

THE EFFECT OF “UP CLOSE & PERSONAL” APPROACH IN SCIENCE WRITTEN EXERCISES AMONG YEAR ONE PUPILS

By

Nelson Anak Peter

ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to investigate the effect of my new approach, “up close and personal”, in helping three Year 1 pupils complete their Science written exercises correctly. During this research, data were collected through my diary notes, pupils’ work and interview. Based on the data collected, I found that they were able to answer their worksheets correctly through this approach.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Every teacher in this world wants to see their pupils succeed in their life and be able to walk proudly and confidently towards their future. When failure occurred, the teacher will be the first person to feel the impact because they will be questioning themselves, “Am I a good teacher? What have I taught my pupils?” These questions will always be echoing in their head and sometimes, this situation makes the teachers feel guilty. So, to prevent this situation from happening, each teacher should always reflect on and improve their practices.

One of the ways that teachers could reflect on their practices is through action research (AR). Kemmis (1988) said that AR is “a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their social or educational practices and the situation in which these practices are carried out.” Through AR, teachers would be able to identify problems or weaknesses that arose during the teaching and learning process. After that, they could plan some actions to overcome or solve the problems or weaknesses for improvement in their practices. Ebbutt (cited by Gabel, 1995) agreed with this statement when he said that AR is “a systematic research on efforts to improve educational practices among practitioners through their own practical actions by reflecting on the consequences of such actions.”

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

My AR was done at one of the primary schools in Lubok Antu district which is located 61 km from Sri Aman town. Sekolah Kebangsaan Nanga Kesit is one of the remote schools in Lubok Antu district that do not have any piped water and electricity supply. There are 135 pupils and 15 teachers in this

school. Almost 98 percent (%) of the pupils are Iban who live in the longhouses along the Lemanak River. The pupils are from families who are mostly farmers and rubber tappers. Some of the parents still lack awareness of the importance of education. That is why some of the pupils' attendance in school is very poor – a week in a month or three months in a year. This problem is one of the factors that contributed to the pupils' poor achievement in their studies. Who could get straight 'A's in their examination if they never attend any lesson for a long period of time? Most of the parents are not concerned about this matter. They don't encourage or motivate their children to go to school. Instead, they ask their children to go to the paddy fields or become baby-sitters at home while they are working. As a result, the weak pupils become weaker in their studies.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

There are 20 pupils in my Year 1 class and four of them have not attended any pre-school. Definitely, these four pupils are far behind the other pupils because they are still unable to read and write. However, out of the 16 pupils who have attended pre-school and able to read and write, there are some who are still unable to do their written exercise correctly. They are able to do oral activities during the teaching and learning processes, but when it comes to written exercises, they keep asking how to do the exercises and they cannot do the exercises as desired. In fact, the written exercises are quite similar to the oral exercises.

I am a graduate teacher who still lacked teaching experiences although I have been a teacher since 2004 after I completed my 'Kursus Perguruan Lepas Ijazah' at Batu Lintang Teacher's College in 2003. My major is in English Study and my minors are in Science and Moral Education. My first posting was at SK Ulu Lemanak, Lubok Antu which is the farthest school at the Lemanak River. I was transferred to SK Nanga Kesit in June 2006. I have been assigned to teach English, Science and Moral for Year 1 and English for Year 3 this year. Since becoming a teacher, I have not taught Year 1 Science and this makes me worry. "How will I teach my pupils? Is it the same with the way I teach English?" Whenever I planned my lesson, these questions always cross my mind. However, I take it as a new experience and a challenge for me.

1.3 FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH

My study focuses on my Science lessons and the topic concerned is Animals' Sound. I have divided the focus of the research or my concern into two, that is, focusing on my pupils and my own practice.

1.3.1 My Pupils

As I have mentioned in the problem statement earlier, some of my pupils are unable to complete their written exercises correctly although they are able to

do so during oral activity. When I asked whether they understand or not, all of the pupils said they do, except for the four pupils who did not attend pre-school whom I categorized as a ‘special group’ and I gathered them in one corner of the classroom. But, my concern is not on this ‘special group’ because they need to learn the basic first. For this research, I focused on a group of my pupils who are able to do the oral activity but fail to do the written exercise. They kept asking how to do the exercise although examples have been shown. The written exercises given are quite similar to the ones used during oral activity. The group consists of three pupils named Ben, Eric and Izy (not their real name) who have the potential to be grade ‘A’ pupils.

