson.

1.2 Related Theory/Literature

The ability to recognize words and meaning requires the activation of prior knowledge and students' schemas. Based on Piaget's theory of schemata "a child's existing schemas are capable of explaining what it can perceive around it." According to Singer & Revenson (1997), "A schema is the basic building block of intelligent behavior, a form of organizing information that a person uses to interpret the things he or she sees, hears, smell, and touches". In the context of this study, the use of picture cards taps on the students' prior knowledge and help them to identify the words and their meaning. When they see the objects, they will be able to guess the correct form of the objects.

This research was also driven by the behaviorism theory by B.F. Skinner (1938) because the research focuses on drilling as a method to reinforce students' learning. As mentioned by Larsen & Freeman (2000), "Language learning is a process of habit formation. The more often something is repeated, the stronger the habit and the greater the learning". Hence, by using drilling, students will be confident in recognizing the forms and meanings of the words.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The focus of this research was on improving the word recognition skills of students who struggled to read and comprehend a text. To be able to comprehend a text, students need to recognize the words and their meanings first. The use of picture cards and drilling is believed to help students to learn new vocabulary more effectively. Olmedo (2003) stated that, "In a classroom environment students with limited English proficiency rely heavily on visual clues for the comprehension and acquisition of learning content". Hence, the pictures cards will help the students to recognize the form of the words easily and help them to make meaning of the words. The method of drilling will help them to remember the words learnt more effectively.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

3.1 General Objective:

The general objective of this research is to develop word recognition skills amongst Year 3 low proficiency students using picture cards and drilling.

3.2 Specific Objectives:

The specific objective of this research is to investigate whether the use of picture cards and drilling helps to improve 11 Year 3 low proficiency students. It also aims to identify students' perception towards the use of picture cards and drilling in improving their word recognition skills.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANT

The target group for this research was Year 3 students in one of the primary schools located in Cheras. The group was selected based on their performance in a diagnostic test. There were 11 students, 7 boys and 4 girls and they were all Malays. The students in the class were low proficiency students, with a particular weakness in vocabulary.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

The action research model that was adopted for my research was Stephen Kemmis Spiral Model (1983). This model involves the steps of Planning, Action, Observe and Reflect (McNiff, 2013). The following discusses the procedure of action that has been undertaken based on this model.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

The data gathering methods that were used in this research were pre-test and post-test, formative tests, classroom observations and an interview. The pre-test and post-test were conducted to assess the development of the Year 3 students' word recognition skills and the formative tests were used to assess their progress in recognizing the form and meaning of the words. The classroom observations were also conducted to see the students' responses and the change in students' behavior during the intervention. I also conducted an interview session with the students to know their perceptions towards the use of picture cards and drilling in improving their word recognition skills.

5.2 Preliminary Investigation

During the preliminary investigation, I used a diagnostic test, unstructured observations and an interview with the English teacher to know about the students' ability in recognizing words and meanings. Through my observations, I noted that the students were having difficulty in recognizing the form and meanings of the words although they have learned the words in the previous lessons. They stared at the words on the board blankly. When I asked them, they merely guessed the meaning

of the words. The diagnostic test scores showed that the students were not able to match the words to the pictures correctly. The highest score was only 3 out of 20 marks for some of the students.

5.3 Action

In Cycle 1, to identify the students' ability to recognize the forms and meaning of the words, I administered a pre-test consisting 20 multiple choice questions. There were two sessions in both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. I conducted the first session of the intervention. First, I introduced 10 picture cards to the students. Using the pictures, I had a question and answer activity with them regarding the meaning of the words. I went through all the 10 words by showing it repeatedly. Then, the students were asked to do a formative test in the form of word search. The next day, the second cycle with the similar steps were conducted. At the end of the week, I administered a post-test to identify the students' performance after the intervention.

In Cycle 2, I started the first session by introducing 10 more new words from the topic. I explained about the words by relating them to their surroundings in order to trigger their prior knowledge. I went through all the 10 words by showing it repeatedly. After that, I grouped them so that they can practice matching the words with the correct pictures together with their friends. It helped them to gain confidence in reading as they are able to recognize the words. This had helped them to gain the confidence of using the words in their reading. After the group activity, students were given a formative assessment to check on their progress from the intervention.

5.4 Findings

Pre-test and Post-test

Table 1
Comparison of pre-test scores post-test scores

Students	Pre-test		Post-test		Difference	
	Cycle 1		Cycle 2			
	Scores	%	Scores	%	Scores	%
S1	10	50	20	100	+10	50
S2	7	35	17	85	+10	50
S3	8	40	18	90	+10	50
S4	9	45	17	85	+8	40
S5	9	45	17	85	+8	40
S6	5	25	17	85	+12	60
S7	5	25	17	85	+12	60
S8	10	50	19	95	+9	45
S9	6	30	14	70	+8	40
S10	4	20	9	45	+5	25
S11	8	40	16	80	+8	40

Table 1 shows a comparison of pre-test scores and post-test scores to show the students' performance after the implementation of the intervention. The highest score is +12 (60%) and the lowest is +5 (25%). This means that all students show a significant progress in recognizing the forms and the meanings of the words after the implementation of the intervention.

Formative tests

Table 2
Students' scores in formative assessment in Cycle 2

Students	Cycle 2 Session 1	Session 2	Difference in scores
S1	8	9	+1
S2	8	10	+2
S3	7	10	+3
S4	9	10	+1
S5	7	8	+1
S6	7	9	+2
S7	7	9	+2
S8	8	9	+1
S9	6	8	+2
S10	7	9	+2
S11	6	8	+2

Table 2 shows the students' scores in the formative tests. We can see that the students have obtained higher scores in the second session and this shows that they have retained a memory of the forms and meanings of the words on the pictures given. 3 out of 11 students scored 100% in the second formative test in Cycle 2. 5 students scored 9 over 10 questions correctly and 3 students scored 8 questions correctly. Based on these scores, it can be concluded that the students are making a good progress as a result of the intervention.

