

USING INTERACTIVE BOOK TO IMPROVE YEAR FOUR PUPILS' SKILL IN ANSWERING INTERROGATIVE QUESTIONS

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Abstract

This is an action research conducted using an interactive book to overcome the issue of syntax in answering interrogative questions among Year Four pupils in a semi-urban school located not far from Kota Sentosa, Kuching. The research aimed to improve my teaching practice and my pupils' skill in answering interrogative questions (when, where and who). Other than I, the researcher, five pupils (three boys and two girls) were involved as participants. The interactive book was designed based on the audio-lingual method. The interactive book placed emphasis on aural-oral skills; indirect repetition and drilling; the use of the target language only; immediate correction of errors and student-centered approach. The data were obtained through observation and document analysis. The data collected were analyzed, interpreted and triangulated with the help of my critical friend and teacher mentor. The research findings indicated that the issue of syntax in answering interrogative questions of "when", "where" and "who" was resolved through interactive book. The book also improved my teaching related to the skill in answering interrogative questions. Future research may examine the effectiveness of the interactive book in teaching another three types of "wh-" interrogative question ("how", "which" and "why").

Keywords: Interactive book, interrogative questions, syntax, audio-lingual method

Abstrak

Kajian tindakan ini telah dijalankan di sebuah sekolah rendah kebangsaan yang terletak di Kota Sentosa, Kuching. Kajian ini melibatkan penggunaan buku interaktif untuk mengatasi isu sintaks dalam menjawab soalan soal dalam kalangan murid Tahun Empat. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menambah baik amalan pengajaran saya serta meningkatkan kemahiran murid dalam menjawab soalan soal (bila, di mana dan siapa). Selain saya selaku penyelidik, lima orang murid (tiga murid lelaki dan dua murid perempuan) terlibat sebagai peserta kajian. Buku interaktif ini telah dihasilkan berdasarkan kaedah audio-bahasa. Buku interaktif ini telah memberi penekanan pada kemahiran aural-oral; pengulangan secara tidak langsung dan latih tubi; penggunaan bahasa sasaran sahaja; pembedaan segera dan berpusatkan pelajar. Data kajian ini telah dikumpulkan melalui pemerhatian dan analisis dokumen dan telah dianalisis, diinterpretasikan serta ditriangulasi melalui perbincangan dengan rakan kritis dan guru mentor saya. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa isu sintaks dalam menjawab soalan soal "bila", "di mana" dan "siapa" telah berjaya diatasi melalui buku interaktif. Buku ini turut menambah baik amalan pengajaran saya berkaitan dengan pengajaran kemahiran menjawab soalan soal. Untuk kajian lanjutan, saya boleh mengkaji keberkesanan buku interaktif ini dalam mengajar tiga jenis soalan soal yang lain ("bagaimana", "yang mana" dan "mengapa").

Kata kunci: Buku interaktif, soalan soal, sintaks, kaedah audio-bahasa

INTRODUCTION

Context

I am a student teacher from the Bachelor of Teaching with Honour Degree Program (PISMP), majoring in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). Throughout the degree years, I was exposed to different types of teaching program such as school-based experience and practicum. I had gone through three phases of practicum at three different national primary schools located in the Padawan district. Recently, I just finished my third practicum at a national primary school located not far from Kota Sentosa, Kuching. The pupils in the school comprised Bidayuh, Malay and Chinese. Their medium of communication since young are Malay, Bidayuh and Iban for the natives. English language is a foreign language for them, a language that they could hardly understand. Their English language proficiency level was mostly average and only children from well-educated families were proficient in using the language. As for the Literacy and Numeracy Program (LINUS) pupils, they were mostly very weak in using the language in class.

Research Focus

The teaching and learning of English language is not an easy task. Since I was still a pre-service teacher, I found that it was impossible to carry out a perfect lesson which every pupil in my class can achieve the learning objectives.

