



Using Magic Bottle To Improve Students' Speaking Skills

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ABSTRACT

Speaking has been the main problem for majority of Malaysian students as they are afraid to make mistakes. In order for students to be understood while speaking in English, they need to be able to pronounce English words clearly. To solve this problem, a game 'Magic Bottle' was developed in this study. This research was conducted on a group of 27 students from Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Taman Universiti, Skudai, Johor Bahru. It was triangulated through analysis of PBD Assessment Reports, a set of pre-test and post-test, participant observation and interview. Early observation shows that none of the students passed their PBD Speaking Skills Assessment. Only 2 out of 27 students (7%) scored Band 2 in their PBD Assessment (Pelaporan Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah) for Speaking Skills. The rest, 25 out of 27 students (93%) only scored Band 1 in their Speaking Assessment. All the students failed in the first PBD Speaking Skills Assessment. In this study, students were taught about pronunciation using 'Magic Bottle'. In the game, students were exposed to the correct pronunciation of the difficult words. They were asked to read and role play the sentences in the game. The research showed that students had improved their pronunciation through 'Magic Bottle'. The T-Test conducted at the end of the test shows that there was a significant improvement between the students' post-test and pre-test results. Students had also shown improvement in their PBD Speaking Skills.

Keywords: CEFR, Educational Game, Methodology, Pronunciation

INTRODUCTION

Although many studies had been done on speaking skills in other countries, there is still lack of research in Malaysia (Rusreena, R., Melor M. Y. and Harwati, 2018). In addition, since 2016, speaking skills is one of the main skills tested in Malaysia PBD Assessment (2016). In Classroom Assessment (PBD) Speaking Skills Assessment, students need to be able to communicate information clearly. Students need to be able to pronounce the words correctly in order to them to deliver their message successfully to their audience (Vietnam, 2015). Thus, there is a need to improve speaking skills among Malaysian students.

According to (Dyah Sih Pratiwi, D.S. and Prihatini, 2021), "Students who cannot pronounce well cannot express themselves and may lose interest and confidence to talk." Therefore, in order to improve students' speaking skills, it should start with teaching them the correct pronunciation. This problem is further highlighted by (Rusreena, R., Melor M. Y. and Harwati, 2018) who argued that Malaysian students are feared of speaking English as they are not confident enough to talk. This scenario is also seen in SMK Taman Universiti as it is a rural school where majority of the teachers and students here are Malays.

Therefore, in order to solve this problem, a language game 'Magic Bottle' was developed to teach pronunciation to the students. It incorporates the use of several activities such as reading aloud, repetition, music and role playing in teaching pronunciation. Language game was developed in this research as games can provide a comfortable and relax environment for students to learn (Jen, 2004).

The results from the study show that students had improved their speaking skills through the use of 'Magic Bottle.' They had shown improvement in their Mid-Term PBD Speaking Skills results. The T-Test conducted in this research shows that there was a significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test results. This shows that 'Magic Bottle' is indeed an effective tool in teaching pronunciation to students.

This is an action research conducted on a group of 27 students from one of the secondary schools in Johor Bahru, Malaysia. It is guided by 2 objectives. First, it aims to improve students' pronunciation through a fun way and it also aims to improve students' PBD Speaking Skills

It is hoped that through the use of 'Magic Bottle', students will be able to pronounce the words with the correct pronunciation and score higher band in PBD Speaking Test Assessment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Procedures

This action research consisted of 2 cycles. In the first cycle, simple sentences were used while in the second cycle, stanzas from a poem were used. This action

research was conducted on a group of 27 students of Form 1 Mulia from SMK Universiti, Skudai, Johor Bahru. 1 Mulia students were chosen for this study as they were one of the weakest groups in Form I. Out of 27 students, only 2 students managed to score Band 2 in the PBD Speaking Skills Assessment before the pre-test. See Appendix 1. In order to gather data for this action research, the instruments used include PBD Assessment Reports of 1 Mulia students, a set of pre-test and post-test, participant observation and interview conducted at the end of the research.