Observation

Table 3
Excerpt: instances in field note to show students' confidence level after the intervention in Cycle 2

Observation	Comments
Teacher drilled students by dividing them into groups. In the groups, the students were able to recognize the correct form of the words and match it with the correct pictures. Students competed with each other in the group to match the word with the pictures. Students seemed like they are confident in their ability to recognize the words with the pictures correctly. Many of them can complete the task independently after the group activity.	The use of drilling enabled the students to be confident in recognizing the words and the meanings. It showed that drilling gave the students the opportunity to practice recognizing the forms of the words correctly with the pictures. That is also good because the students could remember the words better in their future readings.

Table 3 shows good progress in their confidence towards the intervention in Cycle 2. This is due to the drilling that was emphasized more in Cycle 2. Based on the field note excerpt above, it shows that students need drilling in order to help them improve word recognition skills. It helps to build confidence in students as they have the opportunity to practice and to recognize the words. By drilling together with their friends, more meaningful learning will take place and it will raise their confidence in reading.

Interview

The interview conducted shows the students' perception on the use of picture cards and drilling to improve their word recognition. I interviewed 3 out of 11 students to know their perception of the intervention. They mentioned that picture cards and drilling helped them to improve their word recognition skills, and this has helped them to be more confident in reading. The intervention has also helped them to remember the words better through the use of drilling.

From the findings, it can be concluded that picture cards and drilling did actually help the students to improve their word recognition skills. The good performance by the students in their post-

test scores shows that the students are able to recognize the form of the words correctly and at the same time help them to know the meaning of the words. Moreover, when the students are able to recognize the form of the words and the meaning, it will help them in their reading because it enables the students to extract the content from the text.

5.5 Conclusion

The use of picture cards and drilling can be used in reading, writing, listening and speaking or even in a grammar lesson. It can be used in other skills in order to prepare the students with words that they will use for the skills, for example it can be used for a writing class. Teachers can use picture cards to introduce words and meanings. These words will benefit the students whereby they can use it in their essay. When the students used the words in their essay, it means that the students recognize the words and meanings and the intervention is also effective for them.

5.6 Reflection

After conducting this research, I think my intervention would be applicable to any teaching practices. I think this intervention enables the students to know the meaning of words that are not familiar to them. It also would be purposeful and meaningful for the students as well as other teachers. It will be meaningful for me as a future teacher because it will enable me to help the students to widen their vocabulary. Their reading will be meaningful once they know the meaning of the words as well as the content of the text.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The use of picture cards and drilling can be implemented in other subjects such as in foreign languages to display the words and also give the meaning of the words. It will be easier for the teacher to explain meaning that sometimes could not be explained verbally. It also can be used in Mathematics and Science in order to deliver the concept or facts which can give the students general overview of the subject content. Other than that picture cards also is suitable to be used in rural areas where the pictures are the most accessible materials that teachers can get. In addition, most of the schools in rural areas still did not have internet coverage and printers could not be brought in because of the geographical factors.

REFERENCES

- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McNiff, J. (2013). *Action Research: Planning and Practice*. Abingdon: Routledge Publication.
- Olmedo, I. (2003). Language Mediation Among Emerging Bilingual Children. *Linguistic and Education*. 16-143.
- Piaget, J. (1972). *The psychology of the child*. New York: Basic Books.
- Singer, D. &. (1997). *A Piaget Primer: How a Child Thinks (Revised Edition)*. Madison, Connecticut: International Universities Press Inc.
- Skinner, B. F. (1938). *The Behavior of Organisms: An Experimental Analysis*. New York: Appleton-Century.

ENHANCING YEAR 4 CEMERLANG PUPILS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH THE USE OF FLOW MAP

By:

NURSYAZWANI BINTI SANIM
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

This research aims to ascertain how the use of a flow map can enhance reading comprehension among Year 4 Cemerlang pupils. Flow map is one of the Thinking Maps (i-THINK) that is useful in sequencing the order of events in a text. The research also assesses the effectiveness of using a flow map in enhancing reading comprehension specifically the sequencing of events in a narrative text. Five target participants (three males and two females) from Year 4 Cemerlang are selected to participate in this research. Data is collected through pre-tests, post-tests, formative test, observation checklist and document analysis of the pupils' reading comprehension exercises. The analysis of the data reveals that the use of flow map has helped to enhance the target participants reading comprehension based on the comparison of the target participants marks in pre-test and post-test and formative tests. The observation checklist also shows the ability of the target participants to complete all boxes in the flow map with the correct sequence of events. The document analysis of the pupils' comprehension exercises also display the target participants' ability to complete the flow map by writing the correct sequence of events without including unnecessary details from the text. This research recommends other researchers to increase the number of the target participants as well as the use of other different types of Thinking Maps in order to further establish the effectiveness of Thinking Maps (i-THINK) in enhancing pupils reading comprehension.

Key terms: Reading Comprehension, Flow map

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of reading comprehension is getting meaning from a written text. Without comprehension, reading is a frustrating, pointless exercise in word calling. The ability to comprehend what one reads will have a profound effect on their growth as effective readers. In fact, a major goal of reading comprehension is to help pupils developing the knowledge, skills, and experiences that they must have if they are to become competent and enthusiastic readers (Jonhssen, 2006).

1.1 Reflection on Teaching Experience

During practicum, the researcher was given to teach Year 4 Cemerlang in one of the government schools in Kuala Lumpur. The researcher noticed that many of the pupils in Year 4 Cemerlang were having difficulties in comprehending the reading texts given. This problem was identified through the pupils' answer of the comprehension questions such as objective and subjective questions, true-false statements and sequencing of events that were conducted during the initial few reading lessons.

Based on the comprehension questions given, the researcher found out that many of the pupils did not manage to get all the answers correctly. Therefore, it can be concluded that pupils of Year 4 Cemerlang were having reading comprehension difficulties. This is because the pupils displayed their inability to fully comprehend certain content in reading the text thus affecting their reading comprehension. By on the problem identified, the researcher decided to select a suitable intervention strategy which is using the flow map in order to help the pupils to enhance their reading comprehension.