I faced a lot of challenges in my teaching, and one of the challenges was that the pupils had common issue in using the correct syntax in answering interrogative questions. Syntax is the grammatical structure of words and phrases require to create coherent sentences. Normally, in answering an interrogative question, we use simple sentence which follows a subject-verb format as it has a subject, verb and object (Eastwood, 2005). Since I had no experience in teaching, the teaching technique that I had practiced in getting the pupils to know how to form a grammatical sentence during my first two phases of practicum was "chalk and talk". But, it was a failure. Based on Piaget's cognitive development theory, children who are from seven years old to 11 years old are in the concrete operational stage (McLeod, 2015). Piaget considered the concrete stage a major turning point in the child's cognitive development, because it marks the beginning of logical or operational thought. But, one of the limitations of concrete operational thought is they are able to think in an organized fashion only when dealing with concrete information. They are not capable of abstract thinking yet. Forcing the pupils to understand the concept of syntax had caused some pupils to feel frustrated and even demotivated to learn. Literally, I had killed their interest in learning the English language. Figure 1 shows two samples of the pupils' work that I had obtained during my first two phases of practicum.



Figure 1. Samples of the pupils' work from the first practicum (left) and second practicum (right)

During the third practicum, I observed that the same problem occurred among my pupils. Thus, I had decided to deal with this problem with other teaching method. The selection of my research participants was through the observation that I had carried out in class and through document analysis based on their exercises. Figure 2 shows a sample of a pupil's work during the third phase of practicum.

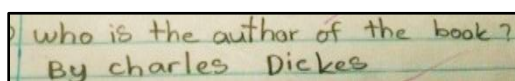


Figure 2. A sample of the pupils' work

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to explore how the interactive book assist Year Four pupils in answering interrogative questions (when, where and who); and to explore how the interactive book improve my teaching practice related to the teaching of skill in answering interrogative questions (when, where and who) among Year Four pupils.

Research Questions

This research aimed to answer the following research questions.

- How does the use of interactive book assist Year Four pupils in answering interrogative questions?
- How does the use of interactive book improve my teaching practice related to the teaching of skill in answering the interrogative questions among Year Four pupils?

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION

Action Plan

An action research can be done to help teachers find interesting and effective ways to overcome issues or problems faced by pupils in learning language (Sagor, 2000). Thus, I had carried out an action research to solve the issue that the pupils faced.

Research done by Mol, Bus and de Jong (2009) on "Interactive Book Reading in Early Education: A Tool to Stimulate Print Knowledge as well as Oral Language" found that interactive books encourage children to be actively involved before, during, and after joint book reading. The interactive book can foster children's language and promote literacy development.

Apart from that, Krashen believed that a number of 'affective variables' play a facilitative, but non-causal role in second language acquisition (Schütz & Kanomata, 2017). These variables include motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Krashen claimed that learners with high self-confidence and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition.

Gardner (1983) (in Brualdi, 1996) proposed a new view of intelligence that is rapidly being incorporated in school curricula. In his Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Gardner believed that different people possess different intelligence (Brualdi, 1996). For instance, people with visual intelligence usually learn visually and organize ideas spatially.

Aural-lingual method (ALM) places its emphasis on aural-oral skills; emphasis on repetition and drilling; the use of the target language only; immediate correction of errors and teacher-centred approach (Chitravelu, Sithamparam, & Teh, 2005). Drills used to teach structural patterns and grammatical explanations should be kept to a minimum.

In my action research, I considered all the theories stated in coming up with the interactive book. The interactive book consists of pictures that facilitates visual learners in answering the interrogative questions asked. The repetitive nature of the book provided drilling to participants in using the same sentence structure in answering the interrogative questions. I used simple English language to help the weak learners in order to boost their confidence in learning.

Implementation of Action Plan

I had chosen the interactive book to help the participants to use complete sentences in answering interrogative questions (when, where and who) and to improve my teaching practice. Figure 3 shows the cover of the interactive book that I had designed.



