Chapter 56

The Use of Interactive World Map to Introduce Cultures Among Young Learners in Rural Schools

Nur Ashikin Binti Norhasim, Nur Hafizah Binti Shaari, Siti Nor Aisha Binti Rosdy & Melor Binti Md Yunus

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

shikin.norhasim@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

For education to become meaningful for the learners, educators must teach not only to the individual cognitive abilities of each learner but must also have knowledge of the social, cultural, political and historical contexts shaping the learner’ perceptions of what is being taught (Freire, 1973; Giroux, 1988, hooks, 1995, Vygotsky 1978). As the new CEFR-based curriculum uses context of varied cultures from all over the world, introducing the young learners to new cultures can be challenging as they have limited exposure to other countries. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the use of Interactive World Map to introduce cultures among young learners in rural schools as well as to identify their perception on the use of Interactive World Map for ESL learning activities. The study is conducted on 80 pupils in three different schools and consists of questionnaire, observation checklist as well as pre and post-test.

Key Words: Interactive World Map, young learners, cultures, rural schools.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or known as CEFR was formulated in 2001. It is designed to establish an international English language standard for the foreign language learners or speakers to follow. Following the footsteps of the other European and Asian countries, Malaysia is finally joining in the community of using the framework in schools just recently in 2017 and it has been going on for almost 3 years. Just like the name; “Common European Framework Reference”, this framework is aimed to be used and referred to worldwide and not just in European countries. The decision of Malaysia joining in the CEFR community is to make sure the Malaysian Education Blueprint of boosting the level of education to international standards comes to
life (Hazita Azman 2016) and together with the objective of ensuring that all pupils will be able to speak and communicate using the language fluently by the end of their schooling period.

1.1 Culture Element
Together with the new curriculum, the Cambridge Assessment English in collaboration with the Malaysian Education Ministry provided schools with textbooks for students and teachers respectively, an activity book and a CD that has all the audio contained in the student's textbook. As we can see, the emergence of contents from different cultures make its entrance in the materials supplied. While the aim of the current education policy is to further advance the level of education to international standards, it is only sensible for the new textbook to be presenting cultures from different countries. Additionally, some of the purposes why cultural learning is exposed in the new CEFR curriculum is to raise cultural awareness and tolerance (Tomalin 1995) besides instilling appreciation and acceptance of other cultures (Tomalin & Stempleski 1993). Culture learning is also imperative for acquiring culture-general knowledge, skills and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals of different backgrounds and cultures. It is an ongoing process that engages learners in the aspect of cognitive, affective and behaviour (Paige et al. 1999). In other words, culture learning has significant and positive impacts on the learners.

1.2 Cross Culture Problem
However, Aziz et al. (2018) made a research on issues faced by the CEFR master trainers in using the textbook provided. Aside from the colourful and fascinating illustrations, one of the challenges is that the books are too internationalised. It is against the common practice with the previous textbooks that used to have localised culture to cater learners’ schemata and background knowledge based on the studies made by Uri and Aziz (2009). Aziz et al. (2018) further explained that certain parts of the training need to be aligned with the local context so that teachers could find the input provided to be more relevant to the teachers, and more importantly to the learners.

1.3 Rural School Problem
In spite of the fact that culture learning is essential; it is actually too ambitious especially when it comes to young learners in rural schools. It is opposite to learners who never once stepped out of their hometown or known the outside world other than their own. As a result, the learners have little or no knowledge about the cultures. This problem leads to teachers spending more time explaining the cultures to the learners thus leaving little time for teaching the actual intended content. This paper addresses the following research questions:

1. Does the use of Interactive world Map help to improve young learners’ performance in understanding foreign culture?
2. What are the young learners’ perception on the use of Interactive World Map for ESL learning activities.
Yunus et al (2009) mentioned that we are currently living in the decade of multimedia and the millennium of the Internet and the World Wide Web (www) where children now are more literate in technology, gadget and social media compared to adults. The integration of information and technology (ICT) into education will also invigorated the process of teaching and learning (Chua & Yunus 2012) in contrast to the usual chalk and talk. As a result, the researchers decided to innovate an Interactive World Map in order to bring the World to the learners virtually and to see whether it is effective to be implemented elsewhere.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are a few studies done by various researches which are related to the study. According to Cullen (2000), there are various sources of information for teaching culture made available nowadays such as video, CDs, TV, reading materials, internet, stories, songs, newspapers, realia or literature. However, the current means in teaching and learning culture now is Virtual Realia. Smith (1997) defines Virtual Realia as digitalised objects and items from the target culture which are brought into the classroom as examples or aids and are used to stimulate spoken or written language production.