1.2 Related Theory/literature

Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development and Bartlett Schema Theory are vital in this research. Reading comprehension is a cognitive process in which pupils interact with the narrative text to make meaning out of it. The ability of pupils to understand narrative text is related to the pupils' cognitive ability in order to process the content of the text. According to Piaget (1952), children come

into any new learning environment with their own schemata that are representative of their patterns of life experiences and prior knowledge. Hence, in order to comprehend the content of the text the pupils need to be able to connect their background knowledge to the text because Schuder (2005) affirms that pupils' background knowledge plays a critical role in reading comprehension and that good readers draw on prior knowledge to understand what they read. This is further supported by Bartlett's schema theory, which defines schema as a mental structure that represents one's understanding of the world to organize current knowledge and provide a framework for future understanding to activate the pupils' vocabularies and background information related to the text. Therefore, in reading comprehension, the more schemas the pupils have, a greater understanding of the content of the text read is established. Hence, the pupils need to use their cognitive process in order to comprehend the narrative text by incorporating their schema in order to build comprehension of the text as well as the ability to use the flow map effectively by sequencing the events correctly.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

Comprehension is an important component in the reading process because one of the ultimate objectives of reading is to gain meaning. According to Kucer (2013), comprehension occurs in the transaction between the reader and the text. By interacting with the text, pupils are able to infer meaning. Thus, this will help them to comprehend the text better. Reading comprehension skill is very important for pupils in order for them to become avid and independent readers. However, reading is only recognition of words for most pupils in Year 4 Cemerlang. They can read but have difficulties in understanding the text. Therefore, it is important to conduct a research in order to develop pupils' reading comprehension because reading is one of the important skills that pupils need to master in school.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this research is to enhance Year 4 Cemerlang pupils' reading comprehension through the use of flow map and the specific objective of this research is to know how the use of flow map can enhance Year 4 Cemerlang pupils' reading comprehension.

Based on the objectives, two research questions are formulated for this research. They are:

- Have the Year 4 Cemerlang pupils enhanced their reading comprehension by using the flow map?
- How does the flow map help to enhance pupils reading comprehension?

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

This research only involved five target participants that were selected from the Year 4 Cemerlang class. They were two girls and three boys and their average age is 10 years old. These target participants are of different races. One is Malay, three of them are Chinese and one is an Indian pupil. These target participants have a moderate level of proficiency in English.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

In conducting this research, several steps were taken to complete the research and each of the steps are discussed below.

5.1 Data Gathering Methods

Five data gathering methods were identified. They were the administration of the pre-test, post-test, formative test, observation checklist and document analysis of the pupils' reading comprehension exercises. These data collection methods were very useful in order to review the effectiveness of the intervention strategy used.

The tests (pre-test, post-test, formative test) were used to compare the performance of pupils before, during and after the implementation of the intervention. The observation was used to determine the progression of pupils' reading comprehension exercises and to determine how the use of intervention strategy actually helped to improve their reading comprehension skill. Apart from that, document analysis of pupils' reading comprehension exercises were also collected to analyse pupils'

answers in sequencing the events in the narrative text. This was helpful in order to evaluate their comprehension of the narrative text and to keep track on the target participants' performance throughout the research.

5.2 Preliminary Investigations

The researcher carried out the preliminary investigations through observation during the aural-oral questioning and document analysis of pupils reading comprehension exercises'. Based on the observation during aural-oral questioning, the researcher found out that the pupils had difficulties in comprehending the narrative text as they were not able to give the correct answer although the answer was clearly in the narrative text. The researcher also used document analysis to determine the reading comprehension problem faced by the pupils. The researcher gave true-false statements of a narrative text to the pupils and the result showed only a few of the pupils were able to answer the true-false statements correctly and the rest had at least three mistakes from the six questions. So, both of these preliminary investigation revealed that the pupils in year 4 Cemerlang had problems in comprehending the narrative text.

5.3 Action

This research is based on Stephen Kemmis's model. Kemmis's model consists of 2 cycles and each cycle has four steps which are plan, act, observe and reflect. For this research, the researcher carried out two cycles of action. For the first cycle, there were three sessions conducted whereas in the second cycle only two sessions conducted. The first step is plan in which the researcher identifies problem and plan suitable intervention to overcome the problem. The problem identified which was related to the pupils reading comprehension of the narrative text. So, the intervention planned to overcome the problem identified is by using flow map. The second step of Stephen Kemmis's model is action. In this step, the researcher carried out the selected intervention strategy that had been planned in the first step (plan) to solve the problem identified. The intervention strategy selected was conducted in both cycle one and cycle two. The third step of this model is observe. Here, the researcher had to observe how the intervention is taking its effect in overcoming the problem by collecting data through the data gathering methods identified. The last stage of this model is reflect. It was essential that the researcher reflect the effectiveness of intervention carried out by analysing the data gathered. The data gathered were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Based on the reflection, the intervention strategy was able to enhance pupils' reading comprehension.

5.4 Findings

The findings below showed that the intervention strategy carried out was helpful in enhancing the target participants reading comprehension.

The comparison between pre-test and post-test shows that all of the target participants made progress in their reading comprehension.

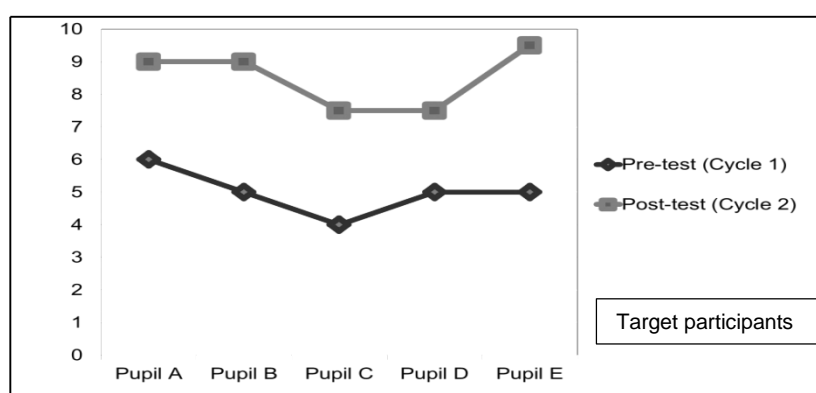


Figure 1 : Comparison of target participants' pre-test marks (Cycle 1) and target participants' post-test marks (Cycle 2)

The target participants marks in the pre-test (Cycle 1) and post-test (Cycle 2) is shown in Figure 1 above. Each target participant showed improvement in the post-test result in Cycle 2 compared to the pre-test in Cycle 1. This positive improvement indicates the effectiveness of the flow map as a strategy in enhancing reading comprehension.

