

THE USE OF LANGUAGE BOARD GAME TO SUPPORT HEARING IMPAIRED LANGUAGE SKILLS

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Abstract— A number of hearing impaired students who are undergoing a special-skilled certificate programme in Politeknik Ibrahim Sultan have difficulties in enhancing their English language skills. A full comprehension and application of selected words or phrases are a challenge for hearing impaired students whose exposure of the language in question is rather restricted. Observations were carried out on two groups of hearing impaired students. Both groups have been exposed to the targeted selected words and phrases. In fact, the groups have also been guided to develop two of the language skills with the application of the targeted selected words and phrases. The hearing impaired students have been drilled to write and read the targeted selected words and phrases. With the comprehension and application of the targeted selected words and phrases laid down to the students, a specially designed language board game is used to test the students' language skills. The two identified difficulties faced by the students when attempting to apply their language skills during the game are misinterpretation of the targeted selected words / phrases and fragmented sentence structure.

1. Introduction

The development of vocabulary is an important aspect of language development. And a learner will achieve his or her greater advancement in language if the grammar of the language has been mastered.

For hearing impaired learners, the hearing loss effects terribly their vocabulary development and, in fact, since young tend to exhibit poor language skills (Eliot, Hirsh and Simmons, 1967). Due to this, the learners' educational potential reduces "with respect to their intellectual potential" (Young and Mc Connel, 1957).

When new words are introduced, normal learners are able to hear and reproduce the words unlike the hearing impaired learners. The hearing impaired are unable to 'sound out' the words but can only attempt to register the words by 'sight' (Mahoney, 2013).

In fact, Mahoney sees that acquisition of sentence structure is more challenging to the hearing impaired learners compared to the acquisition of new words as the learners will definitely need explanation before the language syntax can be comprehensible. It is definitely not easy for any teacher to explain on sentence structure as sentences can be structured in many ways and each way has its own reason.

However, nothing is impossible even with the hearing impaired learners. Lederberg, Prezbindowski and Spencer (2000) discover that a teaching strategy which is called 'rapid word learning' helps the hearing impaired learners to learn new words. 'Rapid Word Learning' exposes the hearing impaired learners with the new words and provides sufficient time for the learners to become familiar to them.

Another teaching strategy that helps with the understanding of reading text, which indirectly promotes the development of vocabulary, is drawing activity. (Andrews, 2012). The learners are asked to read and, then, based on their understanding, draw.

Still, without early intervention, the hearing impaired learners' language abilities will not be native-like-grammatical competence as their first language, which is the sign language, becomes their main communication tool. (Swisher, 1989)

2. Research Method

The research was carried out in two stages as shown in the diagram below:

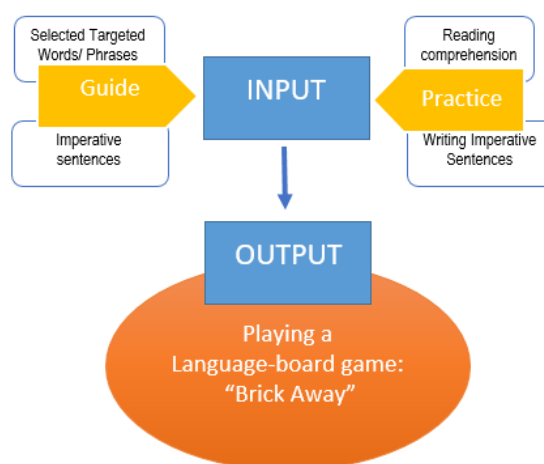


Figure 1: Research framework

The respondents were given input on the vital words / phrases needed for giving instructions on building bricks. Besides that, respondents also received guidance on the imperative sentences.

After the input had been given sufficiently to the respondents, the respondents were given practices on understanding texts on instructions and writing imperative sentences.

Once the input was completed, respondents were grouped appropriately for a game which required them to apply the skills that they had been practicing.