- The researchers also focus on merely presenting the cultures as the goal of culture teaching should be to familiarise learners with the target culture and should not be in-depth (Brockmann 2009).
- Paige Abe and Nickolas A. Jordan suggest, ‘using social media in the classroom creates a new pattern of social encounter’ (2013, p.17).
- Everyday objects or ‘realia’ are used in teaching to improve students’ understanding of real life situations within the discourse of foreign language teaching (Budden, 2011; Harmer, 2007; Richards et al., 1992).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study used action research design following on Kemmis and McTaggart Action Research Model. This model was a spiral model consists of a) planning, (b) acting and observing, (c) reflecting and (d) re-planning (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990) as cited in (Brown, 2002).

3.1 Participants

This study involved eighty 9-year-old primary school pupils from three respective schools from Segamat district and Kulai district Johor, specifically in rural area. The participants were selected based on purposive sampling. They were hardly exposed to other cultures especially foreign cultures as they barely live in Felda and Village area.
3.2 Variables
Dependent Variable (DV) was Interactive World Map and the Independent Variable (IV) were participants’ knowledge on the foreign culture.

3.3 Instruments & Material

The instruments used in this study were:
- Pre- Test and Post- Tests to measure the knowledge.
- A Survey on the participants’ perception
- A checklist observation during the implementation of the innovation

The material used in this study was the innovation adapted from the existing Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation software.

3.4 Data Collection and Data Analysis

The participants were given a pre-test in the form of worksheet before starting their lesson using interactive world map. The pre-test served as a diagnostic tool to measure their knowledge about foreign culture. Next, the pre-test was carried out after the implementation of interactive world map. The Pre- Test, learning process and the post-test took within a week and all the lessons and activities were implemented through the Interactive World Map. Hands-on exercises were also provided as extensive activities.

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are discussed based on the two research questions. The first question was to identify whether the use of Interactive World Map helped to improve young learners’ performance in understanding foreign culture. The data from both pre-test and post- test were analysed through descriptive statistical analysis. Table 1 showed the comparison between the data from the pre- test and the post-test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min Value</th>
<th>Max Value</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the result it proved that participants knowledge on foreign cultures significantly increased from the Pre- Test to Post- Test. It specified a substantial difference between the mean scores in the Pre- Test with the value 53.7 and 79.9 for the Post- Test after using Interactive World Map in introducing culture.
Table 2 Participants’ perceptions towards the use of Interactive World Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Number of Participants that Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings in Table 2 and Figure 2 indicated that majority of the participants have positive perception in using the Interactive World Map in both learning English and foreign cultures. 65% of participants were also motivated in learning other cultures using the innovation tool. However, there was one participant who chose to disagree to the statement “I can understand other cultures better with Interactive World Map” due to his low learning ability.

To strengthen the findings, the researchers also conducted observation checklist to check on the participants’ response throughout the implementation of Interactive World Map. Based on the checklist, it is confirmed that the Interactive World Map has successfully helped the participants to participate actively during the teaching and learning session with majority of 100% response on most of the items.
Table 3 Results of observation checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants’ Checklist (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In general, there is a significant improvement that has been justified from the findings. The differences obtained from the test results showed that the use of Interactive World Map to introduce other cultures are effective to young learners in rural schools. Limited exposure to other countries can be challenging among young learners in rural schools as every picture or word seems to be very alienated to them. By using Interactive World Map, the participants had the chance to explore various cultures from different countries such as Japan, Thailand and Canada.

In addition, majority of the participants want to learn about other cultures using Interactive World Map again based on the item 6 in the questionnaire. This indicates that Interactive World Map has given a good impression to the participants from rural schools to learn English. Participants’ engagement in learning could also be set up through collaboration and sharing ideas by using this tool. This will assist them to be attentive of their own learning thus improve their performance in learning English. For future recommendation, further studies can be done on Interactive World Map to a wider degree of other topics in other CEFR Textbook.

REFERENCES


