Effectiveness of Rhymes and Small talks on Primary Stage Pupils' Oral Communication

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of using small talks in developing the third primary graders' English communicative skills in Damietta governmental schools. In order to answer the questions of the study, the researcher adopted the quasi-experimental approach. The sample of the study consisted of (50) pupils from Dr. Ahmed Zewail Primary School in New Damietta City. The rhymes/songs and small talks were used in the second term of the academic school year (2014 – 2015). An oral communication test of six questions with (30) items was designed to be used as a pre-posttest. The study indicated that there were statistically significant differences in mean scores of communicative skills test in favor of the post application. It also showed that there were statistically significant differences in mean scores of each of the communication skills in favor of the post application. In the light of these results, the study recommended the necessity of using children rhymes/songs and small talks in teaching and learning. It also suggested that further researches should be conducted on the effect of songs and stories on the four skills of English language.

Keywords:

Oral Communication Skills (OCS), Integrated Rhymes, Small talks (ICS)

المستخلص

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو التحقق من فعالية استخدام الاناشيد والقصص القصيرة في تنمية مهارات التواصل باللغة الإنجليزية لطلاب الصف لثالث من المرحلة الابتدائية في مدارس دمياط الحكومية. للإجابة على أسئلة الدراسة، اعتمد الباحث المقابلة شبه التجريبية. وشملت عينة الدراسة (50) تلميذا من مدرسه الدكتور احمد زويل الابتدائية في مدينه دمياط الجديدة. وقد استخدمت الاناشيد/الأغاني والقصص القصيرة مع المجموعة الدراسية في النصف الثاني من السنة الدراسية الأكاديمية (2014 – 2015). وقد صمم اختبار الاتصال الشفوي من (30) بندا لاستخدامه كاختبار قبلي وبعدي. وأشارت النتائج إلى وجود فروق في متوسط درجات اختبار المهارات التواصلية لصالح التطبيق البعدي. النتائج أيضا ان هناك فروقا واضحة من الناحية الإحصائية في متوسط الدرجات لكل مهارة من مهارات الاتصال الشفهي لصالح التطبيق البعدي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مهارات التواصل الشفهي، الاناشيد القصص القصيرة المدمجة.

INTRODUCTION

The English language is a system of sounds and signs organized by grammatical rules to communicate meaning successfully. Oral communication is the most important aspect of English language which is used to express thoughts, hopes, ambitions, and daily actions. Moreover, effective communication is an integral part of daily life, especially in education. It is the core of every aspect of interaction with others.

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SUST Journal of Linguistic and Literary Studies (2019)   **Vol.20.No. 2 June (2019)**
ISSN (text): 1858-828x   **e-ISSN (online): 1858-8565**

Sudan University of Science and Technology
Deanship of Scientific Research
Journal of Linguistic and Literary Studies

According to Schady (2011; 99), "childhood period is the most rapid period of development in human life. Although some children develop at their own pace, all children progress through an identifiable sequence of physical, cognitive, social and emotional growth and change." Juraid (2016; 63), claims that the status of English as a global lingua franca has led to policy on primary English education in many non-English speaking countries. Teaching English in formal educational settings (e.g., primary schools) is a relatively new global phenomenon, and it started in Egypt in the 1990s. in addition, Thapa, et al. (2013; 57) argue that pupils can learn literacy skills through instruction and practice of speaking, reading, writing and listening. Oral communication is the process exchanging information through the sense of hearing and making meaning from what was practiced.

Peyton and Jalongo (2008; 39) assure that oral communication prepares young children for later better learning. This may be the reason Raghavendra, et al. (2012; 112) submitted that it is crucial for a child to develop good communication skills in order to cope with the academic demands of school and to learn adequate literacy skills.