Figure 3. My interactive book

The repetitive nature of the interactive book on the correct sentence structure used in answering interrogative question provided indirect drilling in written form to the participants. It is to help the participants internalize the correct sentence structure that need to be used in answering interrogative questions (refer to Figure 4).

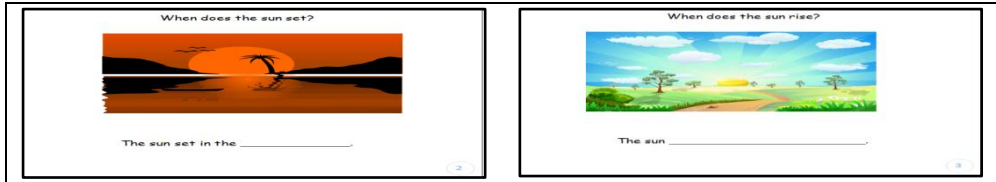


Figure 4. The repetitiveness of the same sentence structure used in answering the interrogative questions through the guided answers

The implementation of the proposed action was based on an adaptation of Lewin's (1946) and Laidlaw's (1992) action research model. In this research, I had conducted two cycles to implement the action planned.

Cycle 1. In the first cycle, I had conducted three sessions on three different days, which were 27th February 2017, 20th March 2017 and 17th April 2017. I used the interactive book in helping the pupils acquire the skill in answering interrogative questions of "who", "when" and "where". I had applied the same steps in implementing the action planned for every session which included preparation stage, practice stage and follow-up activity. In the preparation stage, I had asked simple related interrogative questions to the participants as a lead-in. Then, Test 1 (initial test) was administered to them. After they had completed Test 1, we moved to the practice stage. For the first session, I conducted shared reading using the interactive book designed by me in guiding them on how to use the book. I also guided them in answering the interrogative questions asked in the book. For other sessions, the participants could use the interactive book independently without my guidance. As for the follow-up activity, they were asked to answer Test 2 (post action test). Figure 5 shows the implementation of action during Cycle 1.



Figure 5. Involvement of my participants in the first cycle of action research

Cycle 2. The second cycle was carried out to reconfirm the Cycle 1 research findings. At this time, I had designed another set of interactive book and three different test papers based on the three types of interrogative questions that I focused on. The participants were tested directly after they had read the interactive book. Figure 6 shows the involvement of my participants in the Cycle 2 action research.

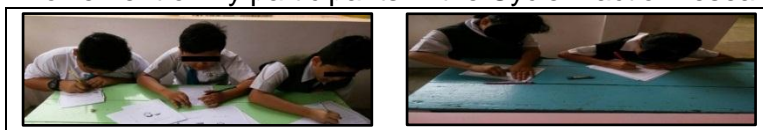


Figure 6. Participants in the Cycle 2 action research

METHODOLOGY

Research Participants

For this action research, I was one of the research participants. I acted as a participant observer. As the word 'participant' suggests, the researcher participates in the activities of the persons being observed rather than being an observer (Kawulich, 2005). I had two roles – as an observer and a participant. I had participated as much as possible in the implementation of the action to observe the effect of the interactive books in overcoming the issue of syntax in answering interrogative questions among the pupils. For this action research, I had chosen five participants (three boys and two girls). Two out of the three boys (Safan and Loren-pseudonyms) have average English language proficiency whereas Jason was placed at the low proficiency level. As for the two girls, one of them was considered as an average learner whereas the other one was considered as weak. But, they all have a common first language which is Bidayuh, except for Loren who spoke both Bidayuh and Iban as his first language. All the five pupils were talkative and playful in class.

Research Ethics

In conducting this action research, I was aware and made sure that I adhere to the fundamental ethical standards in research. I had sought permission in terms of obtaining informed consent as well as written consent. The written consent was to ensure that the participants are clear with the procedures and could easily refer to them. I used pseudonyms to ensure my participants' information was not revealed. I blurred the participants' faces in the photos to protect their privacy.

