



TEACHING SIGHT WORDS USING FLASHCARDS IN DEVELOPING READING FLUENCY OF YOUNG LEARNERS

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Abstract

Understanding the important relationship between reading fluency and early childhood is crucial for a teacher teaching young learners. The right method in the teaching also played a significant role in the success of developing reading fluency. Five kindergarten students were involved in this study to reveal the impact of the teaching sight-words using the flashcard to develop reading fluency. A set of 15 words of Dolch sight words was given to the students to test their reading. At the end of the school year, students were given a reading comprehension post-assessment to compare the results from the previous one. The analysis of the data and the observation showed that using the flashcard in teaching sight words proofed to be effective in developing the reading fluency of the students. All of the participants have shown an improvement based on the post-test results considering that they all started from an unsatisfactory or required improvement level and ended with a satisfactory and good level.

Keywords: *teaching sight words, flashcard, elementary students*

Introduction

The progress of language is one of the main problems during early childhood and plays an important role in children's social development. In fact, it has been researched that young children who are often read to, have better vocabulary and early literacy skills (such as alphabetic knowledge and phonological sensitivity) than children who are less often read to (Mol and Bus 2011; Mol, Bus, and de Jong 2009).

Research proofed that toddlers and preschoolers who are read to every day mastered a wider range of vocabulary than those who are not read to at all. Not only does reading develop a child's vocabulary, and assist them to understand how to read and write, but reading aloud to children also boost their understanding of different topics about the world and life. Early reading which exercised effectively ensure the building of cognitive and reading skills which in turn prevent reading difficulties among young learners

Research done on early childhood literacy by Bridges, M., & Dagys, N. (2012) mentioned some of the functions of early reading programs are as follows:

- Enhance early language, reading development, and literacy development of kindergarten children.
- Provide preschool-age children with cognitive learning opportunities in high quality language and literature-rich environments so they can acquire the fundamental skills and knowledge necessary for reading development among young learners.
- Provide literacy and language activities based on empirical studies and support age-appropriate skills in oral language (vocabulary development, expressive language, and listening comprehension), phonological awareness (rhyming, blending, and segmenting), print

awareness, and alphabet knowledge (letter recognition).

At the school level, learning to read will in turn to assure that a student will grow into a successful adolescent, and eventually a successful, contributing member of society as an adult (Burns, 2007). Early literacy skills should be taught to students as early as preschool.

Literacy skills at Sekolah Adicita Mulia in Pontianak are taught to students as early as Kindergarten level. The principal explained that kindergarten literacy programs are expected to significantly impact students' preparation for primary schools. Therefore, reading and phonic is introduced to Kindergarten B (TK B) students. She also added that kindergarten reading programs will assist students in laying the literacy groundwork for the skills they need in elementary school.

The observation at Adicita Kindergarten revealed that the ability to read in the beginning level in group B is still not developing as expected. This can be seen in the semester 2 report at table 1, whereof the 21 students there were 6 children who had RI (required improvement) grades while the rest were S (Satisfactory) and G (good) and none has excellent grades. The grading scale used are:

E - Excellent

G - Good

S - Satisfactory

RI - Required Improvement

Table 1. Reading Report class KB1

No.	Name	Sem. 1
1	AB	G
2	AM	G
3	AU	RI
4	AY	S
5	DH	G
6	GA	S
7	GR	RI
8	HA	RI
9	HY	G
10	JE	S

11	JY	G
12	JV	RI
13	CH	G
14	LG	S
15	NA	RI
16	NR	S
17	RN	RI
18	QA	G
19	RY	S
20	SW	S
21	CO	S

Source: Adicita Mulia 2019

The reading methods practiced by the teachers in this school is teaching phonic and sight words. However, some teachers regard sight words as a bit boring for the children so they did not really implement them in their reading class. Researchers have found many different effective methods that can be used to teach sight words to students (Hong, S., & Kemp, C.,2007). The most common and basic way to familiarize students with sight words is to present them in a flashcard drill in practice format. Flashcards allow students to see the word numerous times in the same setting and assist them to memorize the words easier. When a student begins learning sight words, it will boost their confidence in their reading competency and as a result, it will decrease frustration that comes with learning to read (Yaw, 2012).

Based on the above concept, this research intends to study the usage of flashcard in teaching sight words in improving the reading fluency of the kindergarten students at Adicita Mulia

The question is formulated as: Is teaching sight word using flashcard develop students' reading fluency?

The specific aim of the research is to investigate the utilization of sight words technique in developing the reading fluency of the Kindergarten students at Adicita Mulia and to observe the implementation of sight word technique in the kindergarten classroom at Adicita Mulia in general.

