

Siti Aishah Uno/ Using tactile flashcards to assist Year Two pupils in differentiating graphemes 'c' and 'ch' that correspond to phonemes /k/ and /tʃ/ in reading skills

USING TACTILE FLASHCARDS TO ASSIST YEAR TWO PUPILS IN DIFFERENTIATING GRAPHEMES 'c' AND 'ch' THAT CORRESPOND TO PHONEMES /k/ AND /tʃ/ IN READING SKILLS

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Abstract

An action research on phonics was carried out during my third practicum in an urban national primary school located in Kuching, Sarawak. The objectives of the research were to improve my teaching of graphemes 'c' and 'ch' that correspond to phonemes /k/ and /tʃ/, and to assist my pupils in differentiating the said phonemes by using tactile flashcards. My participants were four Year Two pupils with average English proficiency other than the researcher. The idea of tactile flashcards was initiated from Sensory Stimulation Theory by Laird (1985). I collected the data using observation (audio-video recording), document analysis, and interview with the pupils, teacher mentor and critical friends. The data collected were analysed, interpreted and triangulated based on the discussions with my critical friends and my teacher mentor. The findings showed that I have improved my teaching practice by using the tactile flashcards and my pupils could differentiate correctly the respective graphemes that correspond to the phonemes. The tactile flashcards could be integrated with other activities such as songs to achieve more meaningful teaching and learning.

Keywords: tactile, flashcards, sensory, phonics, stimulation

Abstrak

Penyelidikan tindakan berkaitan dengan fonik telah dijalankan semasa praktikum tiga di sebuah sekolah rendah kebangsaan di Kuching, Sarawak. Objektif penyelidikan tindakan ini dijalankan adalah untuk memperbaiki pengajaran dan pembelajaran huruf 'c' dan 'ch' yang berkaitan dengan fonem /k/ and /tʃ/ dalam kalangan murid Tahun Dua yang telah dikenal pasti mempunyai masalah membaca perkataan yang mempunyai huruf berkenaan. Peserta kajian terdiri daripada penyelidik sendiri serta empat orang murid Tahun Dua yang mempunyai kecekapan yang sederhana dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Idea kad imbasan sentuhan merupakan suatu inisiatif dari Teori Simulasi Deria yang dikemukakan oleh Laird (1985). Data kajian ini dikumpulkan melalui pemerhatian (rakaman audio visual), analisis dokumen serta temu bual dengan murid-murid, guru pembimbing dan rakan kritis. Data kajian dianalisis, diinterpretasi serta ditriangulasi berasaskan perbincangan dengan rakan kritis dan guru pembimbing. Hasil kajian mendapati kad imbasan jenis sentuhan membantu pengajaran saya. Murid-murid turut dapat membezakan dan membunyikan dengan betul huruf-huruf yang diberikan. Kad imbasan jenis sentuhan boleh diintergrasikan dengan aktiviti lain seperti nyanyian lagu untuk memperoleh pengajaran dan pembelajaran murid yang bermakna.

Kata kunci: sentuhan, kad imbasan, deria, fonik, simulasi

INTRODUCTION

Context

I am a trainee teacher in the Bachelor of Teaching Degree with Honour Program, majoring in Teaching English as Second Language for Malaysian primary education at Institute of Teacher Education Batu Lintang Campus (ITE BLC), Kuching, Sarawak. For ethic purpose, all names in this article are given pseudonyms. During my three months practicum in semester seven from 2nd February 2015 until 30th April 2015, I was assigned to teach Year Two class at SK Ladybird, Kuching. The class was a mixed-ability class with 29 pupils. It was a big challenge for me to teach because the gap in terms of proficiency level in that class was very wide. I had less than 10 pupils who were advanced pupils. The rest were intermediate pupils and about six to 10 pupils were under Literacy and Numeracy Screening Program (LINUS). In my class, there were more boys compared to girls (17 boys and 12 girls). I also taught Year Two at SK Sweet during my second practicum.

For both Year Two classes at SK Sweet and SK Ladybird, I used flashcards to teach phonics. It was because flashcards has been used widely in schools to teach phonics to children. In general, I varied the shapes of the flashcards with different colours to indicate different sounds during my lessons. After I implemented this in my class, I found that it has minimal effect. My pupils could only recognise the graphemes that correspond to the phonemes during the phonics lesson. When I revised the same sounds with the pupils after a period of time, they would repeat the same mistakes in pronouncing or reading the graphemes that correspond to the phonemes correctly.