Data Collection Methods

Observation. Observation of a field setting involves prolonged engagement in a setting or social situation with clearly expressed, and self-conscious notations of how observing is done. This is to develop a full understanding of the setting of interest. Thus, one needs to record the observation (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). For each session, I made an on-going observation and wrote field notes regarding my participants' progress. I observed their facial expression, behaviour, involvement and their progress in learning how to answer interrogative questions using the interactive book.

Document Analysis. I had used document analysis in collecting data related to my research. I used Test 1 (initial test) and Test 2 (post action test) for analysis to determine the improvement of the participants. The test papers were further analysed for pertinent data. In addition, in order to know the participants' feeling and thought towards the action, I provided feedback forms to them.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is a systematic process of searching and arranging the data collected to increase one understanding and then presented on what were discovered to others (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). After I had collected the data from various sources, I analysed them to derive my findings. I had used both qualitative and quantitative data analysis in analyzing the data collected during the implementation of the proposed action. For qualitative data, I had analysed the field notes that I wrote while observing my participants in reading the interactive book. Besides, I also analysed the feedback given by the participants on their feelings and opinion related to the interactive book used. All pertinent or relevant data entries were highlighted so that a common theme could be generated from them.

As for the quantitative data, I collected the required data from Test 1 and Test 2. Then, I tabulated the number of questions that were correctly answered. The differences in terms of the number of correct answers from both tests allow me to map the participants' progress in this action research.

Data Checking Techniques

Triangulation facilitates validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources. It tests the consistency of findings obtained through different instruments. Therefore, I had used two types of data triangulation which were person triangulation and method triangulation.

Firstly, I did person triangulation, whereby I had discussions with my critical friend on the research findings. She also discussed her findings on the participants' involvement and achievement based on her observation of each session of the research.

I also used method triangulation for checking the consistency of the findings generated by different data collecting methods. The pupils' test papers (Test 1 and Test 2) were triangulated with my own field notes and my critical friend's feedback form.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

- **How does the use of interactive books assist Year Four pupils in answering interrogative?**

All in all, I had carried out three sessions in implementing the use of interactive books, involving the three types of interrogative questions, "when", "where" and "who" respectively. Before I carried out each session, I had carried out Test 1. After I had implemented the action in the three sessions, I carried out Test 2 to compare the scores of both test in order to determine the effect of the interactive book on the participants' answers

related to interrogative questions. Table 1 shows the test scores gained by the participants.

Table 1

Participants' Test 1 and Test 2 Scores

Name (Pseudonyms)	Number of Correct Answers					
	Interrogative question – “when”		Interrogative question – “where”		Interrogative question – “who”	
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 1	Test 2	Test 1	Test 2
Jason	0	5	0	4	0	5
Loren	0	5	0	5	0	5
Safan	0	5	2	5	0	4
Sally	0	5	0	4	0	5
Sandy	0	5	0	5	0	5

A comparison of Test 1 and Test 2 scores was done to explore the effect of the interactive book on the participants' skill in answering interrogative questions using complete sentence. Figure 7 until Figure 9 shows the comparison between Test 1 and Test 2 for each type of interrogative question “when”, “where” and “who” respectively.

Figure 7 shows the comparison of the number of correct answers given by the participants for interrogative questions of “when” in Test 1 and Test 2.

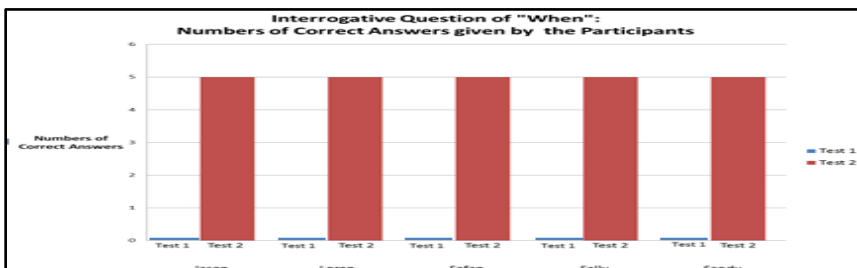


Figure 7. Number of correct answers for the interrogative question of “when” in Test 1 and Test 2

None of the participants were able to give correct answers for the interrogative questions of “when” for Test 1. However, in Test 2, all of them showed improvement and were able to answer all the five questions correctly.

