

Students' Perception of using Games in the Teaching of Reading Skill

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Abstract: The study attempts to investigate students' perception of using games in reading among upper level students. The study was conducted to fifteen students from a rural school in Padawan, Sarawak, Malaysia. The aims of this study is to find out students' perception of using games in teaching of reading skill among stage two students, to find out the impact shown according to students' gender and to investigate whether the usage of games really help the students in learning English Language. The methodologies incorporated in carrying out this study was qualitative which involves questionnaires. It is found that teacher will face some common problems in getting the right approach to teach reading skill as inculcate the reading interest. Based on the result obtained from the questionnaire the outcome of using games in teaching of reading skill shows excellent performance. Furthermore, according to the research done, a game can be a powerful language learning tool. More importantly, the game was found as an important platform to create learning environment so as to motivate students to learn as well as inculcate the reading interest.

Keywords: Games, Reading skill, Stage two students, learning tool

Numerous observations conducted discovered that many Malaysian English language teachers encounter similar challenges in teaching English language where the students do not master reading skill. As a result, the students do not perform in the public examinations. According to Ziauddin Khan (2004), reading is a responsive process which involves recognition, interpretation and perception of written or printed materials. It also functions as a vital tool in every professional field where reading skill helps to provide an additional means of access to academic, professional and recreational materials (Nesamalar, 2005). Thus, reading is regarded as the indispensable channel of communication in ever-widening world.

It is suggested that the use of games is effective in drawing students' attention. Ulrich and Glendon (2005) suggest that games are fun and easy to develop to challenge students and provide immediate feedback so students can assess their own comprehension and, consequently, their need for further study. Games help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest and work. Moreover, it helps the teachers to create useful and meaningful context. Thus, the meaning of the language they listen to, read, speak and write will be more vividly experienced and, therefore, better remembered. If it is accepted that games can provide intense and meaningful practice of language, then they must be regarded as central to a teacher's repertoire (Wright, 1984).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher believes that a well-planned lesson is needed and it should take students' needs and their differences in relation to eco-socio background, gender and abilities into account so it could be implemented accurately. Thus, teachers must contemplate which games to be used for the lesson, when to use them, how to link them up with the syllabus textbook or programme and how, more specifically, different games will benefit students in different ways (Khan.J, 1996). This is vital as the students would be motivated as if they find the lesson is interesting and meaningful and this will be followed by the state agenda in which games bring the students back to the basics of learning the language skills (Mohd Sofi Ali, 2003). Furthermore, Payne (2001) insisted educators must teach and provide support, insistence, and expectations to the students.

As stated by Teoh (1989) , games provide competitive element into the lesson while T.S. Rodgers (Shoemaker, 1991) states that games are competitive, governed by rules, goal-defined, engaged the pupils to challenge themselves which leave predominant impacts in the learning process. The competitive ambiance also makes learners concentrate and think intensively which enhances unconscious acquisition of inputs. It is indicated that most students expressed fondness of the relaxed atmosphere, the competitiveness, and the motivation that games brought to the classroom. According to Saygılı (2013), games would render the reading and writing process more fruitful for both teachers and students.

This paper also investigates through the lens of different genders where it is suggested that sex differences to natural biological maturational differences between males and females have different learning behaviours. According to Aliotti (1978) and Restak (1979) sex differences may be due to inherited factors and biologically inherent brain differences. Additionally, McBride (n.d) indicates boys are more likely to be involved in three dimensional kinesthetic activities involving body movements. It is also suggested that girls have fewer attention span problems and can make faster transitions between lessons compared to boys. Consequently referring to McBride's theory, both genders would display dissimilar responses and perceptions of the method used.

According to Kumar and Lightner (2007), a study by Hake (1998) discovered that students demonstrated more advanced problem solving, gain memory and performance benefits when they are involved in games and interactive learning methods other than learning supports the development of social competence through interactions structure and cooperative learning. Furthermore, results derived from some study cases using games in teaching conclude that games techniques helps the students in their learning especially English language as games promote the interest to read more English materials among students. Although there is a difference between genders and the effects might vary, reading skill is seen to be improved when games are used. Thus, games are deemed as an effective technique in teaching reading skill among students as it is suitable to be served as a warm up activity which stimulates the students to be prepared and they help the students to develop learning skill apart from boosting the students' confidence and expand their knowledge while inculcating reading habit among the students. Melor et al (2009) further elaborate that students can manage their own learning at their own choice. This helps them to take responsibility of their own learning that showcases greater autonomy and more learners centred.