1.3.2 My Own Practice

Due to lack of experience in teaching Year 1 Science, I do not have any idea on how to deliver my Science lessons except by delivering them as how I carried out my English lessons. It means that the teaching approach I used to teach Science is just like when I teach English because, in my opinion, the pupils at this level need to be exposed to vocabularies and sentence structures. So as usual, for the early stages of the lesson, I will ask my pupils to read aloud and spell out the words stated on the cards (drilling). For example, moo, tweet, quack, croak and buzz. After that, I will help them to find the meaning of the words by showing pictures or making some sounds. When they have mastered the meaning of words, I will ask them to read aloud some simple sentences (drilling). For example, a duck quacks, a dog barks, a tiger roars. During this stage, they are suppose to be able to read, to spell and understand which animals make certain sounds. For the written exercises, I often used Science Activity Book or Trek-A Science Work Book for all my pupils. Only sometimes, when needed, I will prepare other written exercises. Unfortunately, this approach is not suitable for the three pupils. Due to this, this AR focuses on my teaching approach, that is, whether I need to change or improvise it to ensure that the three pupils are able to complete their written exercises correctly.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The objectives of the research are categorized into two. Firstly, I would like to improve my way of teaching by trying out a new approach which I named as “up close and personal” approach. Through this approach, I hope to help the three pupils understand well my lessons and fulfill the learning objectives.

The second objective of this research is to help the pupils concerned in answering their Science written exercises correctly. Thus, I hope to investigate the effect of this approach on the pupils’ Science written exercise.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the effect of the new approach (“up close and personal” approach) in helping the three pupils of Year 1 to complete their oral and written exercise?

2.0 THE ACTION RESEARCH PLAN

2.1 *The research plan*

This AR was conducted from March 2007 until November 2007. I have planned the process of my AR as shown in Table 1.

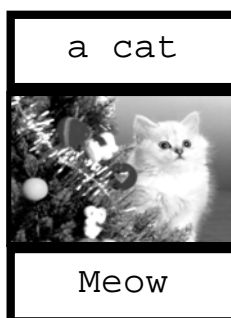
Table 1: Yearly action research plan

No.	Months	Activity	Remarks
1.	March – April	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Identifying my own practice❖ Collecting initial data❖ Analyzing the initial data❖ Compose an Action Plan❖ Writing an AR proposal	
2.	May – July	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Collecting data and record the data in the form of notes or pictures.	
3.	July – September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Data analysis❖ Writing an initial report	
4.	October – November	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Writing a final report❖ Presenting the final report	

2.2 *The action plan*

In this research, I carried out the “up close and personal” approach in teaching Science for Year 1, especially for the Ben, Eric and Izy. I still carried out the previous approach among the pupils as majority of them are able to complete their work correctly. The steps that I have taken during the lessons are listed in the following lesson plan.

- (i) **Induction Set.** All pupils will sit on the floor and I will introduce the topic by asking them to sing with me a song titled “**Old Macdonald Had a Farm.**” After that, I will ask them simple questions regarding the animal sound that they have sung in the song.
- (ii) **Initial-lesson:** Step 1: I will show a set of animal pictures and make sound after that, so that the pupils will know which animal makes the certain sound. During this stage, pupils just listen to me. I will repeat it at least 3 times. For example:



Step 2: I will show a set of animal pictures and make sound after that. In this step, pupils will repeat after me a few times (drilling).

Step 3: I will ask each pupil to say it one-by-one and correct them spontaneously if they make mistakes.

- (iii) ***During-lesson:*** I will form four groups consisting of five members of each group and give them a set of pictures. Then, I will ask them to say it aloud to their group members. After that, I will ask each group to come forward and role-play.
- (iv) ***After-Lesson:*** I will ask them to do an exercise in the activity book. For Ben, Eric and Izy, I will gather them in one group. I will monitor them while they are completing their work (“up-close and personal” approach). If they are unable to complete it, I will repeat my first stage lesson, only for them. While I am focusing on this group, I will ask my collaborator to help me monitor the other pupils in completing their work.
- (v) ***Remarks:*** These steps will be implemented in every lesson that I carry out to teach Science Year 1 during this research. After a few lessons, I will interview the three pupils regarding the “up-close and personal” approach. The process of collecting data for this study is as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Collecting data process

Date / Day (Minutes)	Activity	Methodology
1st SESSION 18 th June / Monday (60 minutes)	Lesson on Animals' Sound (5 types of animal) • Match the sound to the correct picture (orally) • Fill in the blanks with the correct words based on the pictures given (written)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diary notes • Pupils' Work
2nd SESSION 9 th July / Monday (60 minutes)	Lesson on Animals' Sound (5 types of animal) • Match the sound to the correct picture (orally) • Fill in the blanks with the correct words based on the pictures given (written)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diary notes • Pupils' Work
3rd SESSION 16 th July / Monday (60 minutes)	Lesson on Animals' Sound (10 types of animal) • Match the sound to the correct picture (orally) • Fill in the blanks with the correct words based on the pictures given (written)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diary notes • Pupils' Work • Interview

3.0 METHODOLOGY

There are three methods of collecting and analyzing data in this research, namely interview, diary notes and the three pupils' work.

