

Pui Kuet Poh/ Reflective learning on data collecting methods used in implementing action research related to improving Year Four pupils' pronunciation of long vowels

REFLECTIVE LEARNING ON DATA COLLECTING METHODS USED IN IMPLEMENTING ACTION RESEARCH RELATED TO IMPROVING YEAR FOUR PUPILS' PRONUNCIATION OF LONG VOWELS

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Abstract

I would like to discuss my reflective learning on data collecting methods used in my action research entitled "Using Emoji word slide and Bingo game to improve pronunciation of long vowel /i:/ among Year Four pupils". The participants comprised five Year Four pupils with average English proficiency and I, the researcher. I have used observation and interviews to obtain the effect of action data. However, I propose to explore more on using document analysis as another form of data collecting method in my future research study.

Keywords: reflective learning, observation, interview, document analysis, data collecting methods

Abstrak

Saya ingin membuat refleksi pembelajaran saya tentang teknik mengumpul data yang digunakan dalam penyelidikan tindakan saya yang bertajuk "Using Emoji word slide and Bingo game to improve pronunciation of long vowel /i:/ among Year Four pupils". Peserta kajian terdiri daripada saya dan lima orang murid Tahun Empat yang mempunyai tahap penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris yang sederhana. Saya telah mengumpul data melalui pemerhatian dan temu bual. Namun, saya bercadang untuk menggunakan analisis dokumen sebagai satu kaedah mengumpul data bagi kajian pada masa akan datang.

Kata kunci: refleksi pembelajaran, pemerhatian, temu bual, analisis dokumen, kaedah mengumpul data

INTRODUCTION

Context

I am a trainee teacher from the Institute of Teacher Education Batu Lintang Campus (ITE BLC), majoring in Teaching English as Second Language (TESL). In order to protect the rights of all parties, all the names of the schools, teachers and pupils used are pseudonyms. In January 2015, I was assigned to SJK Chung Hua Ara for my third phase of practicum, which is also a sub-urban school in Kuching, Sarawak. I was assigned to teach the Year Four class, with 30 mixed ability pupils in my class. Also in that class, I conducted my action research titled "Using Emoji word slide and Bingo game to improve pronunciation of long vowel /i:/ among Year Four pupils" (Pui, 2015).

The selection of my research participants was done through purposive sampling. In other words, I intentionally handpicked my research participants based on certain characteristics (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2007). In order to select my research participants, I collected the initial data from interviews and document

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analysis. From the interview, my teacher mentor recommended to me five participants who have average English proficiency. I also obtained the previous exam results from the assistant headmistress to confirm that they have average English proficiency. To further confirm the selection of the five participants, I conducted a memory game session on 6 February 2015.

The findings of the memory games session showed that five of pupils faced pronunciation problems in the long vowel /i:/ as corresponds to the letter 'ea'. Instead, they pronounced the words using the short vowel /ɪ/.

Reflection on Experiences in Conducting Action Research

The research was conducted to improve my own practices in teaching pronunciation of long vowel /i:/, to my Year Four classroom, as well as to improve five of my pupils' pronunciation of long vowel /i:/ using Emoji word slide and Bingo game. The Emoji word slide was designed based on Fleming and Baume's Visual Auditory Read/write Kinaesthetic (VARK) model (2006). I provided support to my participants in these four learning modalities because they will learn more effectively if they are taught in their preferred modality. For instance, the Emoji visual that corresponds to the lip shape in producing the long vowel /i:/ benefited the visual learners. Besides, I myself was the model of pronunciation for my auditory learners. For read/write learners, I printed the words on word cards with the targeted graphemes highlighted in red. Next, for kinaesthetic learners, the action of holding the Emoji word slide and sliding the word card made them remember the sound better.

I totally agree with the Affective Filter Hypothesis proposed in Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition (2009) as it in line with my personal theory of teaching English. He argued that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, positive self-image, and low anxiety level are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. These factors allow the affective filter to lower for the input to 'strike deeper' and be acquired (Du, 2009). Hence, as a follow-up activity, I used the Bingo game to facilitate me in assessing my participants' pronunciation of the long vowel /i:/. This was because the Bingo game provided my pupils abundant opportunities to practice pronouncing the long vowel /i:/ rather than just merely listening. In fact, this also in line with the Thorndike's Law of Exercise (1911).

Objective of Article

This article is written with the aim of reflecting on my experience in using observation and interview as my data collecting methods when I implemented an action research titled "Using Emoji word slide and Bingo game to improve pronunciation of long vowel /i:/ among Year Four pupils".

RESEARCH METHOD

Data Collection Techniques

In relation to my action research, I have used observation and interview to collect the effect of action data (Figure 1).

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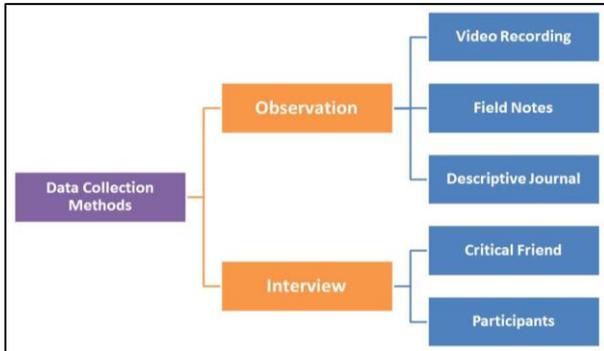


Figure 1. Data collection methods and tools used

Observation

Observation refers to a process whereby a researcher gathers open-ended and first-hand information from observing the people and places at a research site (Creswell, 2012). For observation, I have used several tools to assist me in obtaining the data. I used video recording to review my teaching and my participants' behaviour when the action was implemented. Pictures were then snapshot from the video to indicate the important process of the action (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Sample of photo snapshot from the video recording

Also from the video recording, I was able to review and transcribe my participants' pronunciation of the six words with long vowel /i:/ using International Phonetics Alphabets (IPA) (1886). This is to show the sound quality of the words pronounced by my participants. Sample of the IPA transcription of my participants' pronunciation is shown in Figure 3.

