

Chapter 53

Plickers: Learning Through Codes

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Abstract

Teaching and learning in 21st Century is definitely a challenging but valuable experience. The fruitful experience may benefit the teachers and pupils in many areas such as life skills, career skills and many more. As the education system is transforming to a better version, it somehow requires the teachers to be fully equipped with lots of skills to develop learners' potential qualities. However, due to the increasing pressure and expectations towards teachers, this situation somehow has put some strain on the teachers' ability to perform their job well including conducting assessment for the pupils. Therefore, it is a must to discover the best method to help the teachers to ease their process of assessing the pupils. Therefore, this study will investigate the effectiveness of using an assessment tool, Plickers in improving teachers' assessment process with the pupils. This study was conducted with 17 English teachers from urban school in Melaka and sub-urban school in Selangor. The data was collected via interviews, questionnaires and assessment frequency score. The findings showed that majority of the respondents agreed that Plickers did help them to assess the pupils easily compared to the traditional way. Therefore, it is hoped that the innovation of Plickers will help to improve teachers' ability in assessing pupils thoroughly in ESL classroom.

Introduction

Malaysia is one of the countries that provides the best educational guidelines to improve the education system. Don Carlson, director of Microsoft Education for Asia Pacific, stated in an interview that Malaysia education blueprint was quite extensive compared to other countries in the Asia Pacific region (Anon, 2016). It is also to ensure that education system is at par with the first class, global education system. Hence, the stakeholders such as educators, society and pupils need to be aware of the goals for Malaysian education system so that efficient teaching and learning practices could occur in classroom. The Education Blueprint is one of the examples of comprehensive plan for rapid and sustainable development in education system. In the document, it lays out the processes of changing the education system to a better one to meet the global standards.

On top of that, the educators are also provided with guidelines to establish a sound performance baseline for the Malaysian Education System. They are urged to tackle the learners from the minimum level of schooling. School-based assessment is a new policy venture in the highly centralised education system of Malaysia (Malakolunthu & Sim 2010). Thus, the assessment system needs to be done properly in terms of informing the learners of their learning and to give bands on the learners' achievement in the classroom. However, due to the time limitation to carry out the lessons and heavy workload received by teachers from day to day, assessment seems impossible to be carried out properly. Not only that, pupils' responses were also limited due to poor participation from the pupils. They were so scared to give responses in the classroom that they regarded the questions and answers session as a test. Therefore, this study aims to improve teachers' ability in assessing pupils thoroughly in ESL classroom using the innovation of Plickers.

Content

Pupils of the 21st century are very familiar with technology such as gadgets and devices as it helps them in so many situations such as to learn, to fill their free time or to communicate with others. Therefore, out of thousands useful innovations that exist in our modern world, an interactive tool called Plickers is nothing but a useful aid that helps the teachers to assess pupils' progress in the classroom effectively. Mata (2015) mentioned that the Educause survey found that 54% of students would typically use at least two devices simultaneously for school work and prefer to have technology integrated into their curriculum. Hence, integration of technology will sparks the pupils' curiosity and interest to learn and participate during the lesson. This tool will also allow the teachers to assess pupils understanding for any lesson easily. Burns (2015) supported by stating that technology tools can make formative assessment process easier and seamless when used effectively using online tools and mobile devices.

As for this research, Plickers were used with Year 4 and Year 5 pupils from selected schools in Selangor and Malacca respectively. This tool is used to assess the pupils understanding of the lesson. At the beginning of the lessons, the teachers provided some input to the pupils related to the topic. Instead of using the traditional way of assessing the pupils such as pencil and paper test, the teachers used Plickers to check the pupils understanding of the lesson. The teachers used their phones to scan on the unique codes prepared for each pupils. The designed codes were unique as it differed from one another. The pupils were guided on how to hold the code cards as each side of the code represent an answer. Therefore, as the pupils hold their cards, the teachers scanned through the codes and got immediate feedbacks. This tool also provided reports for each question asked to the pupils. This will be a great help for the teachers to document the progress of the pupils as they can refer to the reports obtained.