This research focuses on the flashcard technique in teaching sight words to kindergarten students at Adicita Mulia School in Pontianak. The result expected from the technique is the optimization of the reading fluency of the students.

This study is expected to contribute to the new findings relate to teaching sight words to Kindergarten students. Teachers are able to utilize the effective teaching technique in improving the reading abilities of the students. The kindergarten students will enjoy a wider range of activities in learning to read and increase their reading fluency.

In the long run, this type of studies can be valuable in helping EFL reading instructors to better meet the needs of the growing population of EFL students.

Literature Review

What Are Sight Words?

Hood (1977) categorised sight words into three main types : the undecodable, the automatically recognized, and the high-frequency words. Un-decodable sight words, or irregular words, do not follow conventional English spelling or phonics patterns. When reading these words, students must produce the word with accuracy and speed since phonics or spelling pattern strategies are not effective for decoding. Automatic sight words are those words students recognize on sight without hesitation (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). The reader sees, cognitively processes, retrieves the word from memory, and linguistically pronounces the word with automaticity regardless of spelling patterns. High frequency words, on the other hand, include the most commonly used words in both writing and speech, also known as the 'glue-words'.

Modern researchers have similarly categorized two types of sight words. The first type consists of decodable words that regularly occur in printed English (e.g., "and," "like," "get"). These excessive frequency

words can be studied by sounding them out, but they appear so regular in the text that mastering them on sight will increase children's reading fluency (Joseph, Nation, & Liversedge, 2013). Moreover, these words can provide student access to enter text in earlier of learning the phonics principles otherwise essential for decoding them (Ehri, 2014). The other form of sight words cannot be decoded due to the fact that they no longer follow the typical letter-sound correspondences (e.g., "have," "there," "of"). These are irregular words and since they are unidentified, they must be recognized automatically.

Sight word plays an essential role in the reading processes. When students recognize words with automaticity (rapid, effortless recognition), they devote less cognitive energy to word recognition. This enables them to spend more time and effort constructing meaning from the text (comprehension).

The History of Sight Word

There are two popular research-based listings of sight words available for teachers to use when planning instruction. One of the most popular listings is Edward Dolch's (1936) list of 220 basic sight words. Commonly referred to as the Dolch words, this listing was expanded as an alternative to longer sight word lists of 500 or more words. The final Dolch listing excluded all nouns, which are concrete and without difficulty referenced in illustrations, and included a further 27 words not located on the three listings cited above. Dolch counselled that his listings of words did not longer encompass all the sight words kids might need to learn in the primary school level, however the words represented the minimum that youngsters should be capable to remember automatically.

Another famous listing of sight words is Edward Fry's (2000) A thousand Instant Words. Fry's list differs from Dolch's (1936) in some significant ways. First, Fry's listings have been revised numerous times. What originally began as a list of

thousand words (Fry, 1957) was turned into a list of 300 words (Fry, 1980) and, most recently, reintroduced as a modified listing of thousand words (Fry, 2000). In comparison, the Dolch words have no longer been updated since they were first introduced. Second, the longer listing compiled by Fry is broader in scope. Among the resources used to expand the Fry list were the Dolch words and The American Heritage Word Frequency Book. As a result, the Fry listing consists nearly all of the Dolch Words, with 19 exceptions of

an	ate	call	drink	eight	funny
	goes	going	he	here	
hurt	its	long	myself	own	
round	she	thank	up		

The other words contained on Fry's (2000) listing represent the most common words in the English language organized in groups of 100. Fry suggested that his listing of Thousand Instant Words be used as part of the comprehensive literacy instruction provided to beginning readers in elementary school in addition to low scores readers who are in junior and senior high school.

Importance of Sight Words

Readers discover ways to recognize words via sight, it will increase their overall analyzing comprehension because they increase an intellectual storehouse of words and their meanings, which allows them apprehend other words within the context of sentences. Most teachers teach sight words early within the first grade due to this reason. Learning sight words also enhance spelling competencies.