Issue of Concern

My concern for lower primary pupils was their reading skills particularly in phonics. In my third practicum, the main issue that catches my attention in phonics was the pupils' difficulty in differentiating several phonemes such as grapheme 'c' that correspond to /k/ and grapheme 'ch' that correspond to /tʃ/ in English words. One possible factor that could have led to this issue was the influence of the participants' mother tongue. As I mentioned earlier, most of the pupils in this school speak English at home. Those pupils might not face problem in recognising or pronouncing the respective grapheme 'c' that corresponds to the phoneme /k/ and 'ch' that corresponds to phoneme /tʃ/. I administered a simple exercise with the pupils. The result of the exercise highlighted clearly this issue. It showed that my pupils had problem in differentiating grapheme 'c' that corresponds to phoneme /k/ and grapheme 'ch' that corresponds to phoneme /tʃ/ in English words (Figure 1).

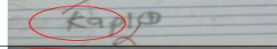
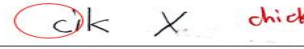
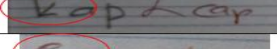

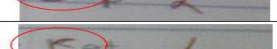


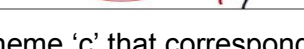
Grapheme 'c' that correspond to phoneme /k/	Grapheme 'ch' that correspond to phoneme /tʃ/
	
	
	
	

Figure 1. Mistakes of the grapheme 'c' that corresponds to phoneme /k/ and grapheme 'ch' that corresponds to phoneme /tʃ/ in pupils' exercise

In my action, I used flashcards to help my pupils in differentiating the grapheme 'c' that corresponds to phoneme /k/ and grapheme 'ch' that corresponds to phoneme /tʃ/ in English words. The flashcards represented each grapheme and phoneme. Each participant used the flashcards individually throughout the sessions. This research only focused on grapheme 'ch' that correspond to phoneme /k/. There are another two grapheme 'ch' that correspond to different phonemes /k/ for Greek origin words and /ʃ/ for French origin words. Addressing these sounds simultaneously would be confusing for the participants. Also, by knowing the basic grapheme 'ch' that corresponds to phoneme /k/ in English words, I believe pupils would find it easier to learn other phonemes /k/ and /ʃ/ of grapheme 'ch' in future.

Research Objectives

This study aimed to improve my teaching of graphemes 'c' and 'ch' that correspond to phonemes /k/ and /tʃ/ by using tactile flashcards among Year Two pupils. My second objective was to assist four Year Two pupils in differentiating the graphemes 'c' and 'ch' that correspond to phonemes /k/ and /tʃ/ by using tactile flashcards.

Research Questions

- This study was implemented to answer the following research questions.
- How does tactile flashcard improve my practice in teaching graphemes 'c' and 'ch' that correspond to phonemes /k/ and /tʃ/ among Year Two pupils?
 - How does tactile flashcards assist Year Two pupils' reading skill in differentiating grapheme 'c' that corresponds to phoneme /k/ and grapheme 'ch' that corresponds to phoneme /tʃ/?

ACTIONS

Planning and Implementation of Actions

In the teaching of phonics, the Sensory Stimulation Theory was viewed as the most significant theory and is applied in this research. Laird (1985) claimed that learning occurs when the five senses of sight, hearing, touch,

smell and taste are stimulated. Laird's theory also suggests that if multi-senses are stimulated, greater learning takes place. According to Laird, people learn 75 percent (%) through seeing, 13% through hearing, and 12% from touching, smelling, and tasting. By relating this theory to phonics, phonics involve sense of sight as seeing the graphemes, sense of hearing of the phonemes that correspond to the graphemes, and by adding another sense to teaching and learning phonics, the learning process would be more meaningful to the pupils. Our eyes see and perceive image(s) that stimulate the brain to understand its shape, size, colour and other physical characteristics while all other senses recognizes things differently according to its function.

In this research, three senses which are sense of sight, hearing and touch were stimulated. By adding sense of touch, the learning process would be more meaningful and effective. Looking into human as a special creature with five senses such as hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch, this study meant to see the effect of stimulation of three senses namely through sight, hearing and especially touch on pupils' reading. Gardner (2010, p1) defined touch as "direct contact between two physical bodies while in neuroscience, touch describes the special sense by which contact with the body is perceived in the conscious mind". This statement explains the idea of sense of touch that is closely related to brain. Scientifically, the sensory neurons transmit their signals to the thalamus and to several parts of the cerebral cortex. The specific location in the brain at which each sensory neuron synapses determines how the touch signal is interpreted. In short, it describes how sensory neurons connected works that sends messages and leaves an impact to the memory bank in the human brain. The connection connects really well in young children's brain. Brotherson (2009) has explained that children's brain will absorb new knowledge and information more easily during their childhood until adolescent than later stage in life. That is one of the reasons why the sense of touch was also manipulated in this study to Year Two pupils (8 years old children).