3.1 Interview

An interview was conducted at the end of the third session. I asked the three pupils some simple questions regarding the “up close and personal” approach, for example, “Which approaches do you like most, the old or new approach?” All the questions were asked in English, but some were in Bahasa Melayu when I realized that they were not able to understand well my questions. The transcripts were then translated into English. All the answers from the session were recorded and later transcribed into transcripts as my evidence.

3.2 Diary Notes

Diary notes were written at the end of every lesson. I recorded all my reflections and comments in relation to my own lessons and also the progress of Ben, Eric and Izy. From the notes, I was able to identify the pupils' interest and attitude towards my teaching. Besides that, my diary notes were used as referral for my final report.

3.3 Pupils' Work

The three pupils were given three sets of worksheets and the number of correct answers from each worksheet were recorded and analyzed.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Before using the "up close and personal" approach in teaching Science, I have used the approach where I taught the whole class during the oral activity and gave worksheets to the pupils after that. During the written exercise, I would go around the class and give assistance to my pupils when needed. In my new approach, I changed my teaching style by teaching the whole class during the oral activity. But, during written exercises, I grouped the three pupils in a group and explained again the oral activity to them. During that period of time, I sat with them while my collaborator monitored other pupils' work.

4.1 First Session

I started my first session on 18th June 2007 (Monday) at 7.20 a.m. For this session, I had an hour with them and I taught the sub-topic Animals' Sound. Before I started my lesson, as usual as a class teacher, I checked their attendance. After that, I asked all the pupils to sit on the floor. I asked Ben, Izy and Eric to sit in the second row. Then, I showed them pictures of animals and asked them to name the animals orally (revision of previous lesson). Generally, all the pupils were able to name the animals based on the pictures shown, correctly. The following lesson plan was carried out during the first session.

Class	:	Year 1
Date (Day)	:	18 th June 2007 (Monday)
Time	:	7.20 – 8.20 a.m.
Theme	:	Learning About Living Things
Learning Objective	:	(2.2) The sound of different animals
Learning Outcome	:	Pupils should be able to know the sound of different types of animal.
Science Process Skill:		Observing
Moral Value	:	Being kind hearted
Activity	:	

(1) Introduction to topic

- Sing a song "Old Macdonald Had a Farm"
- Teacher asks pupils about the song, e.g., Which animal can you hear from the song?

(2) Explanation and Discussion

- Teacher introduces new vocabularies by showing word cards to the pupils and pupils listen.
- Pupils read after the teacher and spell the words shown (drilling).

- Teacher asks pupils to read aloud and spell the words shown, individually.

(3) Written Exercise

- Teacher distributes worksheets to the pupils and explains what pupils should do to complete the exercise.

(4) Closure / Correction

- Teacher checks the worksheets together with the pupils.

I introduced my lesson by playing a song named ‘Old Macdonald Had a Farm’. Before I played the music, I asked my pupils to identify the animals that were mentioned in the song. They were very excited, happy and impatient. I played the music twice before I asked them the questions. All of them listened to the music attentively. After that, I posed questions to them randomly. Some of the pupils’ responses are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Pupils’ responses

Question	Pupils’ Responses
<i>Do you like the song?</i>	“Yes” (All)
<i>What types of animal can you hear from the song? [Apakah jenis haiwan yang kamu dapat dengar dalam lagu tadi?]</i>	“Dog” “Duck” “Goat” “Cow”

Pupils’ responses in Table 3 show that all the pupils were able to name the animals that they heard from the song. For enhancement purpose, I placed part of the lyric of the song on the blackboard. On the lyric, I wrote the animals name in different colours and underlined them as shown in Figure 1.

<u>Old Macdonald Had a Farm</u>	
Old Macdonald had a farm A B C D E And in his farm he has a <u>bird</u> A B C D E And the tweet, tweet here And the tweet, tweet there Here tweet, there tweet, every where tweet, tweet Old Macdonald had a farm A B C D E	Old Macdonald had a farm A B C D E And in his farm he has a <u>chicken</u> A B C D E And the cluck, cluck here And the cluck, cluck there Here cluck, there cluck, every where cluck, cluck And the tweet, tweet here And the tweet, tweet there Here tweet, there tweet, every where tweet, tweet Old Macdonald had a farm A B C D E

Figure 1: Part of the song lyric – “Old Macdonald Had A Farm”

After that, I asked them to identify again the animals' names that are written on the lyric. Most of the pupils were able to identify them correctly. During oral activity, I introduced five new vocabularies on animals' sound which are trumpet (elephant), croak (frog), cluck (chicken), squeak (mouse) and tweet (bird). As usual, I used picture and word cards to help the pupils know which animals make that particular sound. First, I read the words aloud and at the same time I showed the picture of the animal that made the sound. The pupils just listened to me. After that, I asked my pupils to read the words after me. Then, I asked all my pupils to say the words aloud without my help. Secondly, I asked my pupils to read the words aloud, individually. For pupils who were unable to read the words shown, I asked others to read it for him or her. Then, I asked him or her to read it again. Thirdly, I asked my pupils to match the sounds to the correct animal. The answers from the three pupils during the activity are shown below.