Figure 8 shows the comparison of the number of correct answers given by the participants for interrogative questions of “where” in Test 1 and Test 2.

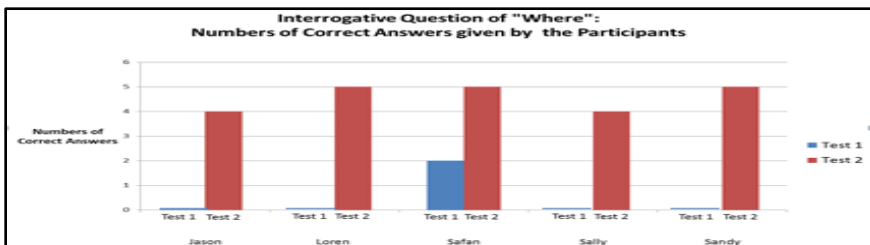


Figure 8. Number of correct answers for the interrogative question of "where" in Test 1 and Test 2

Initially, none of the participants were able to give the correct answers for the interrogative questions of "where" except for Safan who was able to answer two questions correctly in Test 1. But, in Test 2, all of the participants showed improvement in answering the interrogative question. Jason and Sally were able to answer four questions correctly, whereas Loren, Safan and Sandy were able to answer all the five questions correctly.

Figure 9 shows the comparison of the number of correct answers given by the participants for interrogative questions of "who" in Test 1 and Test 2.

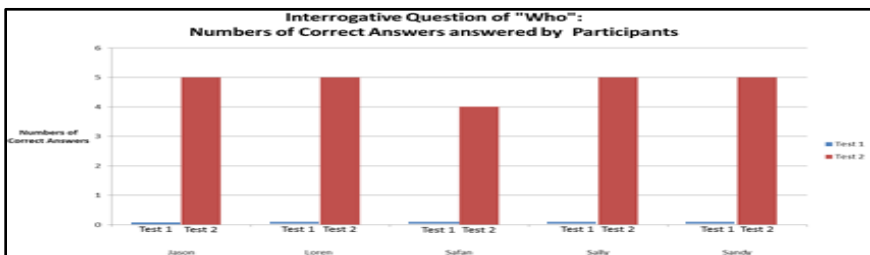


Figure 9. Number of correct answers for the interrogative question of "who" in Test 1 and Test 2

All participants failed to answer any of the interrogative questions of "who" correctly in Test 1. Eventually, after the implementation of the action related to interactive book, four of them were able to answer all the five questions correctly in Test 2 as shown in Figure 9. Safan managed to answer four questions correctly.

Based on the data from Table 1, Figure 7 until Figure 9, it is suggested that the interactive book had assisted the participants in answering interrogative questions by using complete sentences correctly. The numbers of correct answers given by the participants in Test 2 for all the types of interrogative questions increased when compared with Test 1. Figure 10 shows one of the participants' answers in Test 1 and Test 2. There is an improvement as shown Test 2 for the pupils' answers related to interrogative questions of "when".

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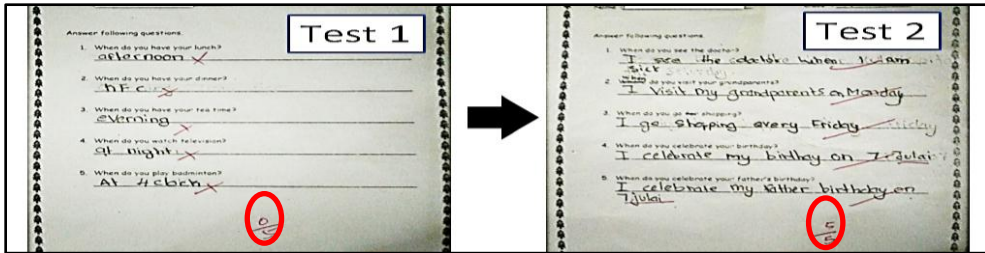


Figure 10. An improvement in Test 2 compared to Test 1 for interrogative questions of “when” for one of the pupils

Figure 11 shows the number of correct answers of the participants for all the interrogative questions in Cycle 2 of the action research.