When learning to read, sight word identification is an important skill and is necessary to establish fluent, confident readers (McCormick and Zutell, 2015). McCormick and Zutell (2015) defined that sight word recognition is extremely essential in the earliest years of reading due to the fact students "do not yet have enough

skills for reading words through use of word identity strategies"

In understanding the significance of sight word instruction within the early stages of reading development, kindergarten students should be equipped with instructional possibilities that foster this necessary emergent reader talent. How to optimize sight word learning for kindergarten students is the foundation for this research study

Flash Cards as a Method of Teaching Sight Words to Children

Children learn to read in distinct way, therefore, exceptional teaching strategies must be employed. One of the methods is a conventional flash-card method. Traditional flash card methods of teaching had been broadly accepted over the years and are supported at some point of the teaching community as an effective technique that enables student learning. In this method a sight word is written on a flashcard; the instructor flashes the word to the children; and the children should automatically examine the word at the card. This procedure is done time and again resulting in a flashcard method. Repetition using the flash card method is effective (Casey, S. D. 2008) in permitting student's recognition of sight words; however, it could no longer not be the most efficient manner of teaching sight words (Kupzyk, S., Daly. 2011). This study will apply three sight word flashcards drills which are a research-based intervention that have been adapted from Intervention Central at <https://www.interventioncentral.org>. The following steps in teaching are: The tutor has a deck of 5 index cards with visible words. Before the session, the tutor sets a criterion for mastering the session: the student correctly names all recognizable words that are in sight on the deck three times in a row. The tutor said to the student, "Let's practice a few words." The tutor shows the student each index card with the message "Look at this word and say the word." If the student answers correctly

within 3 seconds, the tutor says, "Yes, the word is [word]". If the student answers incorrectly, the tutor says, "No, the word is [word]. Say [word]." If the student hesitates for more than 3 seconds, the tutor says, "The word is [word]. Say [word]." When all index cards have been presented, the tutor shuffles the cards and repeats them. When the student reaches the mastery criterion, the tutor repeats the above steps with a new deck of 5 visually recognizable words.

Students' Reading Fluency

Griffin and Murtagh (2015) stated that : The potential to read is one of the most crucial academic and life competencies that one can learn. Literacy talents are considered as crucial to a person's capability to develop as a whole individual and to participate fully in society. (p. 186).

The National Reading Panel identified fluency as a key component in successful reading instruction (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Rasinski, a fluency in reading expert, said that fluency is, "The capability to read in accurate, quick, effortless manner, and with accurate expression and meaning." (Rasinski, 2003 p.126). Since the emphasis on analysing at the word level is the most popular thought of fluent reading, it makes sense for all concerned to remember what words students should examine to boost their fluency.

Readers must both decode words and understand their meaning automatically. Reading fluency is critical due to the fact that it affects students' reading efficiency and comprehension. Fluency can be increased by way of repeating oral reading with feedback and guidance (NICHD, 2000).

Defining the best way to teach reading fluency is the problem of great controversy in educational activities. Researchers agree on reading programs that provide phonics and whole words to be the most effective. On the opposite side, different researchers also agree that

balanced literacy is the only effective way of achieving fluency.

Assessment of Early Reading fluency at Kindergarten in Indonesia

The assessment is carried out to determine the value of all learning activities which has been done. Harun Rasyid, Mansyur and, Suratno (2009: 12), stated that assessment is the efforts of the teacher and the child in learning has been done, the results of the assessment can be used as feedback to make changes in teaching and learning activities.

Anita Yus (2005: 31), added that assessment especially in kindergarten is used more to describe the achievement of child development, thus the assessment can be used to determine what have been achieved and aspects of development that have not been achieved by students within a certain period. Achievement of development can be expressed in letters, numbers, and descriptions. Aspects of language development in reading fluency examined in this study are fluency in recognizing sight words in the flashcards.

Based on the above opinion it can be emphasized that the assessment of ability initial reading in children is an activity carried out by the teacher to find out language development expressed in letter form, numbers and descriptions as the indicators of beginning reading fluency, that is, ability to mention the symbol of the sound of letters, the ability to say the same phoneme, and ability to read words. In this study the terms used in assessment at Adicita Mulia Kindergarten are excellent (E), Good (G) and Satisfactory (S).

Method

This chapter will discuss the naturalistic qualitative study applied to uncover some possible understandings of the questions previously outlined. The focus of this study is to understand how the use of flashcard in teaching sight words impact kindergarten reading fluency.

Research Design

The framework for this study is constructed upon the qualitative research paradigm. Qualitative research is a strategy for exploring how groups or individuals make sense of human problems (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative study method verified a type of scientific studies and consisted some of the investigation that including collects evidence and open-ended questions (Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative research is used by teacher-researchers when trying to solve problems in the natural setting of their own classrooms (Shangoury & Power, 2012). When conducting research using the framework of qualitative research, teacher-researchers look at students carefully, examine their needs, and modify their curriculum to fit the needs of all students (Shangoury & Power, 2012)

This type of research allows teachers to question and reflect on their own teaching practices and conduct study from natural questions that “come up from the day-to-day practice and from differences between what is intended and what occurs (Cochran & Lytle, 2009, p. 42). Those theories mirror what the researcher intends to do at Adicita Kindergarten.