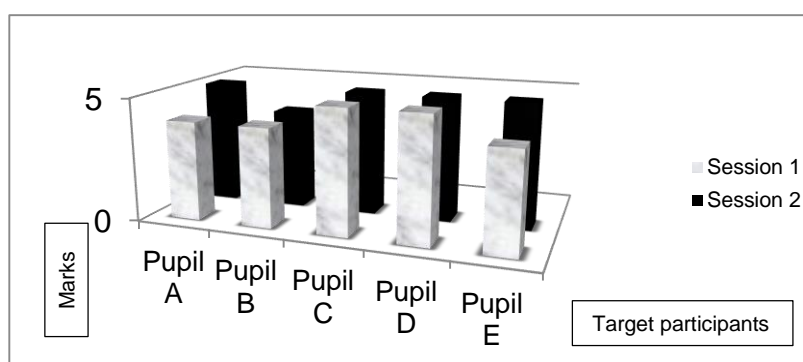


Figure 2 : Comparison of target participants' marks in formative test during Cycle 2.

Figure 2 above shows the differences in marks from the two sessions of formative tests conducted in Cycle2. Target participants (pupil A and E) both show an increase of 1 mark. On the other hand, target participants (pupil B, C and D) did not show any difference in marks because their marks in both the sessions remained the same.

From the analysis of the observation checklist, most of the participants showed positive responses on the ability to comprehend the narrative text through the use of the flow map. This is because the target participants were able to meet with all of the criteria of the observation checklist. The first criterion of the observation checklist is the ability of the target participants to complete all of the boxes in the flow map. The second criterion is the ability of the target participants to rewrite the narrative text in sequence. The third criterion is the ability to identify the major events in the narrative text. The fourth criteria is the ability to recall details from the narrative text (characters, setting, events) and fifth criteria is the ability of the target participants to complete the flow map within the given time.

All of the target participants were able to complete all of the boxes in the flow map with the correct sequence of the events as they were able to identify the major events and recalled details from the text read in terms of the characters, setting and events. This showed the ability of the target participants to comprehend the narrative text by identifying the events and plot of the text.

Based on the document analysis of the pupils' reading comprehension exercises, the target participants' were able to complete the flow map by writing the correct sequence of events without copying or lifting portions of the text. It showed that the target participants were able to identify the main events in the narrative text without writing down unnecessary explanations or details about the main events of the narrative text.

5.5 Conclusion

Based on the findings, the researcher can conclude that the intervention strategy used was effective to enhance pupils reading comprehension. The increase of the target participants marks in the post-test clearly indicates that there is improvement in their comprehension of the narrative text. Besides that, the ability of the target participants in increasing and maintaining their marks in the formative tests also indicates that the intervention strategy is practical to be used to enhance target participants reading comprehension. There were three target participants who did not show any increase of marks in the formative tests due to the fact that they had already achieved the highest (optimum) mark in the formative tests given.

Besides that, the observation carried out during the intervention also showed a positive indication of the target participants' enhancement in their reading comprehension ability. Apart from that, the analysis of the target participants' reading comprehension exercises also showed their ability in comprehending the narrative text as they were able to sequence the narrative text by selecting the

important events from the narrative text. Hence, to a large extent this strategy was able to help the target participants to comprehend the narrative text better because the flow map helped them in finding the important events from the text and thus assisted the target participants to sequence the events from the text correctly.

5.6 Reflection

The intervention strategy used which is flow map was able to enhance pupils' reading comprehension based on the analysis of the findings. The data from the five methods revealed that the use of flow map helped the target participants to improve their comprehension ability in which they were able to identify the main events in the text to be put in the flow map. Through the use of flow map, the target participants were given the chance to locate the main events in the narrative text on their own in order to build on their comprehension. This allowed them to carefully select which events from the text should be selected in order to sequence it in the flow map.

6.0 SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of this research prove the effectiveness of the intervention strategy used in enhancing the target participants' reading comprehension ability. Hence, the researcher believes it will be beneficial to conduct this study on a larger population of target participants. This is because the researcher only had five pupils as target participants and the result of this research is only applicable to this specific group of pupils. So, the researcher would recommend utilizing this study on a larger group of participants and on a more diverse group of target participants.

The researcher also proposes other researchers to conduct a research regarding this comprehension problem among pupils by using other types of Thinking Maps (i-THINK). For example, other researchers can use bubble map to list down the characteristics of the characters found in a narrative text. This will form a better understanding of the characters as well as of the text.

REFERENCES

- Bartlett, F.C. (1958). *Thinking*. New York: Basic Books.
- Jonhssen, S. (2006). *Reading Comprehension: Learning and Awareness*. New York: Riverhead.
- Kucer, S. B. (2013). *Teaching the Dimensions of Literacy*. New York: Routledge.
- Piaget, J. (1952). *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*. International Universities Press: New York.
- Schuder, T. (2005). *The genesis of transactional strategies instruction in a reading program for at-risk students*. *The Elementary School Journal*, 94, 183-200.

USE OF PICTURES WITH READING TEXT TO ENHANCE YEAR 3 PUPILS' READING COMPREHENSION IN A READING LESSON

By:

NURUL AINI BINTI AMAN
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to investigate the use of pictures with reading text to enhance Year 3 pupils' reading comprehension in a reading lesson. Five pupils (three boys and two girls) were identified by the researcher as subjects of this study as they were of low proficiency level. The researcher conducted an observation and a survey to confirm the identified problem and it showed that these pupils do have problems in comprehending reading texts. The researcher used tests (pre-test, post-test and formative assessment), observation (checklist) and questionnaire to collect data for this research. The research shows that pupils scored better in the tests, which showed that they understood the reading text better and this led to them answering the comprehension questions correctly. All pupils showed good progress when the results of the pre-test were compared to the results of the post-test in Cycle 2. The study also showed that pupils could answer more comprehension questions with the aid of pictures compared to reading text without pictures. Based on the questionnaire administered, it can be concluded that the study shows that pupils preferred pictures with the reading text as they supported the content of the text when the researcher administered questionnaire with the pupils. The researcher has suggested that in future, the pictures used with the reading text could have been used in a writing lesson, whereby the teachers could have elicited samples of written work when they used pictures with the reading text. It is worth noting that the researcher used descriptive texts throughout this investigation because the pupils were already familiar with its format. However, in the future, research could be conducted using other types of texts such as narrative or factual texts.