A. Sampling

The respondents of the research were semester three special-skilled certificate programmes in particular hearing-impaired students from Special-skilled Hotel Catering Certificate (KHK) and Special-skilled Graphic Design Certificate (KRG) programmes.

There were 11 respondents from KHK while 8 respondents from KRG. Thus, when the respondents were grouped for “Brick Away”, there were some groups with 3 among the KHK respondents. As for the KRG respondents, each group had an equal number.

The division of respondents in each group was determined by the researchers in which the researchers mixed the high ability respondents with the low ability respondents so as to ensure a fair game.

It should also made known that among the respondents of each programme, there was a small number of respondents who had some ability to hear sound with the use of hearing aid.

B. Research questions

The research questions were as follows:

- How did the respondents perform with the Task cards that require reading comprehension?
- How did the respondents perform with the Task cards that require production of imperative sentences?
- To change the default, adjust the template as follows.

C. Instrument

The first version of “Brick Away” was used to test respondents’ ability in reading comprehension as well as sentence construction.

In the “Brick Away”, there are four different task cards presented to the players and each task card requires different skill to be applied:

- The task of a **Risk card** requires the player to produce imperative sentence or sentences based on the picture given.
- The task of a **Challenge card** requires the player to build up the brick formation based on the description given.

- The task of an **Opportunity card** requires the player to carry out the given instruction.
- The task of a **Chance card** requires the player to fill in the blank with an appropriate word/phrase.

In this paper, only the findings of two of the task cards are analyzed which are Risk and Challenge cards.

3. Data Analysis

“Brick Away” was played for three rounds with KHK respondents while the KRG respondents had a slightly more rounds of six.

PROGRAMME	GROUP	RISK	CHALLENGE	OPPORTUNITY	CHANCE
KHK	1	↓ ii iii			
	2		↓ ii iii	ii	iii
	3		↓ ii iii		
	4		ii iii		↓
KRG	1	iv vi	iii		↓ iii v
	2		ii v		↓ iii iv vi
	3	ii iv v	↓	iii vi	
	4	↓	ii iv v	iii	vi

Figure 1: The sequence of task cards being played

Table 1 shows that the least Task cards being picked was the Opportunity cards. With the KHK respondents, the card was picked only once by group 2. As for the KRG respondents, the card was picked 3 times: once by group 4 and twice by group 3.

It is also a surprise to see that the most Task cards being picked by both groups of respondents were also the same which was the Challenge cards. The KHK respondents picked the Challenge cards for 6 times which was the same number as the KRG respondents.

Table 1 also shows the number of Task cards that the respondents were able to carry out. Those in red indicates that the respondents were not able to carry out the tasks while those in blue indicate the respondents’ success in carrying out the tasks.

A. Findings

a) Reading Comprehension

Most of the respondents did not have problem carrying out the tasks for Opportunity and Chance cards. Nonetheless, group 2 of KRG appeared to be unable to provide the answer for their fourth task card which was a Chance card.

The outcome was different for the Challenge cards. Every KRG group was able to carry out the task of the Challenge cards that they picked unlike the KHK respondents.

Out of the four groups from KHK, three groups landed on the Challenge cards. Unfortunately, the attempts were far from being a success except for one attempt made by groups 3 and 4.

b) Production of imperative sentences

Only one group from the KHK landed on Risk cards which they did for three times and, each time, the respondents failed to carry out the task.

For KRG, 3 groups landed on the Risk cards. Only group 1 was able to carry out the task successfully twice while the other two groups failed in attempting to produce imperative sentences based on pictures given.

B. Discussions

a) Reading Comprehension

Most of the respondents found that the tasks presented by the Challenge cards were quite difficult except when they were given some assistance by the researchers.

It was especially strenuous if the instruction was long. Group 4 of KHK just simply gave up after looking at it for a few seconds. As for group 3 of KHK, the respondents made an attempt to build up the brick formation with their third-picked Challenge card. Unfortunately, only the first 3 steps were correctly carried out.

The groups that received the researchers' assistance were able to form the brick formation as presented by the Challenge cards precisely. The researchers pointed out the key words and, most of the time, the respondents took a few seconds before they were able to carry out the tasks.

