

Pupils' Perceptions on the Use of Action Songs in Teaching and Learning Vocabulary

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Abstract—Vocabulary plays vital part in language learning. A wide range of vocabulary leads to the effective communication process; oral and written. Besides, it builds the learners to become a competent practitioner of the language. With a suitable and effective teaching and learning strategies, it enhances the young learners in vocabulary acquisition. Hence, this action research aimed to investigate the Year 4 pupils' perception on the use of action songs in enhancing them to acquire the vocabulary. Thus, the findings were based on the collected data from one of the school in Bintulu, Sarawak. The integration of action songs as the intervention enhance the pupils in their vocabulary acquisition which leads to the positive perceptions and feedback from the pupils. With the different focus of the lesson from the teacher- centered to learner-centered, the use of action songs during the English lesson motivate and attract the pupils to learn and love English language.

Keywords— Vocabulary acquisition, Action Songs, Perceptions

I. INTRODUCTION

Most of the people use English as a medium and tool for communication for various purposes. This explains why it has become one of the languages which is spoken and written worldwide. A wide range of vocabulary would lead to an effective communication process. It is undeniable that vocabulary plays a vital part in language learning. In English, the learners need to have a strong ground and a wider range of vocabulary in order to be a competent practitioner of the language [1].

In the Malaysian context, a variety of initiatives have been taken to ensure the learners in all levels- preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary level to be proficient in the use of English language so that Malaysia can be on par with the other countries. For example, in order to enhance the proficiency and the competency among the learners in Malaysia, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has made some transformation and improvement on the Education curriculum and the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025). Apart from that, the Ministry also suggested to import a number of native speakers from India for help instead. Yet, despite of all the initiatives, there is still a significant gap in the vocabulary acquisition between the learners from urban and rural schools. Due to the minimal exposure to the English language during the upbringing of the learners and the inequity of access to sufficient English learning materials lead to some issues or challenges to the teachers. One of the challenges faced by the teachers is helping the learners to acquire the needed vocabulary [2].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. English Language Skills

English language is a dominant business language and it is the official language in some of the countries [3]. There are few main skills in English language skills; Listening, speaking, reading, and writing plays a vital role in learning the language. These four skills are related with each other and it should be integrated effectively in order to help the learners to be a competent practitioner of the language. There are two parameters which connect the four basic skills [4]. The two parameters are; the mode of communication (oral or written) and the direction of communication (receiving and producing).

B. Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory

There are eight identified intelligences which are linguistic intelligence, logical mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily kinesthetic intelligence, naturalistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence. [5] In this study, few learning styles were adopted such as bodily kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal and linguistic learning styles.

The use of action songs during the lesson involves bodily-kinesthetic learning styles. The learners will move their body and do the action of the words. This can help the learners to stay focused and concentrate more during the lesson. Based on the study done by [6], through movement and action, it can enhance the learners' hand-eye coordination and concentration. Furthermore, a study by [7] stated that learners with bodily-kinesthetic intelligences stay focused in the lesson through movement and action.

Another learning styles is musical intelligence. Learners with musical intelligence love music and they are sensitive to melody, pitch, tone, rhythm and sounds in their environment [8]. With the integration of songs during the lesson, the learners with musical intelligence would stay-focused during the lesson which can help the learners to increase and develop their performance, especially in vocabulary acquisition.

Besides, another learning style to be implemented in the action song is interpersonal. Through singing and discussion activities, the learners help each other and interact with the teachers and their peers. With the use of interpersonal intelligence, the learners can socialize and improve their interpersonal skill.

The next learning styles is linguistic. This intelligence includes with the capacity in using the words effectively [8].

Apart from that, it also includes the ability of the learners in manipulating the structures, sounds, meanings and practical uses of the language. With the integration of action songs, the learners are required to read and understand the lyrics before they could sing the song. Thus, with the use of action songs, the learners can learn or acquire vocabulary through reading the lyrics or saying the words.

C. Songs and English Language

Songs is an artwork for singing and it can be with or without instrumental accompaniments [9]. Song also can be referred as a relatively short musical composition for the human voice, which featured words or lyrics [10]. Besides, songs are different from a scientific and formal text as it contain rhymes and informal language style. Songs captivate and immerse learners in a culturally rich resource, and it can be used as part of an activity in the classroom since they are less intimidating. Apart from that, by using songs as part of the activity in the classroom, it can promote the language acquisition through the development of learners' language skills-listening, speaking, reading, and writing and as well as pronunciation, rhythm, grammar and vocabulary [2]. There are four-step process which involves in the acquisition of vocabulary through music- understanding the words, learning how to pronounce the words, learning how to spell and the application of vocabulary in sentences [11]. However, the effectiveness of using songs in the acquisition of vocabulary depends on the suitability of the songs. There are four criteria that should be taken into account when choosing a song [12]. The lyrics of the songs must be simple and easy to understand, related with the topic, repetitive and allow the learners to easily carry out actions to gauge meaning. Thus, teacher plays a huge role in choosing the appropriate and suitable songs for the learners.

D. Using Action Songs in Teaching and Learning Vocabulary

Actions songs can be referred as songs that integrates movements for role-playing and miming the words and language structures [13]. It was further discussed that action songs help the learners in learning the language and deliver a positive energy level to the classroom. With a positive energy level from the songs and stress-free environment in the classroom, the affective filter of the learners can be reduced. A learner with a low affective filter would lead to the optimal learning [14]. It is proven that songs can be used as a tool to motivate the learners in overcoming their feelings of shyness and hesitation in learning the language [15]. Thus, songs are suitable and effective tool to create a less intimidating classroom atmosphere.