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Squeak) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Bird
Izy : Elephant
Eric : Mouse

Teacher :
(By showing word card –Trumpet) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Elephant
Izy : Elephant
Eric : Elephant

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Tweet) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Bird
Izy : Bird
Eric : Bird

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Croak) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Frog
Izy : Chicken
Eric : Frog

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Cluck) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Duck
 Izy : Chicken
 Eric : Dog

The three pupils’ answers were recorded in Table 4. For the wrong answers, I asked other pupils to say the correct answer and asked the pupils concerned to say after them.

Table 4: The three pupils’ answers in matching activity

Pupils’ Name	Animals’ Sound & Its Name					Correct Answer
	Squeak (Mouse)	Trumpet (Elephant)	Tweet (Bird)	Croak (Frog)	Cluck (Chicken)	
Ben	0	1	1	1	0	3
Izy	0	1	1	0	1	3
Eric	1	1	1	1	0	4

After the oral activity, I started to distribute the worksheet for that day and I explained to the pupils how to complete the exercise. I gave them 10 minutes to complete the exercise. While they were completing the exercise, I walked around the class and monitored the pupils. I tried not to assist them but helped them indirectly by probing them and encouraging them to find their own answers. After they had completed the worksheet, I checked their worksheet one-by-one. Then, I discussed the answers with them and let them find the correct answers. Figure 2 shows the three pupils’ worksheets that I have checked.

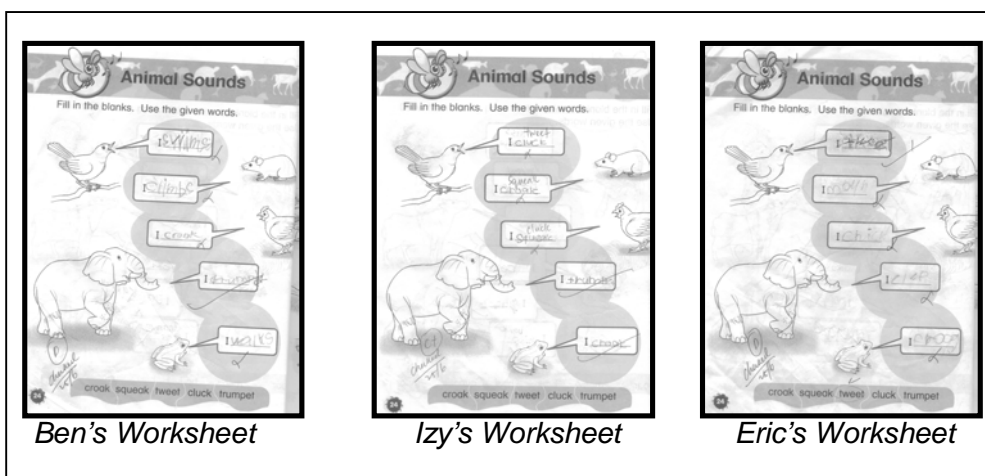


Figure 4: The three pupils’ worksheets (1st session)

Table 5 shows the interpretation of the three pupils’ written answers.

Table 5: The three pupils’ answers in written exercise (1st session)

Pupils’ Name	Animals’ Sound & Its Name					Correct Answer
	Tweet (Bird)	Squeak (Mouse)	Cluck (Chicken)	Trumpet (Elephant)	Croak (Frog)	
<i>Ben</i>	0	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Izy</i>	0	0	0	1	1	2
<i>Eric</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1

The table shows that the three pupils were really weak in the written exercise. Thus, I decided to implement my new approach, “up close and personal” in the next session to see whether it would help them improve their ability in oral and written activity.

4.2 Second Session

My second lesson was supposed to be on 9th July 2007 (Monday). But due to the absence of one of my pupils’ concerned (Izy), it was postponed to 16th July 2007 (Monday) at 7.20 a.m. until 8.20 a.m. As usual, as a class teacher, I checked their attendance for that day. After that, I started my lesson by playing the music and asked them to sing the song “Old Macdonald Had a Farm”, like before. But before that, I asked Ben, Eric and Izy to sit in the second row, so that I could pay more attention to them. During the activity, I could see that they were very interested and the class became active. All the pupils sang along while clapping their hands. I was very surprised because some of them could memorize the lyric of the song. It shows that they really enjoy that type of activity.

After that, I asked the pupils to say aloud the words displayed on the word cards (previous vocabulary, e.g., tweet, croak, squeak, trumpet and cluck). The purpose of this activity was to refresh the pupils’ memory on the previous lesson. All of them were able to say and identify the words shown, including the three pupils in this study. The lesson plan that I have carried out for the second session is as shown here.