The most common words / phrases that cause problem to the respondents are as follows:

- Longer side
- Shorter side
- Next to
- Meet
- Centre
- Yellow brick
- Whole top of
- Green brick

Words of colour, such as 'yellow' and 'green', became difficult when the word 'brick' came after it.

The respondents appeared to be able to perform better if the instructions were written in short sentences rather than complex sentences. Sentences with adverbial phrases confused the respondents easily as shown below:

"Then, take one red brick, with the shorter side facing you, and place it on the top of the yellow brick."

The sentence above contains three different instructions. Unable to separate the instructions and see them as three different steps, the one sentence which the respondents saw it as long confused the respondents utterly. However, when the researchers pointed out the key words and paused, waiting for the respondents to carry out the pointed step before continuing to the next one, the respondents were able to disintegrate the information.

The same result when a note is added to the instruction such as shown below:

(NOTE: The red brick should be placed in the centre of the yellow brick with the front four studs of the red brick covering the centre four studs of the yellow brick.)

The statement contains 4 different tasks. It became easier for the respondents to carry out the task as the researchers pointed out the keywords and pausing.

The situation was different for Opportunity cards. The respondents who picked the cards could easily carry out the tasks except for group 4 of KRG. However, after receiving hints from the researcher, the respondents were able to carry out the task.

The Chance cards appeared to be less stressful to the respondents. Out of the ten cards being picked, two cards were not completed correctly.

Two groups were not able to identify the missing word: group 2 of KHK and group 2 of KRG. The word that both group was not able to identify was 'with'.

As for group 1 of KRG, the third Chance card picked by the group gave some difficulty but, after receiving hint from one of the researchers, the respondents could identify the missing word which was 'guess'. The hint was merely an accidental signing of the word 'guess'.

8 of the ten Chance cards picked appeared not to pose any difficulties to respond as they took only a few seconds before they could provide the missing words. The missing words were as follows:

- Paralleled
- Longer
- You
- Top
- On
- Place

The words/ phrases that truly pose problems to the respondents are not obvious. With a different type of card a particular word can be comprehensible for the respondents. For instance, the word 'longer', required by a Chance card, does not seem to pose difficulty with the respondents but, it is difficult with a Challenge card. Due to unable to comprehend the meaning of the word 'longer', respondents could not do the brick formation.

b) Production of imperative sentences

Only group 1 of KRG was able to produce imperative sentences whereas the other three groups who picked the Risk cards were not successful in their attempts.

Group 1 of KRG picked the Risk cards 3 times. The respondents were able to produce grammatically correct imperative sentences for the first two cards picked. Unfortunately, for the last card, the respondents were able to produce the imperative sentences for the first two steps correctly but failed to do so for the rest of the steps.

“Place a green brick with the shorter side facing you.”

The above imperative sentence was the first one produced by group 1 of KRG. As required, the respondents had the correct verb at the beginning of the statement and successfully included the specific detail such as the colour of the brick as well as the direction of the brick.

The second imperative sentence produced had the same structure as the first imperative sentence produced;

“Place a yellow brick with the longer side facing you.”

There two differences, though, which were the colour of the brick and the direction of the brick.

From the analysis of the findings, it clearly shows that simple pictures, especially with only one brick involved, enabled the respondents to produce imperative sentences. Complicated pictures with more than one brick brought difficulties to the respondents.

4. Conclusions

Reading texts which are lengthy overwhelmed the respondents unless they are assisted by the researchers. With the researchers providing hints or even pointing the vital keywords, it lowers the respondents' anxiety level and, thus, the respondents are able to perform better.

Producing imperative sentences could only be carried out by certain respondents. Most of the respondents do not have the abilities to produce imperative sentences independently.

Due to their smaller lexicons and slower rate of learning new words, the hearing impaired appeared to have a limited vocabulary comprehension (Lederberg and Spencer, 2001) and, thus, experience greater challenge in producing imperative sentences.

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