Key terms: Reading text, pictures, comprehension questions

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to the English Language Curriculum for Primary School (KSSR), "English is taught as a second language in all Malaysian primary and secondary schools. The mastery of English is essential for pupils to gain access to information and knowledge written in English. In line with the government's policy on strengthening English, the curriculum has been designed to produce pupils who will be proficient in the language". All language skills are important when using English but the reading component of the curriculum specifically states that by the end of the 6-year of schooling, pupils must be able to "read and comprehend a range of English texts for information and enjoyment" (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012). There are 25 pupils in the Year 3 class that the researcher is teaching and their proficiency level ranged from average to low. They do understand the instructions when the researcher used English in the classroom but they have problems understanding the reading text during the reading lessons. Hence, the researcher wanted to help these pupils overcome the problem of comprehending reading texts.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

When the researcher posed a few comprehension questions, the pupils answered them in their exercise books. She noticed that many of them answered the questions wrongly and only a handful of them wrote the right answer. Some of them even skipped the questions and answered only a few of the questions. Another instance was when some pupils spelled the words incorrectly even though the words were in the provided reading text. There was also another instance when she asked the questions orally, but most of them could not comprehend the questions. Thus, they kept quiet even if she wanted them to answer the questions orally. Hence, in order to help these pupils comprehend the text better, the researcher used pictures with the reading text so that the comprehension level of the pupils would be enhanced.

1.2 Related theory/literature

The basic theory of this research is grounded on cognitivism, where it places an importance on the learners and how they organize their knowledge (Vaezi, 2006). It focuses on the learners' cognitive development whereby the meaning of a reading text is analysed by the learners themselves and it involves the brain and the end product of the analysis which is textual comprehension (Hamilton, 2002). Reading comprehension is also related to the schema theory. The view is that in a reading process, readers pick out the information and content and combine it with their internal schemata until a single schema or a single conclusion can be made from the readings (Stott, 2011). This means that during a reading process, readers select the content of the text and with the addition of their prior knowledge; they will be able to comprehend what they were reading. Furthermore, pictures can be used to elicit language samples from a second language learner and there are many researchers who have used pictures to maintain some control over the language elicited and at the same time, give the learners enough flexibility to provide them with realistic samples (Derwing, 2004). Pictures also serve to describe contexts and they serve as the second line of communication which the children use to avoid words in the text.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The focus of this investigation is on the use of pictures with text to enhance pupils' comprehension during the reading lesson. The use of pictures can help with pupils' comprehension of a reading text and it can also help pupils make the relationship between the written text and the corresponding pictures.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this study is to find out if pictures used with reading texts help pupils comprehend the text better. The research questions are as follows: a) Can pictures with text enhance pupils' reading comprehension? and b) In what way do pictures with text help to enhance Year 3 pupils' reading comprehension level?

4.0 TARGET PUPILS

There were five pupils who showed low level of understanding when they answered comprehension questions. They could only read a few words in the text and most often answered the comprehension questions wrongly. They did not understand the reading text and they ended up guessing the answers.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

After identifying the problems, the researcher decided to use Kemmis's Model of Action Research (1983) to determine whether the use of pictures with a reading text could indeed enhance pupils' comprehension level. There are two cycles in this model and there are four stages for each cycle such as plan, action, observe and reflect. She practiced these stages when she did the research.

5.1 Data gathering methods

This section deals with data collection methods, whereby the researcher conducted pre-tests, post-tests and formative assessment, and also used an observation checklist and questionnaire to triangulate the results. The pre-test was conducted to measure pupils' level of reading comprehension where they were given a reading text and comprehension questions where they had to answer the questions based on the given text. Meanwhile, the post-test was given to measure whether the intervention helped the pupils in enhancing their reading comprehension. The researcher used formative assessment as a tool to gather data for the research because she could directly test pupils' level of reading comprehension after each session of intervention. Then, by using a checklist, the researcher looked for a few aspects such as pupils' ability to answer the comprehension questions, their ability to give details from the reading texts and their behaviours towards the intervention method. The purpose of using this checklist is also to compare pupils' responses towards the strategy, which is reading texts with pictures and reading texts without pictures. The researcher could

get pupils' perceptions and ask questions to get their views regarding the intervention method when she used questionnaire for the investigation.

5.2 Preliminary investigation

Before the intervention, the researcher observed pupils' behaviour and the way they answered the questions during a reading lesson. She observed pupils' behaviour when they listened to a story told by her. Later, she observed their ability in comprehending the story when they had to complete a table based on the story heard. Then, she conducted a survey to study pupils' preference of a reading text or materials so that she knows which type of material they prefer. From the survey, she could know pupils' preferences and choose which plan of action is suitable to their needs and which material can get the intended meaning across to the pupils. The observation and the survey showed that they have low comprehension level as they could not understand the information in the reading text and the survey showed that they preferred storybooks with illustrations and picture books when they selected reading materials.

5.3 Action

The researcher conducted two cycles of research and carried out the intervention in the cycles. In Cycle 1, she prepared a reading lesson, where she displayed the reading text and read it aloud. Then, she picked key words from the text and explained its meaning through the use of pictures and asked pupils to read the text again. After ensuring the pupils have understood the text, the researcher gave comprehension questions to pupils and they had to answer based on the reading text. She used about four to five pictures when explaining the meaning of key words and one mark was given for each correct answer. In Cycle 2, basically, the researcher did the same thing as in Cycle 1, but with an addition in the number of pictures. Previously, she used about four to five pictures, and in this round, she used about seven to eight pictures with the reading text to further help the pupils. This is because some pupils still could not comprehend the text clearly and she wanted to make the meaning of the text clearer to the pupils. To facilitate this, she used more pictures with the reading text in Cycle 2.