Research Instruments

PBD Assessment Report of 1 Mulia

The problem was highlighted in PBD Assessment Report for Speaking Skills (1 Mulia) before the pre-test as majority of the students scored poorly in the first speaking assessment (Unit 1 Speaking 2.1.1: How Students Spend Their Weekend). None of the students passed the first PBD Speaking Skills Assessment. See Appendix 1. Only 2 out of 27 students (7%) managed to score Band 2 in their PBD Assessment for Speaking Skills while the remaining (93%) scored the lowest Band (Band 1) in their exam. They could hardly pronounce any difficult English words correctly as majority of them were very weak in English. The pre-test results showed that only 10 out of 27 (37%) students managed to pass the pre-test and the rest, 17 students (63%) failed to pass the pronunciation test. See Appendix 4.

Participant Observation

In the class, students were observed to be extremely quiet during English lessons as they were feared of speaking in English. This was prevalent during reading-aloud and presentation activities as students were scared to be selected by teacher to read aloud and present in front of the class. During read aloud activities, it was also noticed that majority of the students could only read simple words and would pronounce wrongly for the difficult words. Meanwhile during Q&A session, students tended to give very limited responses such as 'yes', 'no' and 'I don't know'.

Action Implemented

In order to solve this problem, students were taught about pronunciation using a fun and interesting way. This is done through 'Magic Bottle'. In this game, students needed to read and act out roles assigned to them while reading. According to (Fadilah, 2016) and (Wibawa, 2014), "One of the effective ways of getting students to speak is role-playing." In role-playing, students pretend they are in various social contexts and have a variety of social roles. Apart from role playing, 'Magic Bottle' also involves the use of other strategies that are crucial in teaching pronunciation such as modelling, repetition and reading aloud. This research was carried out following the steps mentioned below.

Pre-Test

Firstly, all the students were asked to sit for the pre-test. In the pre-test, students were asked to read all the words in the table below and the total number of words pronounced correctly was recorded again in the post-test. The words were taken from Pulse 2 Unit 1 Page 14 (Crawfold, 2016).

Table 1.1 Word List Used in the Research

Num.	Words	Num.	Words
1	Isn't	11	Childish
2	It's	12	Crease
3	You're	13	Magical
4	I'm	14	Cease
5	Aren't	15	Treble
6	You'd	16	Shrieking
7	You've	17	Rebel
8	You're	18	Struck
9	What's	19	Rage
10	Without	20	Lightning

Source. Taken from Pulse 2 page 14, Crawfold, 2016

First Cycle of Action Research

The first action research was carried out using the reading text adapted from Pulse 2 (Page 14) (Crawfold, 2016). See Appendix 2. Students were taught to read aloud in the class using the text for the game. While reading aloud, the pronunciation of the difficult words tested in the pre-test and post-test were emphasized. The text was chosen because it involves spoken sentences. In the text, the kids were talking about the places that they have visited.

Students then played the language game 'Magic Bottle.' As they sat in a circle, they passed the 'Magic Bottle' around with the music on. The music was then stopped. The student who was holding the 'Magic Bottle' took out a piece of paper from the bottle. That student had to read and act out the sentence in the paper. The game was continued until all the papers in the bottle were read and acted out by students.

Reflection of Research Cycle 1

All the students enjoyed the 'Magic Bottle' game. However, a few students did not present the roles well. This is probably because they were too shy. Through this game, students were more aware of the pronunciation of the difficult words especially the short forms such as aren't, isn't, you're and I'm. While role-playing, students also had the opportunities to practise speaking with the correct intonation.

'Magic Bottle' had aroused students' interest towards learning of pronunciation. However, students' pronunciation for some of the words were unclear. This might be because students were too excited in acting out the roles assigned that they forgot to speak clearly.

Second Cycle of Action Research

For the next cycle of Action Research, some modifications were made to the game. First, all the students had to read the sentences clearly while acting. The students would be asked to read the sentence again if their speech was unclear. The same process of game was repeated but using different longer sentences. See Appendix 3.

Reflection of Research Cycle 2

The selected students were more co-operative this time. Compared to the first cycle, most of them were willing to perform the roles given. Most of them could pronounce the difficult words correctly at the end of the game. Through role-playing, they were also given opportunity to practise their intonation which is a crucial part of pronunciation. Apart from being able to pronounce the difficult words correctly, they were also able to speak with the correct intonation.

Post-Test

In the post test, all the students were asked to read the same words again like the words in the pre-test (Table 2.2). The total number of correct words pronounced correctly by the students and the differences of marks between the pre-test and post-test were analysed using Paired T-test to see whether there was any statistical difference between the Pre-Test and Post-test.