The implementation of action comprises three sessions including introductory activity. Three sessions were conducted and each session had three activities carried out. The activities named as first activity was 'Introduction to phonemes or words', second activity was 'Read and Touch' and lastly, 'Exercise'. Same activities were conducted in each session but with different words introduced to the pupils. The introductory activity was also addressed as Aladdin Magic Box activity that was conducted to allow pupils to get contact with the substances for the first time. They were also told clearly about the graphemes that correspond to the phonemes used in the activities. Each pupil were allowed to touch each substance and guess what it was. I also informed them about the substances that would be used in my action research. The substances used were cotton, punch waste and sand. The pupils were allowed to choose two substances and each of them

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got a pair of written graphemes 'c' and 'ch' on the paper. They prepared their own tactile flashcards for each graphemes to be used in the next session as shown in Figure 2.

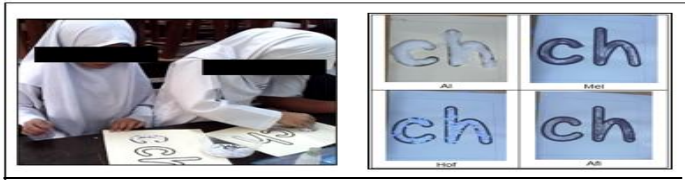


Figure 2. Pupils prepared their own tactile flashcards and samples of tactile flashcards prepared by the pupils

In activity one, I introduced phonemes or words for the session as a revision (Figure 3). For each session, three words with grapheme 'c' and three words with grapheme 'ch' (in total, six words for each session) were introduced. I modelled the reading of words and pupils followed my lead.



Figure 3. Teacher introduced the phonemes and words

For activity two, the pupils used the tactile flashcards in which this is where the Sensory Stimulation Theory was applied. Pupils read the phonemes then the words and associating the graphemes on the flashcards to the words simultaneously as shown in Figure 4. They were drilled to articulate the phonemes correctly by touching the tactile flashcards. They could touch the tactile flashcards with their fingertips or palm and moved their hands accordingly to the shape of the graphemes. They articulated one grapheme that corresponds to phoneme, one at one time. It took about five minutes per grapheme. When they were confident enough to proceed to the next session, they were assessed individually.



Figure 4. Pupils used the tactile flashcards

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The effect of action were reflected in this activity. In activity three, I conducted reading exercise with the pupils as shown in Figure 5.

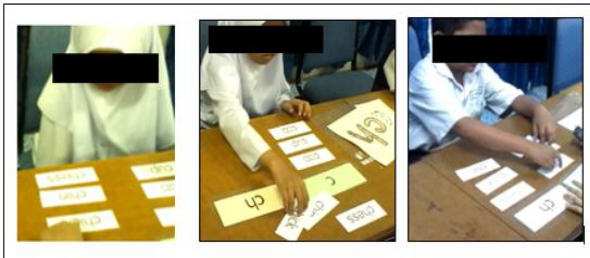


Figure 5. Reading exercise

They individually read to me the words and all are given three attempts. They used the tactile flashcards to assist them in reading and then gradually read the words independently. Their progress were assessed continuously until the end of the session. I also administered listening exercise once to gather feedback on their progress in learning and differentiating the graphemes that correspond to the phonemes. The results were recorded in audio recording and then transcribed.

METHODOLOGY

Research Participants

According to Whitehead (1993, 2000) (as cited in Mckniff & Whitehead, 2002), I need to reveal my educational development in my research write up. Therefore, it was significant for me to be involved as participant. I was the one who conducted the action taken in this research. I participated actively in collecting the data, analysing them and reporting the action taken at the end of the action research.

Other participants who were involved in this action research were four pupils from Year 2 Bestari, SK Ladybird. Two girls and two boys participated as the participants of this action research because they had the common problem in reading skill particularly in differentiating grapheme 'c' and 'ch' that correspond to the phonemes /k/ and /tʃ/. All of them are eight years old. They are Bumiputera pupils who do not speak English at home and have average proficiency level in English. They are given pseudonyms - Mel, Afi, Hof and Al. Mel is an Iban girl. She speaks Iban language at home. Afi is a Malay girl. She speaks Malay language at home. Hof is a Bidayuh boy and he speaks Bidayuh and English language at home. Alex is an Iban boy and speaks Iban at home.

Research Ethics

In order to protect my research participant's identity, I used pseudonym for each of them and also in addressing the school. This would help me to

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avoid any irrelevant issue regarding their personal details and misunderstanding or complication that may affect the process of conducting the action research and reporting the final result. Not only that, I blurred their faces in order to provide data as supporting evidences in this action research. I gave consent letters to several parties who were involved in the study for ethics purposes. This included the headmaster of the school, the English class teacher, the parents of the pupils and the selected pupils as the participants. They were fully aware of my actions in collecting data with the participants.

Data Collecting Methods

In this action research, I used three techniques to collect the data in order to answer my research questions. The techniques that I used were interview, observation and document analysis. For each technique, I prepared several suitable instruments to collect the data related to my study. For observation, I prepared an activity form to obtain feedback from the individual concerned such as my critical friend. I also prepared my own field notes to reflect and record events that happened during the implementation of action.