METHOD

This case study involves fifteen students who are studying in Year 5 and 6 of Sekolah Kebangsaan Saint Giles, Padawan. The researcher has chosen this particular school and experimental group due to familiarity of the environment and the group of students. The selected school is situated in a rural area and the students do not have sufficient exposure of English language. In the case study, the researcher investigates students' perception of the use games in learning English language among Year 5 and 6 students aged 10 involving ten boys and five girls. The study will be taken place for 30 minutes for the period of one week. The students are divided into two groups which are control group (without games) and experimental group (with games). Both groups will have reading lesson and experimental group will undergo lesson stages involving games such as problem solving, chain story and crossword puzzles. The research design selected for this study is qualitative methods based on the objectives of the study which are the students' perception of the technique used, the impacts on both male and female. In relation to qualitative method, an observation is conducted to monitor the students' attitude during their participation in the activities conducted during lesson.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result derived from the observation reveals the differences shown by both male and female respondents based on pre and post study. Apart from that, interviews are conducted among students who are chosen randomly by the researcher to comprehend the students' perceptions and opinions regarding the technique introduced within the lesson and English language. A questionnaire is used to draw the students' response after the study is conducted by responding to the questions by indicating the scores ranging from 1 to 10 marks regarding the teaching of reading through games. The figures below illustrated students' perception on the use of games in their reading lesson.

Table 1: Students' perception

Number of students	Male	Female
	7	8
Like English language subject	13/15	
Like reading English materials	9/15	
Prefer female teachers	15/15	
Prefer group work activities	9/15	

Based on the table above, 86.9% male students like English language while all the female students like the language and enjoy English lesson. Furthermore, it is showed that only 34.7% of male students spend their time reading English material where else 71.4% of female students spend their time on reading English materials. It is found that female students spend most of their free time at the school's library reading storybooks while the male students prefer outdoor activities. Denoting from the survey conducted, it is found that male and female respondents showed similarity in preferring female teachers. On the other hand, it is showed that male students prefer to work in groups compared to female students due to the imbalance number of students based on genders. Deriving the second questionnaire result, it

is found that all male respondents like games during reading lesson. Hence, this proves that male students prefer active learning involving physical movement as they reflected that games motivate them to read.

The table below showed the impact of games in the teaching of reading among students.

Table 2: Impact on students

Students	Gender	
	Male	Female
Increase motivation to learn English subject	7/7	7/8
Increase communication among students	6/7	7/8
Develop students in learning ESL	7/7	8/8

Hence, the theory of the use of games in teaching reading is effective is proven by the result drawn from the questionnaire. It is shown that male respondents display greater interest in reading when games are used. Furthermore, it is found that both gender respondents gave full cooperation and they are more attentive during the lesson when games are used. Similar to the findings of the questionnaire, the male respondents showed greater interest during lesson when games are used as they are given the opportunity to have physical movement. It is found that the male respondents' attitude differ from pre study as they are more cooperative and engaged with the lesson. Apart from that, the number of male respondents present at school for English lesson increases compared to pre study. This shows that games provides a platform for the teachers to attract the students. On the other hand, it is found that female respondents are more passive. This is possibly due to the small number of female students in the class. However, the female students dominate most of the time during the reading session as they are more confident and they believe that reading could expand their knowledge and excel in their study.

It is found that both genders respondents are motivated during lesson other than enjoying the lesson as they find that the games provide them pleasurable ways to learn the language. Drawing from the observation, the students display higher confidence including low proficiency learners as they are able to comprehend the lesson and they enjoy working together as a team. This is proven by their willingness to express their opinions and ideas during the lesson. Hence, games help the students to have meaningful lesson in a conducive learning environment.

CONCLUSIONS

It is hoped that there would be more studies regarding games used in the classroom. The study faced limitations in relation of number of respondents and imbalance of gender groups. Thus, it is recommended that the study involves bigger group and schools to achieve more reliable and accurate result in the future. Corresponding to the status of English language as the second language in Malaysia, numerous policies and programmes have been implemented to ensure the students master the language. Yet, the reading skill among students are not deemed as important by the students and it is found that the percentage of reading habit among students is low. Hence, it is important to inculcate reading habits among young children to enable them to have better benefits in the future. Thus, games are encouraged to be used in language classrooms as they are able to transform the students and change the students' perception and attitudes in learning English language.

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