Participants	Words with long vowel /i:/					
	read	leaf	lead	seat	bean	bead
	/ri:d/	/li:f/	/li:d/	/si:t/	/bi:n/	/bi:d/
Alison	[ri:d]	[li:t]	[li:d]	[si:t]	[bi:n]	[bi:d]

Figure 3. Sample of the IPA transcription of my participants' pronunciation

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Besides, I wanted to explore my own teaching in this research too. In relation to this, I asked my critical friend to observe my teaching while filling in the field notes. The field notes were written in a form (Figure 4).

Field Notes		Date: 23/2/2015
Observation	Remarks	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 students had been selected and being exposed to the game a smiley image. • Some students especially the one female student, Alan seems not to understand the instruction given by me. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students looks happy when they saw the smiley. • English language proficiency of the students are not very good. 	

Figure 4. Sample of Timothy's field note

I also used descriptive journal to note down the significant event reviewed in the video recording and my personal reflections on the descriptive journal (Figure 5).

Journal			Date: 26 February 2015
Video 1			
Runtime	Observation	Remarks	
03:20	I asked for volunteer for the next word, no one raised hand, I asked Catherine, she smiled.	afraid of trying willing to take risk	
03:31	When Catherine slid the EWS, Jacky, Alison and Alva smiled.	happy? excited to see friends using the EWS.	

Figure 5. Sample of my descriptive journal

Interview

Johnson and Christensen (2012) describe interview as a method in data collection in which the researcher asks questions to the research participants. I conducted semi-structured interview to both my research participants and my critical friend. The interview sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed into words for analysis purposes later.

In order to find out the effects of Emoji word slide and Bingo game on my pupils, I have prepared a set of questions (Figure 6) in guiding and obtaining my pupils' responses. The responses were then tabulated and I also did frequency count for the responses given (Figure 7).

1. Do you like the Emoji word slide? Why?
2. Do you enjoy the Bingo game that you have just played? Why?
3. Do you still remember some of the words you have just learn from the Emoji word slide and Bingo game?

Figure 6. Interview questions for my participants

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Questions	Responses		Remarks
1. Do you like the Emoji word slide? Why?	Yes	5	<i>funny, cute</i>
	No	0	

Figure 7. Sample of interview responses given by participants

Besides, I also interviewed my critical friend to explore the effects of my teaching and the teaching aids that I have used in the action with a set of questions prepared (Figure 8).

1. Do you think my teaching of pronunciation is effective? Why?
2. Do you think my participants understand my teaching better when I used the Emoji word slide?
3. Do you think the Bingo game can further facilitate my participants' pronunciation? Why?

Figure 8. Interview questions for my critical friend

REFLECTIVE LEARNING

Evaluation on the Data Collecting Methods Used

In my action research, I have used observation and interview to collect the effect of action data. During observation, with the help of video camera, significant events after the action was implemented were captured. Aside from the verbal responses given by my research participants, non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions, gestures and participation were also captured in the video camera. By triangulating these data collected, I was able to better explore the effect of my teaching of long vowel /i:/ on my participants using the Emoji word slide and Bingo game. Besides, interview has also assisted me as in terms of what to ask my research participants and my critical friend. For example, in my action research, I have a set of questions for my participants and critical friend so as to collect the required data to answer both of my research questions, which was to explore my own teaching as well as my pupils' learning of pronunciation of long vowel /i:/ using the Emoji word slide and Bingo game.

However, I believe that my action research can be enhanced further if I could use another form of data collection method, which is document analysis. By triangulating with another source of data, I believe the credibility and trustworthiness of the research can be enhanced.

SELF-LEARNING

This action research has impacted me as a trainee teacher. The process of being a researcher has trained me to be a more observant person. However, this did not mean that I did not observe during my previous teaching practices. However, I was just merely 'looking' instead of observing. In other words, I did not reflect as why my pupils behaved in a certain way. Also, it was because I did not record the whole process hence I had problems recalling the incident.

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Through this action research, I realised that there are different tools that can be used in data collection, especially observation. Field notes and reflective journals were the new tools that I have used in action research. I found them useful in jotting the events that happened as well as my reflection and thoughts regarding the events. By doing this, eventually I can be more critical in looking and analysing the events that has happened.

SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT CYCLE

In my future research, I would suggest to add document analysis as another method in data collection. Document analysis refers to any public or private records that a research obtained from site or participants in a study (Creswell, 2012). In addition, examples of document can be lesson plans, textbooks, participants' drawings and report cards.

The rationale of using document analysis in my next cycle of this research is because my pupils actually produce some kind of document after the action has been introduced. However, I did not analyse the document obtained. In the follow-up activity introduced, my participants actually filled in the Bingo game sheet with the words that they have learnt (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Sample of my participant's Bingo game sheet

After referring to the Bingo game sheet, I believe the game sheet can also be used as a form of data. In order to play this Bingo game, my participants is required to listen and identify the words heard so as to tick and colour the letters B-I-N-G-O. As a result, this Bingo game sheet provided feedback on whether my participants can correctly discriminate the targeted phoneme in the words heard. Realising this strength in my Bingo game sheet, I would like to use document analysis, especially Bingo game sheet, in my next cycle of this study.

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