Reflection from Overall Research

The data from this research was analysed using several methods presented below. They include observation, interview, pre-test and post-test and also PBD Assessment Reports (Speaking Skills).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings from Observation

Before the action research, students were extremely quiet every time during speaking lesson as they were afraid of making mistakes. Nobody would volunteer to present in front of the class. They would push to each other the job of presenting or reading aloud in front of the class. However, students had shown more confidence in speaking activities after 'Magic Bottle' They were no longer as shy as before in their class. They were also more daring to voice out their opinions during brainstorming activities in class. Furthermore, they were also more eager to

take part in public speaking activities such as MBMMBI presentation during assembly and speaking at the Speaker Corner.

Interview After the Research

From the interviews conducted at the end of the research, majority of the students voiced out that they enjoyed playing the game. Apart from improving their intonation and articulation of the words, the game had also made them more confident in speaking English. All of them said that they are looking forward for games such as 'Magic Bottle' in their future lesson.

Difference between Pre-Test and Post-Test

Analysis of the pre-test and post-test results show that all the students had improved their pronunciation through 'Magic Bottle'. See Appendix 4.

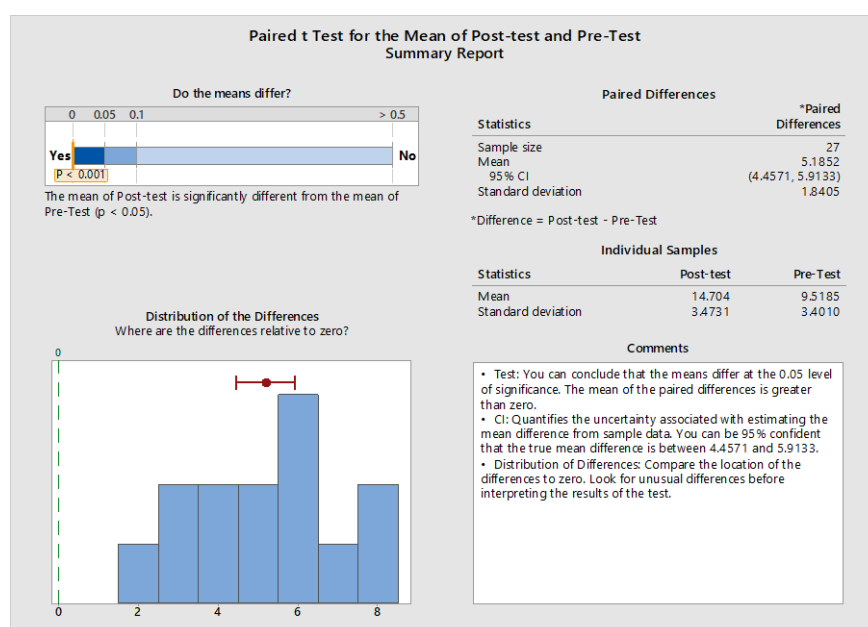


Figure 1.1 T-test conducted to show the differences between the Pre-Test and Post-Test
Source. Tabulated by using Minitab

In addition, the Paired-T test conducted for the difference between pre-test and post-test results shows that students had improved significantly in their pronunciation. This is because they had repeatedly learnt about the articulations of the words from the activities conducted in the 'Magic Bottle' and Read Aloud Activities. They had also learnt to speak with suitable intonation as the sentences used in the research were used for daily conversation.

Findings from PBD Assessment of 1 Mulia (Speaking Skills)

Students' mid-year PBD Assessment Report for Speaking Skills shows that 24 out of 27 students (89%) scored at least Band 3 in their PBD Speaking Skills Assessment. In PBD Assessment, Band 3 signifies a pass. See Appendix 5.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of 'Magic Bottle' had successfully helped the students to improve their pronunciation in terms of articulation of the words. This is because 'Magic Bottle' is a strategy that incorporates pronunciation learning activities (reading aloud and repetition) and the element of fun (music and role-playing) in teaching pronunciation.

Suggestions

'Magic Bottle' is an innovation for language teaching and learning that helps to improve students' pronunciation. The limitation for 'Magic Bottle' is it has only been tested for speaking skills in this study. Apart from teaching pronunciation, 'Magic Bottle' can also be used for the teaching and learning of other language items and subjects. The recommendations for future study are:

- i. 'Magic Bottle' can be used to teach other language items that emphasize on repetition and memorization such as grammar rules.
- ii. 'Magic Bottle' can be used to teach other subjects that emphasize on rote learning such as History, Geography and Science.

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