

Chapter 47

Interactive Reading Notebook for Upper Level Primary School Pupils

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Abstract

Comprehension skills are imperative to reading comprehension. For pupils to be successful in both school and life, they must be able to comprehend texts well. The interactive reading notebook (IAN) was discovered as a possible way to teach reading comprehension to pupils effectively. The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which the interactive reading notebook could be effective in enhancing the comprehension skills among upper level primary school pupils in ESL classrooms. In this intervention, 5 pupils were selected from a rural school in Kanowit, Sarawak and a sub-urban school in Sandakan, Sabah respectively. Pre and post-tests, observations and questionnaires were used as data gathering methods. The finding indicated that the pupils showed positive responses and improvements in comprehension tests after the implementation. Hence, the intervention also managed to improve the teaching strategy used by the teachers and the respondents also agreed that using IAN as a teaching tool helped them to comprehend texts well. Therefore, IAN is the gateway to engaging and fulfilling reading activities with a sensory experience that digital environments are missing.

Keywords: Interactive reading notebooks, reading comprehension, strategy,

Introduction

Eighteen years into the 21st century, the new generation of students are decidedly different learners than their parents, grandparents, and even older siblings as they have been raised in a world surrounded by technology and are expected to meet higher academic standards. As 21st century students are technology literate, students' learning preferences are also different from those who sat in the classroom twenty years ago. Therefore, teachers are now expected to equip students with not just the content knowledge but also the learning skills needed by these 21st century learners using technology. Nowadays, digital learning tools such as Kahoot, padlets, and many others have been increasingly employed in language learning and have been proven effective by researchers. Nevertheless, these digital learning tools are not able to equip students with a sensory experience. In order to fill this gap, interactive reading notebooks, IAN, were employed as a research tool to provide a more engaging and fulfilling learning experience.

In this paper, interactive notebooks are divided into two parts: the Information Side and the Thinking Side. The Information Side includes the new information the students are learning for the reading lesson whereas the Thinking Side allows the students to take the new information from the Information Side and apply it in their own way to demonstrate understanding of the new content. This is where the word 'interactive' comes into play. Students use thinking strategies to 'interact' with the new information. Some activities include graphic organizers, foldable or flip-flap activities, problem solving, written reflections or opinions, or illustrations.

Interactive notebooks allow students the freedom of choice with many assignments and the opportunity to express themselves personally. The notebooks also provide a consistent resource for students to return to after

diverse instructional activities and an outlet for student thoughts and perspectives. The purpose of this article is to describe how the interactive notebook can be utilized and from which students can benefit within two primary-school English classrooms.

Methodology

Research questions

1. Can the interactive reading notebook help to facilitate better comprehension of texts among learners in the ESL classroom?
2. What are the notebook taking strategies?

Research Design

The selected research design for this study was action research. Action research is characterized as research that is done by teachers for themselves (Mertler, 2009). Kurt Lewin's Model of Action Research was chosen for this study.

Target participants

The research participants were from a rural school in Kanowit, Sarawak and a sub-urban school in Sandakan, Sabah. They were Iban and Kadazandusun children whose first languages are Iban and Kadazandusun. English, on the other hand, is a foreign language to them. 5 pupils with reading abilities that ranged from low proficiency to advance were selected from each school. In this action research, IAN was employed as a learning tool to enhance comprehension skills among primary pupils in ESL classrooms. Three lessons were conducted as intervention with three different activities. This intervention took three weeks to be completed. Each lesson was conducted each week with proper activities orderly arranged.

Instrumentations

1. Semi-structured interviews

Three semi-structured interviews were carried out after all the three lessons with the ten respondents, who were referred to as Respondent A, Respondent B, Respondent C, Respondent D, Respondent E, Respondent F, Respondent G, Respondent H, Respondent I and Respondent J individually. The respondents agreed that the use of the IAN enhanced their comprehension skills.

2. Participant observations

Participant observations were done by two English teachers who had more than 5 years teaching experiences to allow for richly detailed description, which describing behaviours, intentions, situations, and events as understood by one's informants. It gave the researchers a better understanding of what was happening in the culture and lends credence to one's interpretations of the observations.

3. Document analysis

The documents that were scrutinised included task sheets that participants completed individually while the three lessons were carried out. Respondents' answers were then analysed.

Triangulation of findings

Triangulation was done to validate the findings of the research. This was carried out to ensure careful and purposeful elimination of redundant and irrelevant data. The findings were then used to answer the research questions.

Findings

Based on the initial semi-structured interview, it can be concluded that all ten participants believed that English text was difficult to understand. 4 out of 10 participants stated that they preferred to read Malay storybooks as they had limited exposure to the English Language and that reading English stories or texts were dull.

From the analysis, it can be summed that the use of IAN taught pupils to comprehend text well. Out of ten participants, eight participants showed a vast difference in making predictions, answering Wh-questions as well as vocabulary understanding. Participants were also paying more attention throughout the lesson. The interactive reading notebooks also allowed pupils to interact with the information and figure out what it meant. According to Perkins (1991), when participants understood the content, they could explain the concepts in their own words, apply the information to new contexts appropriately, and then make new analogies and generalizations. Overall, the findings of this study indicated that interactive notebooks could serve as a useful tool for teachers and students in language learning classrooms.

Conclusion

One noticeable characteristic of 21st century learners found this research was that these students wanted and expected to have a control of their own learning experience. IAN, therefore, served the purpose that technology has never been able to fulfilled.

References

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Appendix