The next technique is interview. I prepared two sets of questions. My interviewee were the participants, my mentor and my critical friend. I posed six questions for each interviewee (mentor, critical friend and participants). I also prepared several documents to collect my data. I compared and contrasted the participant's result throughout the entire sessions. This technique was important for me to the effect of the action taken towards the teaching and learning process, particularly in differentiating grapheme 'c' that corresponds to phoneme /k/ and grapheme 'ch' that corresponds to phoneme /tʃ/ in English words. I also conducted listening exercise to assess the participants' progress.

Data Analysis Techniques

After I collected all the data I needed, I analysed the data by analysing each instrument and looked for the content and the patterns shown in the data obtained. Then, I interpreted the data I collected before I triangulated the data.

I analysed two instruments used during observation which are field notes and feedback in activity form. I analysed the content of the field notes that I had for each session. I also analysed the content of the feedback given in the activity form. The content that I analysed in each instrument is presented in Figure 6.

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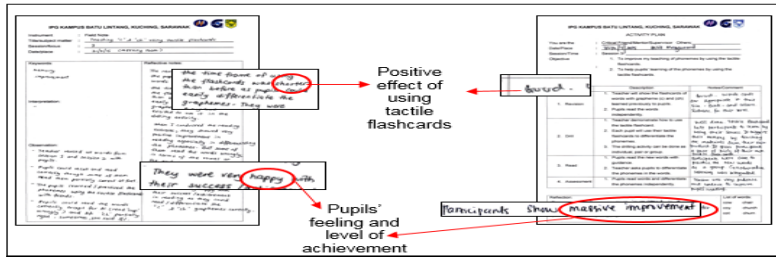


Figure 6. Sample of data analysis and interpretation

Based on Figure 6, I analysed words such as 'good' or 'shorter' that reflect on the positive effect of using tactile flashcards. I also looked for pupils' feeling such as 'happy' or 'bored' and level of achievement such as 'slightly' or 'massive' stated in both instruments.

The interview forms contain a set of questions for my mentor, critical friends and pupils. Each form contained six questions to be answered by each individual. I analysed the content and pattern of responses such as 'yes' or 'no' in the interview form. The analysis is done as shown in Figure 7.

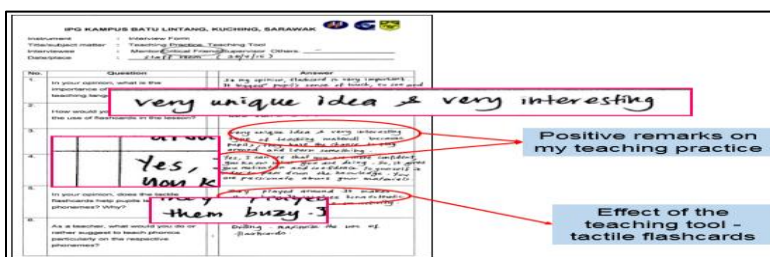


Figure 7. Interview instrument for mentor and critical friend

In the first set of questions which was for the mentor and critical friend, I analysed their answers that reflected the positive remarks on my teaching practice whether the tactile flashcards was a good idea or not in assisting the pupils in reading in addition to improving my teaching practice in general. Figure 8 shows data analysis and interpretation of the interview form for the pupils.

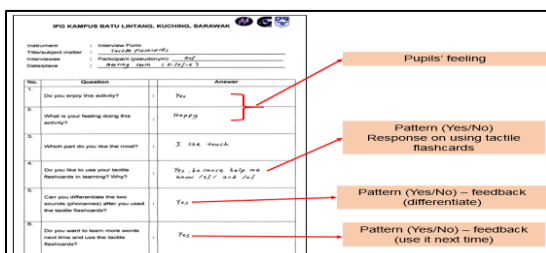


Figure 8. Interview instrument for pupils

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The set of questions for the pupils were analysed by looking into the pattern of the answers given such as on their feelings toward the activity conducted. The first question was a 'yes' or 'no' answer that indicated their feeling doing the activity. Then, I analysed the pupils' responses on using tactile flashcards, whether they like it or not. I also analysed their feedback with the answer 'yes' or 'no' to gather feedback on whether they can differentiate the graphemes that correspond to the phonemes using tactile flashcards. Their feedback on using the tactile flashcards were also analysed to indicate whether it was a good or bad sign as teaching tools in the lesson.

Based on the transcription sheet and exercise worksheet (listening), I analysed the content and pattern as shown in Figure 9.