5.4 Findings

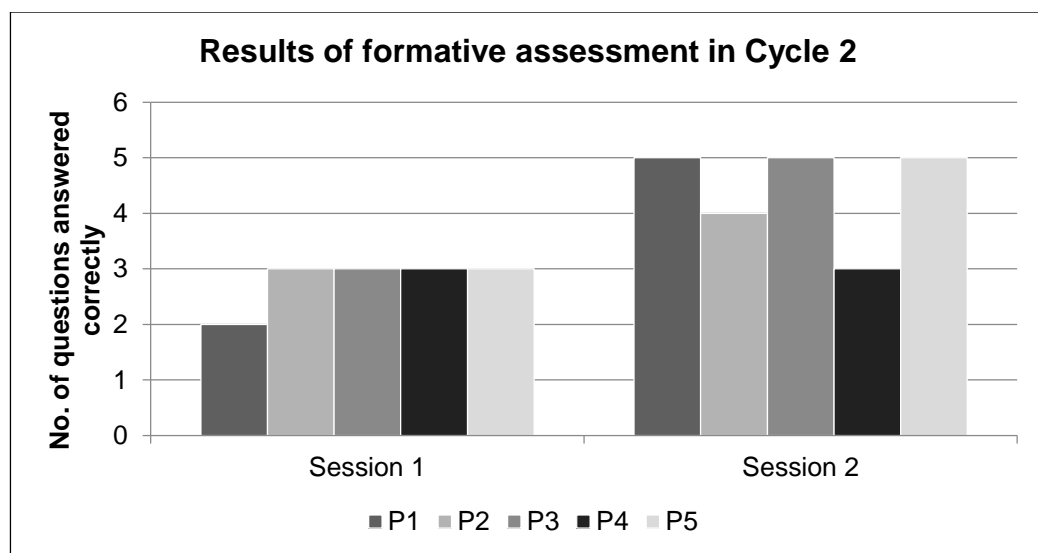


Figure 1: Results of formative assessment in Cycle 2

The graph above shows that in Session 1 for Cycle 2, the highest score is three, while the lowest score is two. There are four pupils who scored three, while only one participant scored two. By comparing the score to the score of Cycle 1, there is a slight positive change and it shows that the pupils' level of reading comprehension has improved a little. Moreover, the scores for Session 2 showed marked improvement, compared to Session 1 for Cycle 1. This is because there were three

pupils who scored five out of five, which is a perfect score, and only one participant who scored three. Another participant scored four and generally, all pupils have improved based on this table.

In Session 2 in Cycle 1, the researcher implemented the intervention, which is to use pictures with reading text, and observed pupils' behaviours when she used the intervention. It shows that one participant (P4) scored one question correctly, while two pupils (P1 and P2) scored three questions correctly. The other two pupils (P3 and P5) scored four questions correctly. This also represents a remarkable improvement as the pupils were able to answer more questions than before and this shows that they have started to understand the reading text better.

The results of the questionnaire showed that all pupils liked the use of pictures with the reading text. They preferred it more compared to the reading text alone. They also preferred the pictures since they were in colours and the colours used were attractive to them. All of them also agreed that the pictures supported the text, whereby the use of the pictures was suitable with the choice of reading text. For instance, one of the reading texts that the researcher gave the pupils was about Kellie's Castle, a historical building in Perak. Thus, the pictures in the text are about the castle and its surrounding and this is most likely why the pupils claimed that the pictures supported the reading text. The pictures used were suitable and descriptions about the castle are clearer with the addition of the pictures.

Table 1
Comparison of marks obtained by pupils in the pre-test and post-test

Pupils	Pre-Test		Post-Test				Differences In Marks	
	Questions answered correctly	(%)	Cycle 1		Cycle 2		Questions answered correctly	(%)
			Question answered correctly	(%)	Question answered correctly	(%)		
P1	1	20	3	60	5	100	+4	80
P2	3	60	3	60	5	100	+2	40
P3	2	40	4	80	5	100	+3	60
P4	1	20	1	20	4	80	+3	60
P5	2	40	4	80	5	100	+3	60

The table shows the marks obtained by the pupils in the pre-tests and post-tests. In the pre-test, two pupils (P1 and P4) scored 20% (1 question correct), two pupils (P3 and P5) scored 40% (2 questions correct) and one pupil (P2) scored 60% (3 questions correct). So, the maximum score obtained is 60% in which P2 answered three out of five questions correctly and the lowest score is 20% which is one out of five questions answered correctly. By comparing the pre-test to the post-test in Cycle 1, there was an improvement in pupils' comprehension in the reading lesson. The post-test in Cycle 1 shows that two pupils answered four questions (80%) correctly, while one participant answered three questions (60%) correctly. The other two pupils showed no change at all. This means that four out of five questions were answered correctly and the lowest score was still one out of five questions. This shows that the intervention on the use of pictures with the reading text was partially successful because only three pupils showed improvement in the tests, while the other two pupils showed no progress at all. This led the researcher to further conduct another cycle of the test, which resulted in her conducting another post-test after the intervention in Cycle 2. The scores for the post-test in Cycle 2 shows that four pupils answered five out of five questions (100%) correctly, while only one participant answered four out of five questions (80%) correctly. Thus, the intervention can be deemed a success because all pupils showed remarkable progress in the post-test in Cycle 2.

5.5 Conclusion

The results of the investigation showed a positive outcome. The result has showed that not only did the pupils' performance towards the reading texts improve; they also liked the usage of pictures during the reading lessons. They were also given time to read the text carefully while referring to the given pictures which fostered better understanding of the reading texts. Other than a better performance level, the pupils also were challenged with answering the comprehension questions, whereby they were unable to do so before the intervention, as they did not understand how to answer them. But after the intervention with the pictures, they developed the ability to answer the questions correctly. Hence, the use of pictures with reading texts in the classroom should be implemented and teachers could also use this intervention in the language classroom.

5.6 Reflection

Based on this research, the researcher has identified a few limitations that could have been overcome during the investigation. A different set of instruments for collecting data could have been used when carrying out this research. The researcher could have used video recording or interview to get more qualitative results related to the research. The researcher should have not relied on the observation checklist and the questionnaire to get the qualitative results of the research. If the researcher were to use video recording, then she could have observed pupils' behaviours and responses well. The researcher also could obtain pupils' answers more directly and she could also get to know in detail the pupils' opinions on the use of pictures with the reading texts.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The researcher suggested that in future, the pictures used with the reading text could also be used in a writing lesson, whereby the teachers could elicit samples of written work when they use pictures with a reading text. The researcher could have conducted this research by using other types of texts such as narrative text or factual text as the researcher used only descriptive texts throughout this investigation because the pupils were already familiar with its format.