Communication skills help children to guide their self-inquiry and discover their individual possibilities. Children who are active communicators can incorporate the things they hear faster in their framework of knowledge than a more passive counterpart. In his own view, Oduolowu and Oluwakemi (2014; 44) observed that Children can also exhibit better concentration and memory when they develop good communication. Sheil, et al. (2012; 57) cited that oral communication is the child's first, most important, and most frequently used structured medium of communication. In addition, and most significantly, oral communication is the primary mediator of culture, the way in which children locate themselves in the world. Basically, oral communication is about communicating with other people. It involves a process of utilizing knowledge and skills in order to speak and listen effectively.

Redecker, et al. (2012; 57) assert that although the curriculum places a strong emphasis on oral communication, it has been widely acknowledged that the implementation of the Oral communication strand has proved challenging and there is evidence that some teachers may have struggled to implement this strategy because the underlying framework was unclear to them.

Lindsay, et al. (2010; 34) declare that the reasons for such difficulties are various. These include families with lower socioeconomic status, children with hearing loss, brain injury, learning disabilities and for some, the cause is unknown. After they encounter these difficulties, many children become silent, friendless, and feel lonely and easily rejected by classmates when trying to make friends or join a group activity.

Zhang (2010; 29) asserts that pupils who study English as a foreign language (EFL) usually have limited opportunities to communicate in English outside the classroom and also have limited exposure to English speakers or members of the international community. This might be one reason for teachers to provide more situations, activities and strategies for pupils to strengthen their oral communication performance.

The researcher used Small talks as a form of oral communication which encouraged young learners of English language and made them active during the learning process. It is not a one-way act as there are usually at least two people involved, a teller and an audience, a listener or recipient. Also, stories and rhymes provide familiar things to children and create an active interaction amongst pupils through repetition and intonations. If there is a topic which is hard to explain to children, we can integrate the topic into a story or a chant. Stories and rhymes can present the introduction and solution which might help children to visualize the textbooks and understand the topic better. Here is a sample of the rhymes and small talks followed by a teacher's guide written by the researcher. The researcher turned the content of TIME FOR ENGLISH series into rhymes and small talks. After applying these rhymes and small talks, pupils were amazingly inspired and encouraged to share and communicate in English during and out the class.

2. Method and Procedures

This chapter deals with all the research design, participants and instruments of the study. Also, it tackles the materials of the study, the experimental procedures and administration of the study instruments.

2.1. Research Design

The research adopted the quasi-experimental one group pre-posttest design. Children's songs and stories were used with the study group. By the end of the experiment, the communication pre-posttest was administrated to the study group in order to determine the effectiveness of children songs and small talks in developing pupils' communicative skills.

2.2. Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were 50 pupils enrolled in the third year, Dr Ahmed Zewail Primary School, New Damietta city. They were aged 8-9 years old during 2014/2015 academic year. They were treated as one quasi-experimental group, having a pre-posttest before and after the experimental procedures.

2.3. Variables of the Study
The study included the following variables: a. The independent variable is represented in the integrated rhymes/songs and small talks. b. The dependent variable is represented in the development of the third graders' English communication skills.

2.4. The Instruments and Materials of the Study

The researcher used the following instruments: a) An oral communication skills checklist. b) An oral communication skills test. c) A teacher's guide based on the integrated songs/rhymes and small talks.

2.4.1. The Oral Communication Skills Checklist

The checklist aimed to determine the oral communication skills necessary for the 3rd primary graders. The checklist was constructed in the light of the following:

1. Reviewing previous studies concerned with EFL oral communication skills, especially those related to integrated songs/rhymes and small talks in teaching EFL in the primary stage.

2. Reviewing the syllabus directives of Time for English book of grade three.

3. Consulting supervisor's curriculum planners about what is suitable for the primary stage pupils. The checklist relied on the 3rd-grade syllabus (Time for English) oral skills (listening and speaking). These oral communication skills (OCSs) were extracted from units 7 and 8 in addition to the literature MOE directives.

The OCSs checklist contained the oral communication skills (listening and speaking).Checklist validity . To validate the checklist, it was submitted to a panel of juries in curriculum and methods of teaching EFL. The juries were asked to evaluate the checklist in terms of clarity, readability and its suitability for 3rd-year pupils' communication skills. The jury members validated the checklist items and their comments were taken in mind and done in the final version of the checklist.