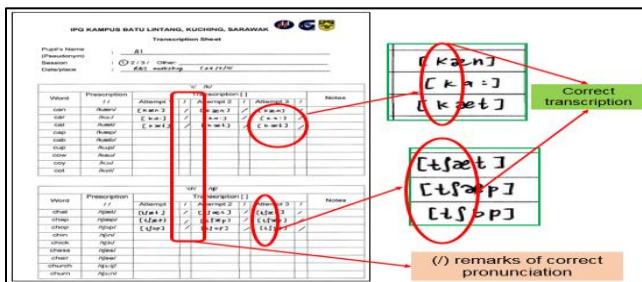


Figure 9. Data analysis on the transcription sheet

I evaluated their reading in differentiating the grapheme 'c' for phoneme /k/ and grapheme 'ch' for phoneme /tʃ/ in the English words based on the transcription obtained from the audio recording. I analysed the remarks of correct pronunciation (/) and the International Phonetic Alphabets (IPA, n.d.) transcription of each word read by the pupils. Not only that, I analysed the frequency of correct answers in their listening exercise as shown in Figure 10.

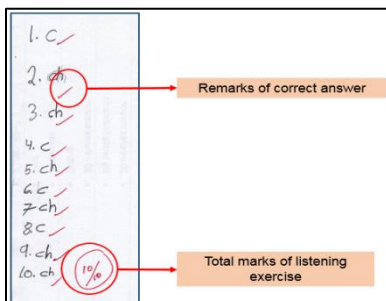


Figure 10. Listening exercise

I counted the remarks of correct answer for each pupil and the maximum marks would be 10 marks. The total mark of this exercise was recorded at

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the bottom of the paper and all the results of the pupils were tabulated into a table.

Data Checking Techniques

In order to validate the data I collected, I used time triangulation, method triangulation, and person triangulation. I chose these data checking techniques because it gave me a confirmation on the validity of the data collected. It was also to ensure that the data collected were comprehensive to be reported. I used time triangulation to determine the progress of the effect of the action in the action research. I compared each pupil's transcription sheets of every session to check on their progress throughout the action research. In method triangulation, I compared the data I gained from the field notes, feedback given on the activity plan, and also interview forms. I checked the data related to the use of tactile flashcards in these instruments. I also used person triangulation to check the effect of tactile flashcards to my teaching practice and pupils' reading. I compared the responses or feedback given by my mentor and critical friend which help me to check on the accuracy of the data collected for my report

FINDINGS

- **How does tactile flashcard improve my practice in teaching graphemes 'c' and 'ch' that correspond to phonemes /k/ and /t/ among Year Two pupils?**

Tactile flashcards improved my practice in teaching phonics among Year Two pupils because it was effective to be used in teaching two different graphemes that correspond to two different phonemes. Analysis from several instruments such as my field notes, feedback from my critical friend and answers in interview forms from mentor and critical friends showed positive impact of the action taken. Figure 11 is the field notes that I wrote in one of the sessions. Based on the field notes, I could identify few positive remarks on the effect of using tactile flashcards in the session.

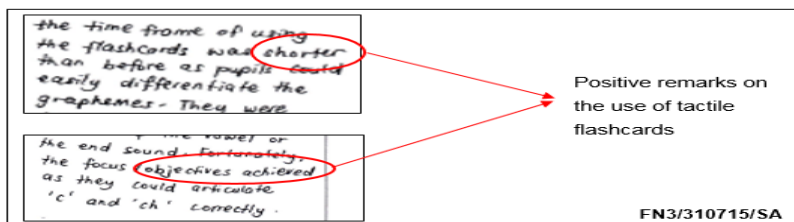


Figure 11. Field note excerpt on the use of tactile flashcards

Figure 11 shows positive effect of using tactile flashcards to teach phonics. It took a shorter time to teach the graphemes that correspond to the phonemes because the pupils could differentiate the graphemes. My

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field note also shows that my objectives were achieved in the session. Therefore, these positive remarks show pupils gave positive responses towards my teaching tool in teaching phonics.

Figure 12 shows the feedback given by my critical friend on the use of tactile flashcards.

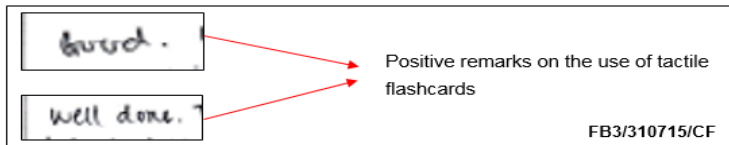


Figure 12. An excerpt of feedback by critical friend

These positive remarks indicated that the tactile flashcards were appropriately used to teach phonics. Figure 13 shows the positive response or remarks obtained from the interview with my mentor and critical friend on the tactile flashcards used to teach phonics.

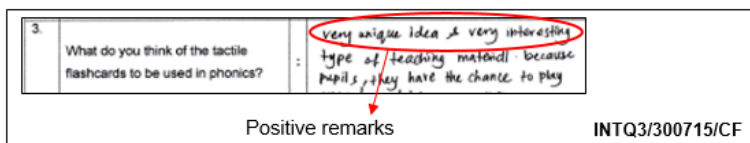


Figure 13. Interview excerpt to support the idea of using tactile flashcards in phonics

The idea of using tactile flashcards as shown in Figure 14 was said to be a unique idea.