Class	:	Year 1
Date (Day)	:	16 th July 2007 (Monday)
Time	:	7.20 – 8.20 a.m.
Theme	:	Learning About Living Things
Learning Objective	:	(2.2) The sound of different animals
Learning Outcome	:	Pupils should be able to know the sound of different types of animal.
Science Process Skill:		Observing
Moral Value	:	Being kind hearted
Activity	:	

(1) Introduction to topic

- Sing a song "Old Macdonald Had a Farm"
- Teacher shows pupils previous lesson word cards and asks pupils to read aloud and say out the name of animals concerned.

(2) Explanation and Discussion

- Teacher introduces new vocabularies (5) by showing word cards to the pupils and pupils listen.
- Pupils read after the teacher and spell the words shown (drilling)
- Teacher asks pupils to read aloud and spell the words shown, individually.

(3) Written Exercise

- Teacher distributes worksheets to the pupils and explains what pupils should do to complete the exercise.

(4) Closure / Correction

- Teacher checks the worksheet together with the pupils.

In the next stage of my lesson, I introduced another five new vocabularies related to the topic. The five new vocabularies were moo (cow), meow (cat), squeal (squirrel), hiss (snake) and quack (duck). As usual, in my strategy of teaching, drilling is the most important activity during the oral stage. First, I said aloud the word in each card twice and the pupils just listened. After that, I asked my pupils to say it aloud after me, twice. Then, I asked them to spell the word shown. Next, I asked my pupils, one-by-one, to say aloud the words shown. All of them were able to say them correctly except for a few of them. Sometimes, I asked my advanced pupils to be the model for the weak pupils. The three pupils in this study, especially Izy, were among the group of pupils whom I have to help and probe.

After that, I asked the pupils to match the sounds to the correct animals that make the particular sounds, for example, moo for cow, meow for cat and quack for duck. The answers from the three pupils during the activity are shown below.

Teacher :

(By showing word card – Squeal) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Mouse
Izy : Penguin
Eric : Squirrel

Teacher :

(By showing word card – Quack) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Duck
Izy : Duck
Eric : Duck

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Hiss) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Snake
 Izy : Mouse
 Eric : Snake

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Meow) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Cat
 Izy : Cat
 Eric : Cat

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Moo) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Cow
 Izy : Cow
 Eric : Cow

The three pupils' answers were tabulated in Table 6. For the wrong answers, I asked other pupils to say the correct answers and asked the pupils concerned to say after them.

Table 6: The three pupils' answers in matching activity

Pupils' Name	Animals' Sound & Its Name					Correct Answer
	Squeal (Squirrel)	Quack (Duck)	Hiss (Snake)	Meow (Cat)	Moo (Cow)	
Ben	0	1	1	1	1	4
Izy	0	1	0	1	1	3
Eric	1	1	1	1	1	5

After the oral activity, I distributed the worksheet for that day and I explained to the pupils how to complete the exercise. I gave them 10 minutes to complete the exercise. For the three pupils, I sat together with them in their group and repeated the oral stage activity (drilling) with them. Here, I implemented my new approach which is “up close and personal”, whereby I organized the similar activity as in oral activity to only three of them. So, my attention was focused only on three of them. After that, I let them complete their worksheets independently, with little guidance. While I sat with the three pupils, I asked my friend, Mdm. Jasmine, to monitor other pupils' work. After they completed the worksheet, I checked their worksheet one-by-one.

Then, I discussed the answers with them and also let them find the correct answers. Figure 5 as shown below are the three pupils’ worksheets.

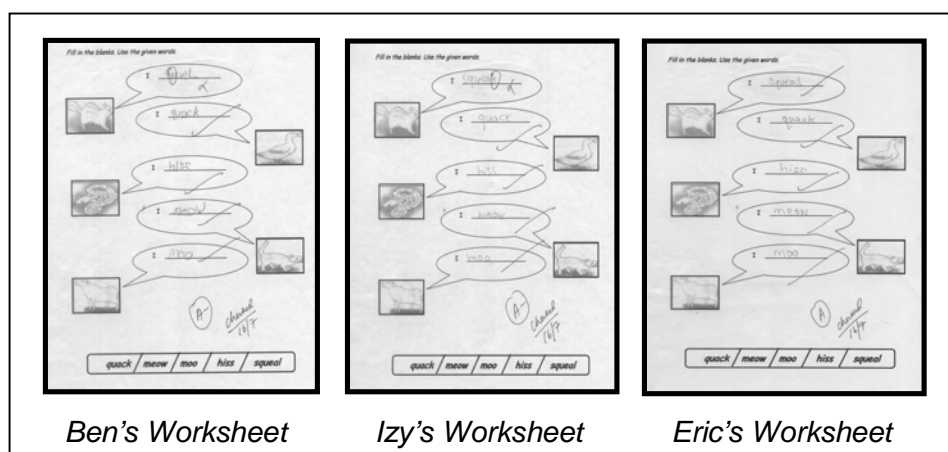


Figure 5: The three pupils’ worksheets (2nd Session)