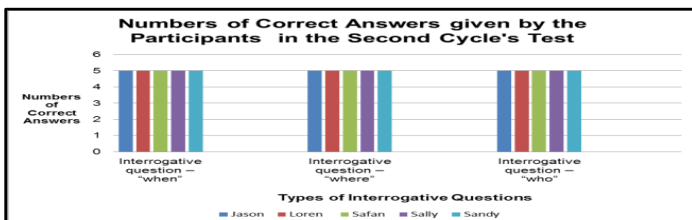


Figure 11. Result of second cycle’s test.

In Cycle 2, all the participants were able to answer all the interrogative questions of “when”, “where” and “who” correctly as shown in Figure 11. The findings in Cycle 2 reconfirmed my findings related to improvement of the pupils in answering interrogative questions through the use of interactive book.

Moreover, the repetitive nature of the interactive book allows the participants to practice the correct sentence structure taught by the interactive book. The interactive book allowed them to use the same sentence structure to answer the next interrogative questions. If they had made mistakes when answering the interrogative questions in the interactive book, I would immediately correct them. This helped them to correct themselves and avoid the same mistake (refer to Figure 12).

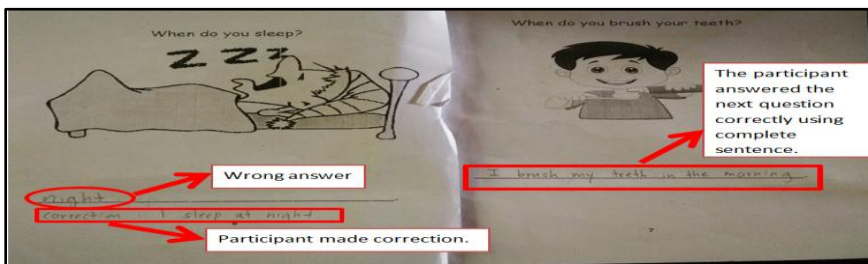
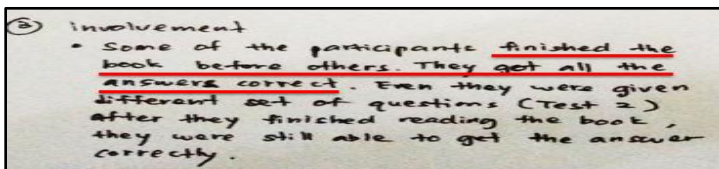


Figure 12. Pupil did self-correction for question (left) and avoided mistake for the next question (right)

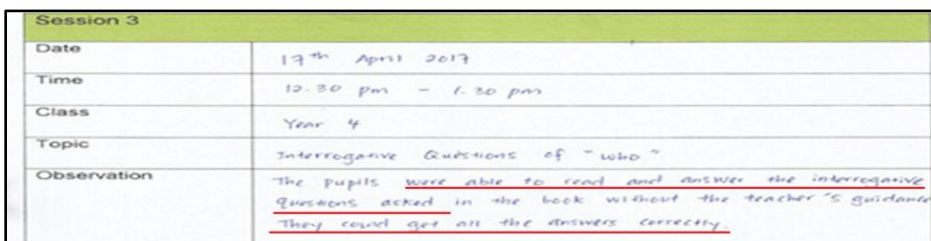
Moreover, I also discovered that the participants were motivated after I used interactive book to teach them how to answer interrogative questions using complete sentences. I observed their facial expression, behaviour and involvement during the three sessions. They eagerly wanted to read the interactive book when I introduced it to them. Some of them were fast in their reading and were able to finish all the interrogative questions in the book besides answering all the questions correctly. Figure 13 shows an excerpt of the field notes that I had written in my third session with them.