Learners will need to make connection between new language and meaning by relating the vocabulary with the movements made [2]. The learners are more likely to retain the information when they are already able to associate the words and its meaning [16]. They can mime or point at the things mentioned. As the learners remembered, they would be able to apply the words across the different language skills. Apart from that, action songs are also repetitive in nature, contains high frequency words and expression which can facilitate learners' memorization associated with the linguistic items introduced. [2].

III. METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the pupils' perception on the use of action songs in teaching and learning vocabulary. The participants which were 20 Year 4 pupils were interviewed using close-ended questions.

A. Research Design

The research design of this study was action research. The Kemmis and McTaggart Action Research Spiral / Cycle model is used for this study. This model proposed a spiral model which includes four steps: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. With the spiral model by Kemmis and McTaggart, improvement or correction can be done to the intervention after the first cycle. This will increase the percentage of the effectiveness of the intervention in order to improve the vocabulary acquisition among the Year 4 pupils. An interviewed session was carried out after the second cycle.

B. Participants

There were 20 Year 4 participants chosen from one of the urban schools located in Bintulu, Sarawak. The participants were 10 years old. All of the participants were formally exposed with English language since Year 1. Most of them come from low socioeconomic status families. Apart from that, most of them have limited exposure on the usage of English language. However, all of the participants can read English texts and none of them were diagnosed as pupils with learning disabilities.

C. Data Collection Method

The data were collected through the interview session with the learners. The interview session was held after the second cycle. The participants were asked to answer the close-ended questions.

D. Procedures

Consent forms were given to the pupils and they need to return the forms before starting the data collection. After the first cycle which consists of four lesson, there were some improvement has been made by the teacher.

An interview session was carried out after the implementation of the improvised intervention on the second cycle. The learners were needed to answer three close-ended questions regarding their perceptions on the use of action songs during teaching and learning vocabulary. The data were analysed, interpreted and presented in number and percentages.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Pupils' Perceptions on the Use of Action Songs in Teaching and Learning Vocabulary

This study explored the perception of Year 4 pupils towards the use of action songs in Teaching and Learning Vocabulary. The findings were presented in the following table followed by the report of the findings and discussion.

TABLE I. SUMMARISED RESPONSES FROM THE PUPILS

Questions	Number of Pupils		Percentage (%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No

	Number of Pupils		Percentage (%)	
Do you like the songs used during the lesson?	20	0	100	0
Do you think the use of songs help you to learn more vocabulary?	20	0	100	0
Do you think it is easier to learn vocabulary using song?	19	1	95	5

Based on the data shown above, all of the pupils showed positive feedback on the use of action songs during the lesson. All of the pupils liked the chosen song that they learnt during the lesson. According to Nefthalie (R14), she said that the chosen songs were fun, and the use of songs help her to learn new words. This support the idea that with a meaningful and fun lesson, it can attract and motivate pupils to learn the language. Based on the study done by [7], with the use of suitable action songs during the lesson increased the pupils' motivation. Apart from that, the pupils felt less burdened and stay-focused to learn English language when they were familiarized and enjoyed with the songs [7].

The interviews revealed that all of the pupils agreed that the use of action songs helped them to learn the vocabulary better. Meanwhile, there were 19 out of 20 pupils felt that it was easier for them to learn vocabulary by using the action song. One of the pupils stated that "it is easier to learn vocab using song because I can memorise the words when I sing the song repeatedly". (Azhar, R1) This can be linked with a study by [2], who stated that action songs contain repetitive lyrics which facilitate the pupils' memorization. However 5% of the pupils, which was 1 out of 20 pupils found that it was not easy to learn vocabulary through songs. One of the pupils asserted that "it is not easy to learn vocab using songs because I don't understand some of the words" (Afif, R19). This can be linked with one of the criteria in choosing a song to be used in the classroom. The chosen songs should contain simple and easily understood lyrics so that it will lower the affective filter, increase their self-confidence and motivate them to learn the language.

V. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The integration of action songs during the English lesson benefits teachers and the pupils. Through this study, a suitable, fun and interesting teaching strategies were explored. With the use of action songs, the lesson became more pupils-centered which one of the demanding trends in Malaysian education nowadays. Apart from that, with the use of action songs during the lesson, the role of the teacher was changed from traditional teacher to facilitator. The pupils were given more chances to manage their own learning process. Besides that, with the use of action songs, it attracts and motivate pupils to learn English [17][15]. Lastly, from this study, the pupils were able learn on how to learn the vocabulary and the language in a fun and interesting way.

For the recommendations, there is a need for a further research with a larger size of participants. A bigger size of participants would give more reliable and stronger result of the research. Besides, a longer period time for the research will produced more valid and consistent data.

VI. CONCLUSION

Vocabulary learning is one of the important element in learning the language. A study done by [18] stated that a key point to learn all skills of language is vocabulary. In order to be fluent and good in the language, the learners should be well-acquired and good in vocabulary as it is related and connected with each other [18]. Using and integrating action song is one of the strategies to enhance the vocabulary acquisition among the learners. Songs consist of plentiful sources of vocabulary, sentence structures and sentence patterns which explained why it can be one of the most effective ways in teaching language [18].

Apart from enhancing the learners in vocabulary acquisition, it also helps the learners to low their affective filter and increase their self-confidence in learning the language. In other words, with the integration of action songs during the lesson, it creates more fun and less intimidating environment which gradually increase the motivation of the learners and at the same time attracts their interest to learn vocabulary. This support a study by [15], who claimed that the use of songs can motivate and help the learners to overcome their feelings of shyness and hesitation in learning the language. Hence, based on collected data on the pupil's perceptions, it is proved that the use of actions songs is a suitable strategy that can be used to help the learners in learning vocabulary.

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