2.4.2. An Oral Communication Skills Pre-posttest

It aims to determine the participants'(OCSs) level in their entry level as to oral communication skills before the test administration. The oral communication skills test was constructed in the light of the following resources:

1. Reviewing the previous studies concerned with EFL tests, especially those related to communication skills.

2. Reviewing literature of teaching oral communication skills.

The oral communication skills pre-posttest consisted of 6 questions; two question for speaking skills, two questions for listening skills, one question for grammar and one question for vocabulary. Each question consisted of five items. So, the total items of the pre-posttest were 30.

To validate the OCSs test, the researcher submitted the test to a panel of the jury who are specialized in curriculum and methods of teaching EFL. The jury members were asked to validate the test and judge the clarity of its questions and their suitability for the pupils' levels and what these questions aimed to measure. They were also asked to add, omit or modify any question(s) as they saw fit. According to the jury's remarks, modifications were made.

The reliability of the test was computed using the test – retest method before administrating the test to the participants of the study. It was administrated to 20 pupils on 3rd November 2014. Four weeks later, on 30th November 2014, the same test was applied to the same group under the same conditions. Then, the correlation coefficient between the first and the second administrations of the test was calculated using the correlation coefficient analysis as shown in tables (1) and (2).

The reliability coefficient was 0.87 as shown in table (3) which was statistically significant at 0,001, thereby reflecting test reliability .

2.4.3. Teacher's Guide

The researcher prepared a teacher's guide to help and guide the teacher when teaching the proposed study. So, the researcher prepared the teacher's guide determining the following:

a. The objectives of each lesson in the light of the cultural and linguistic content of these lessons.

b. The method of teaching songs/rhymes and small talks in the light of the suggested study.

c. The suitable aids to be used to help pupils during learning.

d. The suitable activities and practice to evaluate the pupils' performance of each lesson according to its nature and according to pupils' needs and objectives of the lessons.

The sources of the teacher's guide are the researcher's experience as and an English teacher. Moreover, English supervisors' experience and some of English teachers' experience in Dr Ahmed Zwail Primary School.

The teacher's guide includes information about applying the experiment. It includes the objectives and procedures of the lessons. The researcher suggests a lesson plan that is a model for using children songs/rhymes and small talks in practicing oral communicative skills. The lesson plan includes the learning objective, sources, procedures for presenting songs/rhymes and small talks and practice. A panel of language and EFL instruction specialists, some of English teachers and English language supervisors, shared in revising the teacher's guide. The researcher made some modifications to make the teacher's book valid. The content of the teacher's guide depended on primary three books to apply the study. The researcher analyzed the content of the school book to know the information included, integrated the song/rhymes and stories which contain each lesson's information and designed the suitable activities that were used through the application. The determined content consisted of two units (the first two units of the second term), each unit consisted of 4 lessons (total of 10 lessons, besides the first two lessons in which the researcher agreed to the procedures of applying the suggested study with the subjects. The following table shows the analysis of the content.

3. Conclusions

The outcome of this study substantiates an initial belief regarding the fact that the study group learners were able to comprehend the integrated rhymes/songs and small talks and provide some fluent oral communication skills. In fact, even though the learners started from a slightly lower level of English, they improved their oral communication skills (listening and speaking) and performed the songs and small talks successfully.However, in order to obtain better results, the researcher believes that there is an urgent need to develop new materials and resources adapted to non-native young learners. If the existent materials are to be used in the EFL classroom, and just to mention some of the paths to explore, they need to include higher quality sound, rhymes/songs and slower storytelling pace. Graded pedagogical tasks responding to the learners' age and developmental stage would also be necessary.

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Finally, suitable rhymes and small talks for children are needed, both from a cognitive and communicative perspective, and, perhaps more importantly, to ensure their relation to the syllabus and the nature of children.

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