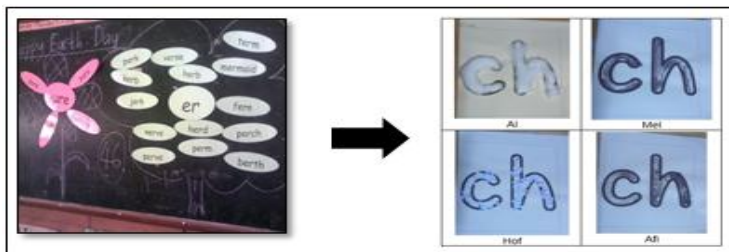


Figure 14. Example of flashcards produced by pupils

Unique flashcards helped me to teach phonics because I was able to monitor the pupils' progress individually and pupils were more focused in learning. It also helped in saving my time to manage them. Figure 15 depicts my mentor and critical friend's opinion on the effect of using tactile flashcards towards my teaching practice.

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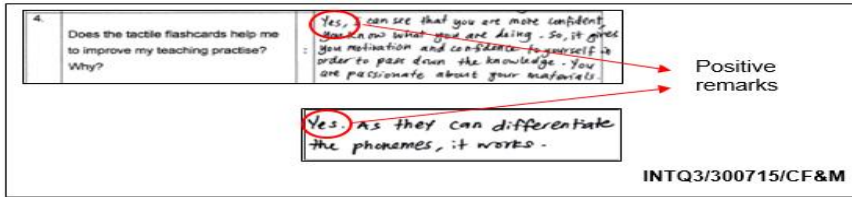


Figure 15. Interview excerpt on improvement in teaching practice

The positive pattern of answers 'yes' as shown in Figure 15 indicated that the tactile flashcards improved my teaching practice because they claimed my session went well, the pupils could differentiate the graphemes and I became more confident in teaching. It also indicated that the teaching tools used was effective in the lesson. Therefore, these findings suggest that my teaching practice improved from not effective to effective in terms of teaching phonics. The pupils' responses also support that the tactile flashcards improved my teaching practice because they said they liked to use the tactile flashcards during phonics lesson. This is shown in Figure 16.

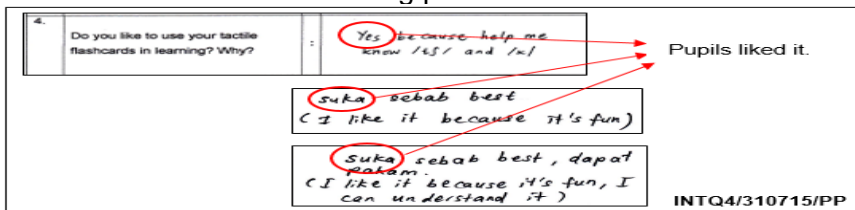


Figure 16. Pupils' responses on the use of tactile flashcards in phonics

Based on the pupils' feedback during interviews, the tactile flashcards were able to draw their interest in learning phonics. Therefore, I believed that tactile flashcards are good teaching tools to be used in the classroom as the pupils like it. Hence, it improved my teaching practice.

- **How does tactile flashcards assist Year Two pupils' reading skill in differentiating grapheme 'c' that corresponds to phoneme /k/ and grapheme 'ch' that corresponds to phoneme /t/?**

The tactile flashcards assisted Year Two pupils' reading skill in differentiating grapheme 'c' that corresponds to phoneme /k/ and grapheme 'ch' that corresponds to phoneme /t/ because the pupils' three senses which are sense of sight, hearing and touch as claimed by Laird (1985) in the Sensory Stimulation Theory were stimulated by the flashcards used. The effect of the action is reflected in the pupils' transcription sheets as they showed positive results as more ticks (✓) were marked on the transcription sheets (Figure 17).

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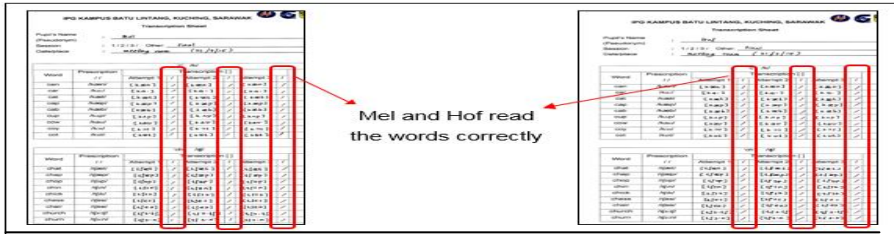


Figure 17. Result from one of Mel's and Hof's transcription sheets

Figure 17 shows that Mel and Hof read or particularly were able to differentiate the grapheme 'c' that corresponds to phoneme /k/ and grapheme 'ch' that corresponds to phoneme /t/. Based on the transcription recorded in the transcription sheet, both of them were able to articulate the graphemes that correspond to the phonemes correctly. This is contrast to Al and Afi as shown in Figure 18.