REFERENCES

- Derwing, P. (2004). *Graphic Aids Reading*. Retrieved February 3, 2014, from <http://www.slideshare.net/ana0123/graphic-aids-reading>
- Hamilton, C. (2002). *Using Visual Aids*. Retrieved February 3, 2014, from <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/presentation/visual-aids>
- Kemmis, S. (1983). *Beginner's Guide to Action Research*. Retrieved February 5, 2014, from <http://education.qld.gov.au/staff/development/performance/resources/readings/beginners-guide-action-research.pdf>
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2012). English Language Curriculum for Primary School. Retrieved August 20, 2014
- Stott, M. (2011). Retrieved August 28, 2014, from Schemata Theory: http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/36584_01_Koshy_et_al_Ch_01.pdf
- Vaezi, S. (2006). *What Every Teacher Needs to Know About Comprehension*. Retrieved February 5, 2014, from http://www.learner.org/workshops/teachreading35/pdf/teachers_know_comprehension.pdf

USING A FLOW MAP AND DRILLING TO IMPROVE THE CONSTRUCTION OF SIMPLE SENTENCES AMONG LOW PROFICIENCY 5 GEMILANG PUPILS

By:

NURUL HANAN BINTI SUKRI
English Studies Department

ABSTRACT

This action research is carried out to improve the construction of simple sentences among low proficiency 5 Gemilang pupils. The subjects for this study are six pupils who have been identified with problems in constructing simple sentences. The focus of this research is to find out whether or not the use of a flow map and drilling can improve the ability to construct simple sentences among the low proficiency pupils. The data gathering methods used are a pre-test and post-test, three formative tests, three classroom observations and the teacher's journal writing. The findings indicate that the pupils have shown some improvement in constructing correct simple sentences. They are able to recognize the elements in a simple sentence such as 'Subject', 'Verb', 'Object' (SVO), arrange it and use it in their sentence structures. Suggestions for further research include the use of flow maps and drillings to address other problems such as constructing compound and complex sentences.

Key terms: flow map, drilling, simple sentences, structure, SVO

1.0 INTRODUCTION

English has been one of the compulsory subjects in our education system. As mentioned by Gill, 2002 (cited in Darmi and Albion, 2013), in line with the education policy, English is placed as the second language in Malaysia and it has been made a compulsory subject at all levels of education. In the Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah (KBSR), there are four major skills that are focussed on. The skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing. As mentioned by Peha (2003), writing is one of the important skills in language learning. It helps people to deliver messages effectively. Even the achievement of pupils in learning English is assessed in writing. Thus, to be effective in writing, one will have to be able to structure basic sentences correctly.

1.1 Reflection on teaching experience

After going through four School Based Experiences and three phases of practicum, a few issues related to English Language Teaching were noted. One of the issues was the lack of good writing skills such as constructing sentences, arranging words into sentences and expressing ideas and thoughts in writing. The low proficiency pupils faced the difficulty to write words in English, to use correct form of words and to write simple sentences. These problems could be seen when the teacher asked them to write simple sentences based on pictures of events or situations. Many of them could not write the descriptions of the pictures and some could not even write a sentence about the pictures. Here, it was realized that the pupils had problems in expressing thoughts in writing because of a weak foundation in constructing simple sentences and the lack of vocabulary.

1.2 Related theory/literature

Cognitivism and behaviourism theory were used to guide this study. Ausubel (1968) claims that new concepts that can be incorporated into more inclusive concepts or ideas. This means that cognitivism encourages the learners to use what they know and process it into a new information as needed. For example, the pupils are given a method to help them to write sentences. By using the method, pupils are guided to write the descriptions of the stimulus given. This is similar to the current research as the target pupils were taught to use a flow map as a guide in constructing simple sentences.

As for behaviourism theory, Thorndike (cited by McLeod, 2007) mentioned the 'effect' in giving the same conditioning in shaping one's behaviour. As referred to this research, pupils' ability to construct simple sentences was improved when they had been conditioned through the use of flow map.

2.0 RESEARCH FOCUS

The focus of this research is to examine the use of a flow map and drilling in improving the construction of simple sentences among the low proficiency pupils. This research was carried out as the pupils could not write simple sentences using correct sentence structure. The ability to construct sentences correctly is important as it is tested in Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) which they will sit for in a year's time.

3.0 OBJECTIVE

There were two objectives that guided my action research. The first objective was to identify whether low proficiency 5 Gemilang pupils were able to improve the ability in constructing simple sentences using a flow map and drilling. The second objective was to explain how the use of a flow map and drilling helps the low proficiency 5 Gemilang pupils to construct simple sentences.

4.0 TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The subjects for this research were pupils in Year 5 Gemilang, SK Bukit Jalil. The six pupils were selected as the subjects of the study based on their performance in a diagnostic test. They were four boys and two girls who were not proficient in the English language. They were having major writing problems and one of it was in constructing simple sentences.

5.0 PROCEDURE OF ACTION

Stephen Kemmis' model was used to guide this action research. The procedures of action are discussed below.

5.1 DATA GATHERING METHODS

Three data collection instruments were used in this research. They were tests, observations and journal entries.

Tests

A similar set of questions comprising five pictures were used in a pre-test and a post-test. The pupils had to write a sentence to describe each picture. The pre-test was carried out before the intervention while the post-test was carried out after the intervention. There were three sessions in this research and for each session a formative test was given. The formative test in the first session required the pupils to match correct sentences with the pictures and to fill in the blanks with correct words. In the second session, the formative test given required the pupils to arrange the words into sentences correctly. In the third session, the formative test required the pupils to rearrange words into sentences to describe some pictures.

Observation

A classroom observation was conducted in each session. The observations were conducted to look at the pupils' responses, participations and behaviours during the intervention.

Journal

Journal entries were written by the researcher after each session. The journal was written based on four aspects which were the flow of the session, the pupils' participation, the effectiveness of the session and the weaknesses of the session.