② involvement
• Some of the participants finished the book before others. They got all the answers correct. Even they were given different set of questions (Test 2) after they finished reading the book, they were still able to get the answer correctly.

Figure 13. An excerpt of my field notes (third session)

Based on Figure 13, the participants were excited and motivated to read the content of the interactive book. They were eager to finish and complete the interactive book. They knew what was expected from them after they had gone through the two sessions with me. They were also motivated to learn the correct sentence structure to be used in answering interrogative questions. Some of them finished reading and answered the interrogative questions in the interactive book before others and were able to answer all the questions correctly. This suggested that they were very motivated to learn and had mastered the skill in answering the interrogative questions using the correct syntax. Figure 14 shows an excerpt from my critical friend's feedback.



Session 3	
Date	17 th April 2017
Time	12.30 pm - 1.30 pm
Class	Year 4
Topic	Interrogative Questions of "who"
Observation	<u>The pupils were able to read and answer the interrogative questions asked in the book without the teacher's guidance. They could get all the answers correctly.</u>

Figure 14. An excerpt from my critical friend's feedback

Based on her feedback, some of the pupils finished the book faster than the others. This showed that the participants were motivated to read the book. They were excited to read and answer the interrogative questions in the book. She also observed that they were able to answer almost all the interrogative questions correctly. I also checked with the English language teacher on their performance in class by interviewing her. Their teacher gave positive feedback about their performance. They were now able to

answer her questions in complete sentences. They also answered questions in their exercises using the correct syntax and were almost error free.

All in all, the interactive book had helped the participants to overcome the issue of syntax in answering interrogative questions since it provided samples of sentence structures to follow. Besides, there were a lot of questions for them to practise on. The interactive book had also motivated them to learn. Thus, they were performing better in class and in their learning of the English language.

- **How does the use of interactive book improve my teaching practice related to the teaching of skill in answering the interrogative questions among Year Four pupils?**

Previously, I tend to use “chalk and talk” technique in teaching this skill. I explained to the pupils on how to form a grammatical sentence in answering interrogative questions on the board. I expected the pupils to understand the concept of syntax when I told them verbally by using examples on the whiteboard. At a point of time when I felt hopeless especially when my pupils still failed to master it, I just wrote down the answers on the board and asked them to copy into their exercise books. This method would not improve the pupils' learning, but would train them to be passive learners who would rely on spoon-feeding.

But, through this action research, I discovered another teaching method that I could use to improve my teaching practice related to the skill in answering interrogative questions in complete sentences correctly. The interactive book helped me to teach my participants the skill on how to answer interrogative questions using the correct syntax by giving them the correct sentence structures to follow. This is followed by a lot of practice in getting them to familiarize themselves with the syntax. This interactive book had helped me to avoid explaining the concept of syntax to the pupils since they were able to think in an organized fashion only when dealing with concrete information. They were not capable of abstract thinking yet. After using this book, I did not experience the frustration and tiredness in getting them to understand the concept of syntax. Teaching had become more learner-centered instead of teacher-centered like how it used to be. Figure 15 shows an excerpt of my field notes related to session three of Cycle 1 of this action research.

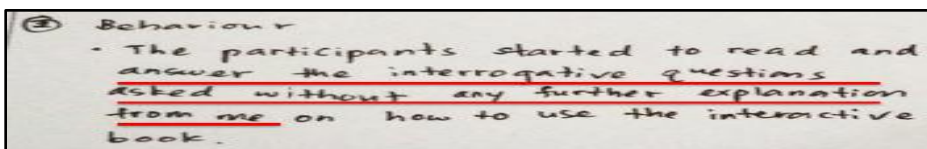


Figure 15. An excerpt from my field note (third session, Cycle 1)