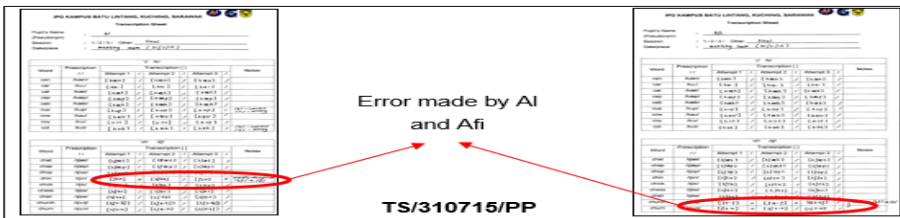


Figure 18. Result from one of Al's and Afi's transcription sheets

Figure 18 shows that Al and Afi made some errors in the reading exercise at the end of the session but these were their best recorded reading in differentiating the graphemes that correspond to the phonemes. They almost got all correct for their reading. Their progress is also reflected in their results of the listening exercise. It was essential to record this result because phonics also involved sense of hearing. When they were able to translate whatever they heard into print correctly, it shows that they were able to produce the mental image of the graphemes in their brain, in short, they were able to differentiate the graphemes correctly. The following shows their achievement in listening exercise.

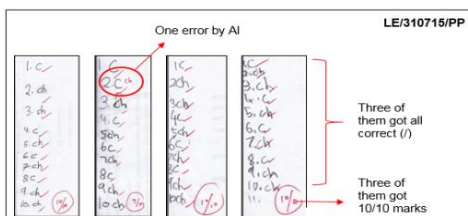


Figure 19. Listening exercise results

Their results were gathered in the Table 1. Each correct answer carried one mark and total marks should be 10 marks each pupil.

Table 1

Marks in Listening Exercise

Name	Marks
Mel	10/10
Hof	10/10
Afi	10/10
Al	9/10

Three of the pupils, Mel, Hof and Afi got full marks (10/10) for the listening exercise while only Al got 9/10 for this exercise. He made error in question number two. He might have misheard the word. Even though he was only able to get 9/10, he showed great improvement in differentiating the graphemes that correspond to the phonemes. From the initial data collected previously he got all wrong in the reading exercise as shown in Figure 20.

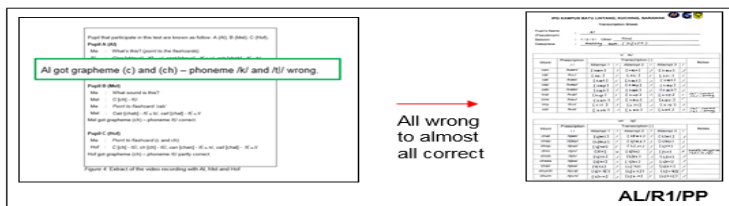


Figure 20. Al's progress

Initially, he read all the words with graphemes 'c' and 'ch' wrong but after he participated in this action research, he could read almost all correctly the words. This progress indicates that the application of Sensory Stimulation Theory worked well on him. Figure 21 shows the responses given by the pupils during interviews.

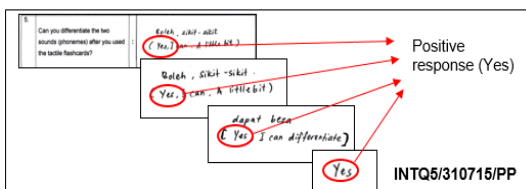


Figure 21. Pupils' responses

The responses given by the pupils are positive responses. All of them answered 'yes' that is, they could differentiate the graphemes that correspond to the phonemes after they used the tactile flashcards. Even though some of them said that they could differentiate a little bit but the effect of action shows the tactile flashcards assisted them in learning. My critical friend also claimed the same in her feedback as shown in Figure 22.

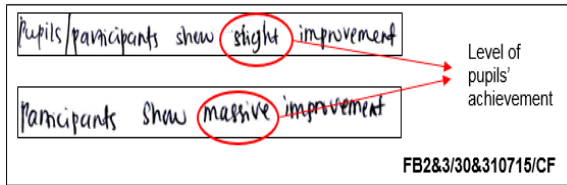


Figure 22. Feedback given by critical friend

Figure 22 shows that the pupils gradually and positively progressed in differentiating the graphemes that correspond to the phonemes, that was, from slightly improved to a 'massive' improvement. This suggests that the tactile flashcards were able to assist the pupils in differentiating the grapheme 'c' that corresponds to phoneme /k/ and grapheme 'ch' that corresponds to phoneme /t/.