5.2 PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

A preliminary investigation was conducted at the beginning of Cycle 1 to gather factual information regarding the issue identified. The data gathering methods used were a diagnostic test and an unstructured interview with the class English teacher. In the diagnostic test pupils had to write about their favourite games or sports in five sentences. The result showed that the pupils have

different kinds of issues in writing but one general problem that emerged was their inability in constructing simple sentences correctly.

5.3 ACTION

After the implementation of the intervention in Cycle 1, a few changes were made to improve the intervention in Cycle 2. A pre-test was carried out before the three sessions in this cycle.

In the first session, pupils were introduced to a flow map which was labelled with the elements in a sentence such as 'subject', 'verb' and 'object'. Each element was explained to the pupils. Then, a demonstration on how to construct a simple sentence using the words in the flow map was done. Pupils were drilled in constructing correct sentences using the flow map. After this activity, a formative test in a form of worksheet was given.

In the second session, an explanation about the structure of simple sentences was given again. Each pupil was given a word card and they had to arrange themselves like the flow map to form simple sentences. The researcher drilled them by getting them to do the formation repeatedly. The group read out their sentences and the other pupils would tell either it was correct or not. At the end of the session, another formative test was given.

In the third session, the pupils were taken to the school's Science Park as they needed to write about things in the park using simple sentences. In class, they were divided into groups and each group were told to write ten simple sentences about the park using the flow map as a guide. The researcher drilled the pupils several time before they presented their answers to the class. The class had to decide whether the sentences were correct or not. If any of the sentences was wrong, the class must give an explanation. Another formative test was given at the end of this session.

5.4 FINDINGS

These are the results of the intervention.

Pre-test and post-test

Table 1
Comparison between pre-test scores and post-test scores

Pupils	Total pre-test score (%)	Total post-test score (%)	Differences (%)
P1	2 (40%)	4 (80%)	+2 (+40%)
P2	4 (80%)	4 (80%)	0 (0%)
P3	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	+2 (+40%)
P4	5 (100%)	2 (40%)	-3 (-60%)
P5	0 (0%)	2 (40%)	+2 (+40%)
P6	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	+2 (+40%)

Table 1 shows a comparison between the pupils' performance in the pre-test and the post-test. Four pupils show an improvement, one pupil shows decline and one pupil shows no changes. This shows that the intervention has improved some of the pupils' ability in constructing correct simple sentence structures but not everyone.

Formative tests

Table 2
Comparison of formative tests' scores

Pupils	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
P1	83%	90%	75%
P2	83%	80%	63%
P3	83%	-	25%
P4	100%	20%	88%
P5	67%	70%	-
P6	100%	80%	-

Table 2 shows that the pupils demonstrated different scores in the three formative tests. They generally performed poorly in session 3. This is due to the nature of the test which required them to produce ten sentences on a subject. This indicates that the pupils still lack the skills in constructing simple sentences independently.

Classroom Observation

The pupils' conducts were observed based on three aspects; responses, behaviour and participation. The result is shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Conducts of Pupils during The Intervention

Pupils	Responses			Behaviour			Participation		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
P1	/	/	/	X	/	/	/	/	/
P2	/	/	X	/	/	/	/	/	/
P3	/	-	/	/	-	/	/	-	/
P4	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
P5	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	/	-
P6	X	/	-	X	/	-	X	/	-

In the first session, there were 2 pupils who did not give any responses, 3 pupils who misbehaved and two pupils who did not participate in the session conducted. In the second session, one pupil was absent. From the five pupils that presence, one pupil did not give any responses, one pupil misbehaved and all pupils participated. In the third session, two pupils were absent. From the four that presence, all pupils gave responses, behaved and participated. The result shows that P1, P2, P3 and P4 demonstrated active involvement in the activities throughout the three sessions. However, P5 and P6 appeared to be passive and they were absent from session 3. This behaviour can be explained by their lack of proficiency in the language.

Teacher's journal

An entry of journal was written by the researcher after each session. There were four aspects that were focussed on: smoothness of the session, participation of pupils, the effectiveness of the session and the weaknesses of the session. An analysis of the journal entries shows that the pupils were active and focussed on the activities. This is due to the use of the flow map and drilling which kept them engaged throughout the learning process.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This action research shows that the use of a flow map and drilling has helped to improve the ability to construct simple sentences among the low proficiency pupils. The drilling has helped them to memorise the structures in simple sentences. The use of the flow map created some interest in the pupils as various activities were carried out during the intervention.

5.6 REFLECTION

There are strengths and weaknesses of this action research. One of the strengths is that the intervention used is effective in handling pupils with sentence structure problem. The intervention also works in capturing pupils' attention. One weakness in this research is in the data collection during the classroom observation. It was not done systematically and this may have affected the reliability of the data collected. The observation checklist was not clearly structured and the researcher might have missed observation criteria that are important for the research. Furthermore, the intervention was conducted for the whole class and the researcher might have neglected the target pupils. Another weakness is the duration of the action research. A longer time period would allow the researcher to have more sessions with the pupils particularly those who are extremely weak in the language.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future researchers can use similar intervention in a few ways. One way is use the flow map and drilling to teach the construction of compound and complex sentences for other groups of pupils.

REFERENCES

Ausubel, David P. 1968. Educational Psychology: A Cognitive View. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Darmi, R & Albion, P. 2013. English Language In The Malaysian Education System: Its Existence And Implications. Retrieved on July 18, 2014 from http://www.academia.edu/4275280/English_language_in_the_Malaysian_education_system_Its_existence_and_implications

McLeod, S. A. (2007). Edward Thorndike. Retrieved on September 24, 2014 from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/edward-thorndike.html>

Nesamalar, C. 2005. ELT Methodology Principles and Practices: Teaching Writing. Selangor, Oxford Fajar.

Peha, S. 2003. Teaching That Makes Sense, Inc.: Writing Across the Curriculum. Retrieved on September 23, 2014 from [http://www.ttms.org/PDFs/06%20Writing%20Across%20the%20Curriculum%20v001%20\(Full\).pdf](http://www.ttms.org/PDFs/06%20Writing%20Across%20the%20Curriculum%20v001%20(Full).pdf)