Plickers did a wonderful job in helping the teachers to assess the pupils at ease. As mentioned earlier, it provides an immediate feedback for the teachers to monitor the pupils' progress of the lesson. In fact, it can be used in the class daily no matter of what topic that is going to be taught. The most interesting part is only one device is needed to use this tool which will be handled by the teachers. Therefore, it will be hassle free as the pupils did not to bring any gadget or device to school as it may leads to othe problem such as stealing or misuse of the gadget.

However, this tool also has some flaws. As it will create a unique code for each lesson and for each pupil, it demanded a high cost from the teachers in terms of paper supply as the teachers need to print out different codes for each pupil on every lesson. In fact, since this tool works with multiple choice questions, it id somehow creating a doubt wether the pupils really answer the questions or they simply choose any answer that they want.

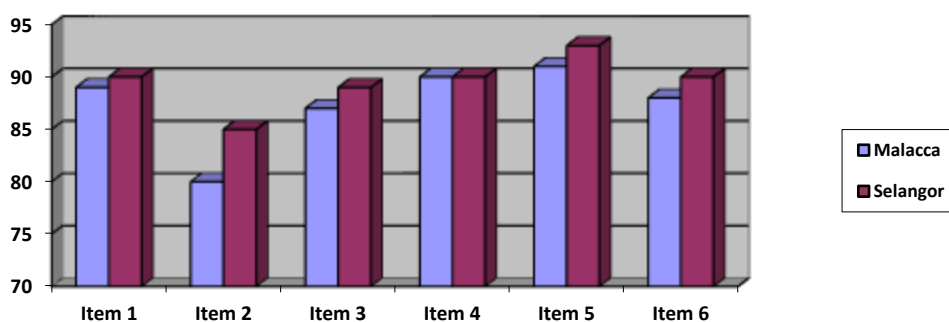


Figure 2

Figure 1 shows the data collected from the questionnaire given to the teachers. There are six items in the questionnaire and the responses are analysed using Likert Scale, ranging from 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree). As for the item 1, “Plickers helps me to assess the pupils easily”, the teachers from schools in Melaka got the score of 89 meanwhile teachers from Selangor scored 90. It shows that the teachers agreed that Plickers did help the teachers to assess the pupils easily. As for the item 2, “I find it convenient to use Plickers in the class”, the teachers from the schools in Malacca scored 80 while teachers in Selangor scored 85. It shows the teachers agreed that it is very convenient for them to use Plickers in the classroom. As for the item 3, “Plickers helps me to document the evidence of pupils’ learning.,” the teachers from the schools in Malacca scored 87 while teachers in Selangor scored 89. It shows the teachers agreed that Plickers helped the teachers to document the evidence of pupils learning.

As for item 4, “Plickers helps me to provide information to the pupils on their learning”, the teachers from schools in Melaka and Selangor scored 90 which shows that the teachers from both states agreed that using the tools, their pupils could be informed of their progress in learning. Item 5 which focus on the statement “I prefer to use Plickers instead of pencil and paper test to assess the pupils”, teachers in Selangor scored 2 points higher than teachers in Melaka which is 93 and 91 respectively. This shows that the teachers from both states prefer to use interactive assessment tool like Plickers compared to traditional method of assessing pupils such as paper and pencil test. As for the last item in the questionnaire, “I will use Plickers to assess every topic that I teach”, teachers in Melaka and Selangor scored 88 and 90 respectively to show their mutual agreement that they will continue to use Plickers as their assessment tool in assessing pupils’ progress from time to time.

Conclusion

The usage of Plickers in the classroom is one of the best evidence that learning sessions that take place in the classroom everyday is inclined towards 21st Century Learning. In fact, it is the best way to support the goals of Malaysian education system as stated in the National Blueprint where it demanded the integration of technology in the classroom. Other than that, Plickers is nothing but a tool that help the teachers to carry out the assessment in a stress-free way not only for the teachers but also for the pupils. It creates an interesting and enjoyable experience for the pupils therefore will help to increase the quality of the responses obtained from the multiple choice questions.

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