REFLECTION

Summary of Findings

Based on the findings that I obtained, it is suggested that this research has positive impact on my teaching of phonics particularly in developing effective teaching tool to teach graphemes 'c' and 'ch' that correspond to phonemes /k/ and /t/. I had improved the flashcards that were used individually by the pupils which promotes autonomy in learning. The result of this study also suggests that tactile flashcards improved my personal teaching practice in relation to phonics (differentiating graphemes 'c' and 'ch' that correspond to phonemes /k/ and /t/) among Year Two pupils.

It also fortifies my educational value as a teacher and researcher. Interview conducted with my mentor and critical friend advocates that the teaching tool allows me to be creative in developing effective teaching tool for pupils through the Sensory Stimulation Theory (Laird, 1985) in which according to Laird, people learn 75% through seeing, 13% through hearing, and 12% from touching, smelling, and tasting.

This research also improved my assessment skill in assessing phonics lessons among the research participants. This is my first experience in using reading exercises to assess the pupils' phonics.

This research also have positive impact on my pupils. They had improved in reading skills particularly in phonics. They were able to differentiate graphemes 'c' and 'ch' that correspond to phonemes /k/ and /t/ correctly. The tactile flashcards allow the pupils to associate their sense of sight, hearing and touch in order to maximise their learning as claimed by Laird (1985). The tactile flashcards were able to assist their learning of the graphemes and phonemes as their sense of sight, hearing and touch were stimulated in the activities. Also as claimed by Nicholson (1998, p 188) said

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that "flashcards can help them (children) to build knowledge of these high-frequency words, which have to be known if children are to bootstrap themselves into reading of text". Therefore, the use of flashcards were appropriately done for the pupils learning particularly in reading skills. One of the pupils has shown great progress in his learning as he could differentiate the graphemes and phonemes almost correctly at the end of the session. Listening exercise analysed during this study reveals that the pupils progressed from having poor results in differentiation to high marks in the exercise. Three out of four pupils managed to perform with full marks in the listening exercise by the end of the last session.

FURTHER REFLECTION

This application of Stimulation Sensory Theory is not listed as one of the conventional methods in teaching phonics. As such, the implementation of the action had undergone few challenges. The first challenge would be my teaching style. As I purposely retain my teaching style, the progress of the pupils was slow and the pupils looked bored. I had to restructure a little bit the activities in order to maintain the pace for a positive progress.

I also noticed that the tactile flashcards is quite restricted. Pupils only used the tactile flashcards in the first and second activity in every session. The usage of the tactile flashcards was not fully maximise during the learning process. The pupils only used it for reading session. The tactile flashcards only acted as an aid to their learning in differentiating the graphemes that correspond to the phonemes. In retrospect, the tactile flashcards allow pupils to learn by stimulating their senses. It is one of the key criteria in the Sensory Stimulation Theory. One of the participants actually really like the second activity which is Read and Touch activity. Therefore, he could performed well in this activity and produced great result at the end of the session.

One of the limitations of this tactile flashcards is the durability of the tactile flashcards. In this sense, the pupils had to be careful and kept fixing their tactile flashcards. Therefore, the tactile flashcards may not be used for a longer time. Other materials such as the quality of the glue and paper should be taken into consideration to sustain the flashcards longer. As an English language teacher, I found that this research is crucial for young learners particularly in learning phonetics. It is because many words in the English language could be pronounced differently even though they are spelled with the same alphabets. I was also able to be more creative and innovative in producing effective teaching aids for the lessons. Through this action research, I could sharpen my skills in teaching in order to be a 21st century teacher. I also became more sensitive to my pupils' needs in the classroom as they have diverse backgrounds and interests. I also learned to accept the fact that not all plans could be successful during implementation.

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I accepted my failure and weaknesses and should be able to overcome them professionally. This research has taught me to be an action researcher and gave me new experiences as a researcher for the very first time. I was able to apply learning theories in research as well as in teaching and learning with deeper understanding through practical practices. I was able to discover the strengths and weaknesses of my innovation and action for improvement of my practices. I also discovered new knowledge through self-discovery and interaction with people around me throughout the whole process of research.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE NEXT CYCLE

I would like to provide a few suggestions for the next cycle when I am posted to school. I would study or apply other appropriate teaching act (style) to support the teaching tool used in this research. Only then, the pupils could learn better and not bored with my lessons. Next, in the classroom context, for an effective tactile flashcards, I would like to integrate other element or activity such as rhyme, music and jazz chant. It would create fun learning environment for the pupils. I would also like to consider pupils' learning styles (Gardner, 1986), such as kinaesthetic learners in choosing the participants for the next research. In the next cycle, I would also like to improve on the durability of the tactile flashcards, so that the cards can be used for a longer period of time. I would like to use other materials that could stick longer on the flashcards as this would save money and resources as well. Using tactile flashcards might be suitable for the beginner teacher in teaching pupils as the teacher could establish rapport with the pupils through hands-on activity like this one.

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