After the lesson, I analyzed the worksheets and tabulated the findings in a table as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: The three pupils’ answers in written exercise (2nd session)

Pupils' Name	Animals' Sound & Its Name					Correct Answer
	Squeal (Squirrel)	Quack (Duck)	Hiss (Snake)	Meow (Cat)	Moo (Cow)	
Ben	0	1	1	1	1	4
Izy	0	1	1	1	1	4
Eric	1	1	1	1	1	5

Table 7 shows that the three pupils have improved in their written exercise and I thought that my new approach in teaching was a success because they were able to complete their written exercise correctly. Not only that, the three pupils also showed their happy face and interest towards learning because they saw an 'A' and 'A-' on their exercise paper. Even though the three pupils have successfully achieved my expectation, I was still not contented because probably today animals' sound were easier than before and they were familiar with most of the sounds taught today. So, to reconfirm whether the approach really helps the three pupils, I carried out the approach again in my next lesson, which is the third session, that was planned on the following Monday (23rd July 2007).

4.3 Third Session

Once again, due to the July Monthly Test from 23rd – 26th July 2007, I had to postpone my third lesson to 6th August 2007 (Monday) at 7.20 a.m. until

8.20 a.m. After I had checked the pupils' attendance, I proceeded with my Science lesson. The steps during this lesson were similar to the previous one (16th July 2007) except that instead of five vocabularies, I gathered all the sound vocabularies that they had learned in the two previous lessons. Below is the lesson plan for the third session.

Class	:	Year 1
Date (Day)	:	6 th August 2007 (Monday)
Time	:	7.20 – 8.20 a.m.
Theme	:	Learning About Living Things
Learning Objective	:	(2.2) The sound of different animals
Learning Outcome	:	Pupils should be able to know the sound of different types of animal.
Science Process Skill:		Observing
Moral Value	:	Being kind hearted
Activity	:	

(1) Introduction to topic

- Sing a song “Old Macdonald Had a Farm”
- Teacher shows pupils previous lesson word cards (10 words) and asks pupils to read aloud and say out the name of animals concerned

(2) Explanation and Discussion

- Teacher asks pupils to read aloud and spell the words shown on the word cards together and then individually (drilling).

(3) Written Exercise

- Teacher distributes worksheets to the pupils and explains what pupils should do to complete the exercise.

(4) Closure / Correction

- Teacher checks the worksheet together with the pupils.

As usual, I played the song “Old Macdonald Had a Farm” as an induction set activity. After that, I asked my pupils to say the words aloud as shown on the word cards. For this session, I did not model because they were familiar with the words. But, when they mispronounced the words, I corrected them immediately. Many of my pupils, including the three pupils, have problems in pronouncing some of the words. It may be because of a week's break between the last lesson and today's lesson. They probably could not remember how to pronounce the words especially squeak, squeal, croak and cluck. After that, I asked my pupils to match the sounds to the correct animals that make the particular sounds, orally. Below are the three pupils' answers during the activity.

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Squeak) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Mouse
Izy : Squirrel
Eric : Mouse

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Trumpet) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Elephant
Izy : Elephant
Eric : Elephant

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Tweet) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Bird
Izy : Bird
Eric : Bird

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Croak) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Duck
Izy : Chicken
Eric : Frog

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Cluck) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Duck
Izy : Chicken
Eric : Duck

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Moo) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Cow
Izy : Cow
Eric : Cow

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Meow) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Cat
 Izy : Cat
 Eric : Cat

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Hiss) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Snake
 Izy : Snake
 Eric : Snake

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Quack) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Duck
 Izy : Chicken
 Eric : Duck

Teacher :
(By showing word card – Squeal) Which animal makes this sound?

Ben : Mouse
 Izy : Squirrel
 Eric : Mouse

The three pupils’ answers were recorded in Table 8. For the wrong answers, I asked other pupils to say the correct answers and asked the three pupils to say after them.

Table 8: The pupils’ answers in matching activity (orally)

Pupils’ Name	Animals’ Sound & Its Name				
	Squeak (Mouse)	Trumpet (Elephant)	Tweet (Bird)	Croak (Frog)	Cluck (Chicken)
Ben	1	1	1	0	0
Izy	0	1	1	0	1
Eric	1	1	1	1	0

Pupils’ Name	Animals’ Sound & Its Name					Correct Answer
	Moo (Cow)	Meow (Cat)	Hiss (Snake)	Quack (Duck)	Squeal (Squirrel)	
Ben	1	1	1	1	0	8
Izy	1	1	1	0	1	7
Eric	1	1	1	1	0	8

The next step was the written activity. The activity was similar to the previous lesson except the pupils had to complete ten questions instead of five questions. As usual, I gave them 10 minutes to complete the activity and I asked Mdm. Jasmine once again to help me monitor the other pupils' work because I wanted to implement my approach on the three pupils. Before the three pupils complete the worksheets, I repeated the steps in the oral activity with them (drilling as a group and individually). Then, I asked them to match the sound to the particular animals. I corrected any mistakes made by them directly. After that, I asked them to complete their worksheets. After they had completed the worksheets, I checked their worksheets one-by-one. Then, I discussed the answers with them and let them find the correct answers. Figure 6 shows the three pupils' worksheets for the third session.