In addition, the interactive book had changed my grammar lesson from a dull drilling lesson into an interesting and discovery lesson. I liked to use drilling method for my grammar lessons. I found it was very difficult to produce teaching aids to teach grammar compared to other language skills. But, with this action research, I found an interesting teaching aid which guided the participants towards discovery learning. I, as one of the future educators, need to present materials or teaching aids in an engaging and motivating manner. The materials should encourage exploration, experimentation and knowledge construction. This interactive book fulfilled the criteria mentioned as it was engaging, motivating and encouraged further exploration. The participants could discover how interrogative questions are answered in the interactive book and the correct sentence structure used. Figure 16 shows an excerpt from the feedback form of one of the participants.

1. The interactive book was helpful.
1 2 3 4 5
2. The interactive book held my attention.
1 2 3 4 5

Figure 16. An excerpt from the feedback form of one of the participants

Based on Figure 16, the participant found the interactive book helpful and held his attention. His feedback suggested that the interactive book could be one of the interesting teaching aids that I could use in teaching grammar. It had helped me to change my grammar lesson from a bored lesson to an engaging and discovery learning lesson.

I would conclude that this action research had produced positive outcomes, especially in my teaching practices related to teaching grammar. It helped me to improve my teaching practices by allowing me to discover new methods in teaching grammar. It also had changed my bored and less fun grammar lessons to interesting lessons with the use of interactive book which allow discovery learning to happen.

REFLECTION

Overall, I would conclude that this action research had produced positive outcomes. My two main objectives and two research questions were achieved and answered. Moreover, there were also unexpected learning elements that occurred which I did not plan beforehand.

This interactive book kept the participants engaged in learning by promoting intrinsic motivation through fun-drilling. Through the implementation of the action plan, one constant and positive change I noticed was that one particular pupil who was not keen on learning and

reading became engaged in reading the interactive book. The nature of the interactive book which offers easy and understandable language, as well as systematic arrangement of questions based on difficulty level has successfully created an intrinsic motivation in my participants to continue with their reading.

In the interactive book, a lot of practice on the same sentence structure were provided in order for the participants to familiarize themselves with it. It was a kind of drilling that was done indirectly in written form. This helped the participants to internalize the correct sentence structure used to answer the interrogative questions in them. In addition, reading using interactive book was different from reading texts in the textbook. Normally, questions were asked after the pupils have finished reading the whole text in order to test their understanding. But, in the interactive book, questions were asked on each page of the interactive book in order to train the participants to answer interrogative questions using the correct language structure.

However, the limited questions asked in the interactive book had created a barrier for the pupils to further expand their skills in answering interrogative questions. Moreover, there were limited types of interrogative questions in the interactive book in which there were only three types of interrogative questions. The pupils only learn and practice their skills in answering these three types of interrogative questions.

In conclusion, every action has its own strengths and weaknesses, and that includes my action. Thus, I should strengthen the strengths of the interactive book and improve on its weaknesses. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, our strength grows out of our weaknesses. In the future, I should improvise the weaknesses and turn them into special features of the interactive book.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION

Despite its limitations, I discovered that the interactive book has the potential to be further developed into a more effective language learning strategy by improving and refining some of its features.

First of all, the interactive book could be redesigned to achieve self-regulated learning. It could be redesigned in a way that enables the participants to self-check their answers without the presence of the teacher. The participants would be able to experience independent learning since they would be able to answer the interrogative questions asked in the interactive book and then check their answers without the teacher's assistance. As a result, learning could be much more self-regulated.

The contents of the interactive book could be further explored. Due to time constraint, I was only able to create three volumes of this interactive book. I wish I could be able to design a full set of interactive book related to the six types of interactive book (what, who, when, where, why and how).

Lastly, the number of questions asked in each volume of the interactive book could be increased. There were only 10 questions asked in each volume. I personally think that the number of questions should be increased to provide sufficient practice to the participants to practise the correct language structure in answering interrogative questions. By increasing the number of questions asked in the book, the pupils' confidence could also be raised.

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