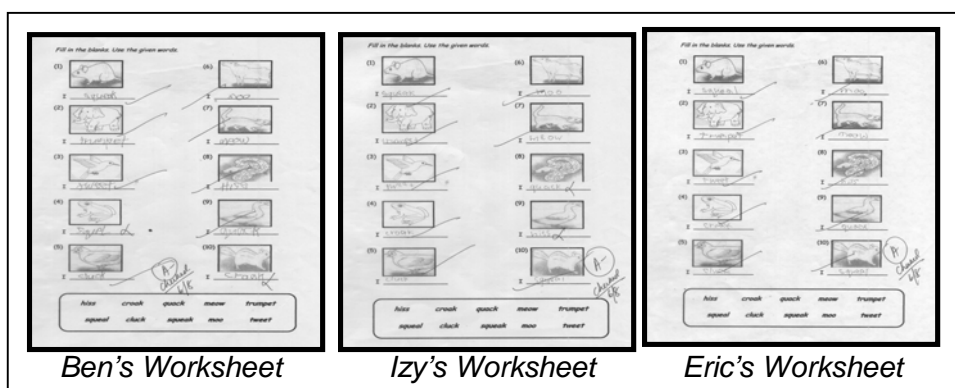


Figure 6: The three pupils' worksheets (3rd Session)

At the end of the lesson, I analyzed the data from the worksheets and transferred the data into Table 9.

Table 9: The three pupils' answers in written exercise (3rd session)

Pupils' Name	Animals' Sound & Its Name				
	Squeak (Mouse)	Trumpet (Elephant)	Tweet (Bird)	Croak (Frog)	Cluck (Chicken)
Ben	1	1	1	0	1
Izy	1	1	1	1	1
Eric	1	1	1	1	1

Pupils' Name	Animals' Sound & Its Name					Correct Answer
	Moo (Cow)	Meow (Cat)	Hiss (Snake)	Quack (Duck)	Squeal (Squirrel)	
Ben	1	1	1	1	0	8
Izy	1	1	0	0	1	8
Eric	1	1	1	1	1	10

Table 9 shows that the new approach, "up close and personal", has helped the three pupils in written exercise. The great achievement was by Eric where he got all correct, while Ben and Izy managed to get eight correct and two incorrect answers. It was probably due to the word recognition problem and misunderstanding the meaning of the word. Anyway or anyhow, the two of them have shown excellent performance in written exercises if compared with the first session exercise. So, from this data, I could state that this approach, "up close and personal", has successfully helped the three pupils in improving their performance in the written exercise.

4.3.1 The Interview

After I had finished discussing the answers with the pupils, I carried out a simple informal five minutes group interview with the three pupils. The interview was carried out to obtain their opinion and feedback regarding the approach that has been carried out during the lesson. Besides that, it was also to see whether the approach really helped them in completing the written exercise given. The interview was carried out in English but most of the time I had to translate the questions to Bahasa Melayu. If not, they were unable to answer my questions. Below is the transcript of the interview session with the three pupils.

Date and Time : 6th August 2007 / 0815 a.m.
Venue : Year 1 Classroom (the pupils' table)
The pupils' concerned : Ben, Izy and Eric
Language Use (teacher) : English and Bahasa Melayu
Language Use (pupils) : Bahasa Melayu
(* This interview has been fully translated to English)

Question 1: Do you like today's lesson?

Ben : (smile and nodding his head)
Izy : Yes (smile)
Eric : Yes (serious)

Question 2: How do you feel after you received your exercise paper?

Ben : I am happy. I seldom got A- (smile and look at his other friends)
Izy : I like...I got A- (smile)
Eric : Good because I got A. (smile)

Question 3: Did you like it when I sat together with you and taught you personally in a small group? (Referring to the “up close and personal” approach)

- Ben* : *Yes. I can completed my exercise easily (looking straight to my face)*
- Izy* : *Yes. Because teacher was there to help me when I don't know (smile)*
- Eric* : *Yes. I hope teacher will do the same again in future (serious)*

Based on the input elicited from the interview, I would said that the three pupils were interested in the approach and thought that this approach had helped them to obtain excellent grade in their written exercise. Furthermore, they wanted me to use the same way of teaching for the coming lessons. “Up close and personal” approach is a proper approach to teach my pupils because I became close to them. They also felt more ‘secure’ when I sat with them. The learning process is more ‘pupil friendly’ and it is supposed to be like that if pupils are to have absolute interest in their learning.

5.0 REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

Through this action research, I have learnt a lot of things although this is my first action research. I have never been exposed to this kind of research and I felt very worried at the beginning. But now after I have been through the process, I felt very lucky because I have gained new knowledge and experience. I also learned how to identify my own weaknesses and what I should do about them. Other than that, I could think of suitable action(s) to improve or overcome the weaknesses. Despite that, I felt that this research was quite a burden to me due to time constraint and responsibility. But I kept trying to complete the research because I believed that it would be good to me and my pupils. I also learned to be critical and open-minded towards my own practice for the sake of my professional and self-development.

During the research which took place for about seven months, there were many obstacles that I had to face to ensure the successful completion of this research. The main obstacle was during the process of identifying my practice that I wanted to improve on in this research. It took me sometime to identify my own weaknesses because all this time, I only rely on other peoples’ comments and feedback. Not all people could admit their own weaknesses openly to others or publicly. However, due to the eagerness to learn and try new things, I was able to identify my weaknesses. The most important thing is to think positively. Now, I am more confident and contented with my own way of teaching. The second obstacle was regarding the number of pupils in the study. Initially, there were five pupils involved in

this study. Two of the pupils were transferred to another school in the middle of the year. Due to that problem, I had to reorganize my research plan. But as a researcher, I am ready to deal with it because problems do exist any time and any where. The third obstacle was my pupils' attendance in school. Because of this problem, I had to extend my collecting data schedule three times – two times because two of my pupils were absent at different days and once due to the monthly test. So, instead of three weeks, it became six weeks. But this kind of problem was out of my control and I just did what I had to do in order to collect my data.

The "up close and personal" approach that I had carried out during the research has shown me that my pupils could achieve beyond their ability if I am closer to them. Before this, I just taught them generally as a big group. Through personal approach, they felt very secure and they knew that, I, as their teacher care for and love them. So, they feel motivated and their interest towards learning increased. This helped them to be more hardworking and committed to their learning. That is why the three pupils until now keep showing their smiling and motivated face whenever I entered the class. They also became brave because they never hesitate to ask me when they are not sure. So, I have provided opportunity to my pupils to easily approach me when they need to. Before this, they seemed to be afraid to come to the front and ask me personally. Now, I keep wondering about the rest of the weak pupils in the class. What will happen if I use the same approach on the four weak pupils? Is the approach suitable for them? I have decided to keep using this approach and try out the approach with my four weak pupils.

In conclusion, as a teacher, I must be close and personal to my pupils so that they will feel that I care for and love them. Through this practice, I would create a positive environment for learning in the classroom. Pupils who ask when they do not know the lesson will learn something from the process compared to pupils who are afraid to ask. As long as that happen, active learning will not occur. So, be close and personal to the pupils.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akbar Bin Ibrahim. (2004). *Penyelidikan kualitatif: Satu pengenalan ringkas*. Kuching, Sarawak: PROFES.
- Arhar, J.M., Holly, M.L. & Kasten, W.C. (2001). *Action research for teachers: Traveling the yellow brick road*. Upper Saddle, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

- Bahagian Pendidikan Guru. (2001). *Garis panduan kursus penyelidikan tindakan untuk maktab/institut perguruan Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.
- Chuah Kim Hwa. (2007). *Teknik Pengumpulan data kualitatif penyelidikan tindakan*. Bahan Kursus/ Bengkel Penyelidikan Tindakan Peringkat Asas (Fasa II) Tahun 2007 di bawah Kursus Pendek Kelolaan Institut, Institut Perguruan Batu Lintang, 9-11 Mei 2007 di Pusat Kegiatan Guru, Sri Aman.
- Cresswell, J.W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Ferrance, E. (2000). *Action research*. United States of America: Brown University. Retrieved from http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/themes_ed/act_research.pdf on 20th April 2007.
- Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (1988). *The action research planner*. Geelong: Deakin University.
- Lundeborg, M.A., et al. (1997). Listening to each other's voices: Collaborative research about open meetings in classrooms. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 13(3), 311-324.
- Donner, M. (2001). *Staff and organization development: Classroom action research*. Retrieved from <http://www.madison.k12.wi.us/sod/car/carhomepage.html> on 12th March 2007.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research*. (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Ma Tzu-Lin Yang & Cobb, P. (1995). A cross-cultural investigation into the development of place-value concepts of children in Taiwan and the United States. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 28, 1-33.
- Ng Kim Choy. (2004). *Penyelidikan tindakan: Pengenalan*. Retrieved from <http://www.teachersrock.net/AR3.htm> on 12th March 2007.
- PALM. (1988-1990). *Supporting teacher development through action research: A PALM resource for advisory teacher*. Norwich: University of East Anglia.
- Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum. (2003). *Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Sains Tahun 1 KBSR*. Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.