Time and Place of the Research

The research will take place from 24 June to 28 June 2019, before the end of the academic year at Sekolah Adicita Mulia, Pontianak.

Subject of the Research

The subject of this study is four kindergartens (Kindy B) students from Adicita Mulia. The group consisted of 2 boys and 2 girls, ages ranging from five to six years who had started school from pre-kindergarten at the same school. The researcher decided to select them based on their below- average score in their English reading fluency.

Before beginning to collect data for this study, a letter stating the purpose of the study to the participants and their parents were sent out. Because this study uses

young children, the parents have to sign a consent letter letting their children be a part of the study

Technique and Instrument of Data Collecting

Data for this research will be collected during the semester in various instruments which are observation, interviews field notes and students’ reading class works and the scores list. The activities to collect data will be:

- Direct observation technique is by observing the reading activities in the class directly and take notes of the learning process during the introduction of the letters of the alphabet using flashcards. The researcher will be an active observer during the data collection meaning that the researcher will assist the main teacher in teaching the students in a classroom and at the same time observe closely the way the targeted students respond to the sight word reading given by examining them through pre-test and post-test using the same reading material.
- Interviews by conducting direct communication verbally and face to face with the data source. For 10 effective school days, the researcher will work with each student for 15 minutes on their reading abilities by giving them word list that is prepared for them to practice.
- The documentary study by analyzing data relates to documentation of the teaching and learning process of learning sight words using flashcards such as lesson plan, flashcard worksheets, pre and post-test results
- Field notes contain everything the researchers obtained during observations and interviews in the field.

Data Analysis Technique

The process of analysing qualitative data mainly involves coding or categorising the data. Fundamentally it involves making sense of the amounts of knowledge by reducing the amount of raw data, followed by identifying significant patterns, and eventually drawing meaning from data and subsequently building a logical chain of evidence (Patton 2002)

Many qualitative analysis depends upon a general approach called “constant comparative analysis”. At first developed to be used within the grounded theory method of Glaser and Strauss, which itself evolved out of the sociological theory of symbolic interaction, this strategy involves taking one piece of information (one interview, one statement, one theme) and comparing it with all others which were similar or different to develop the concept of the possible relations between various pieces of knowledge.

In this study the information was analysed by using qualitative data analysis. The researcher compared qualitatively the pre-test and post-test scores to produce representative data to reveal the degree of the development of students’ reading fluency when taught sight words using the flashcard technique. The development significance is expected from the score improvement. Ultimately, the researcher synthesised the data and interpreted the meanings that were extracted from the data

Findings and Discussion

The purpose of the study was to find out whether teaching sight words using flashcards would improve the kindergarten’ students reading fluency. In this chapter, the findings and discussions of results gained from the data collection instruments are presented. There is also a presentation of the backgrounds of the participants who are given pseudonyms to keep the confidentiality.

The Findings

Profiles of the Participants

From the list of 21 students, we had six students identified to conduct the research based on their low level of reading, but only four affirmed to be the participants in this study. They are referred to as Ally, Benny, Claire and Devon. To familiarize pupils with the researcher, direct observation was done on the first day by assisting the main teacher in the classroom.

Table 2 The profiles of students

1	Ally was 6 years old female of Chinese background. She was eager to learn new words.
2	Benny was 5 years, 7 months old male Malay background. He seemed quiet but he did what he was asked to do at the session.
3	Claire is 6 years, 2 months old female of Malay background. She was active and interested in the flashcards
4	Devon is 6 years, 1-month-old male of Chinese background. He was motivated and active

Source: Adicita Mulia School (2019)

The Reading result at the beginning of the study.

This Preliminary data was obtained at the initial observations at Adicita Kindergarten School in Pontianak. The reading result was provided by the Kindergarten B English teacher. Table 4.2 showed the test result of the four participants.

Table 3 Reading Result Pre-Test

No.	Name	Achievement
1	Ally	RI (53)
2	Benny	RI (50)
3	Claire	RI (55)
4	Devon	RI (59)

Source: Adicita Mulia School (2019)

The Grading system for reading at Adicita is as follows:

Excellent : 90 above

Good : 76 -89

Satisfactory : 60- 75

Required Improvement: Below 59

The following activity was the implementation stage which is the stage of the intervention in the form of learning sight words using a flashcard in accordance with the lesson plan made for this research. The learning process was carried out three times in this research. Researchers obtained data from the results of pre-test and post-test conducted on participants. Pre-test is an ability test given to students before given an intervention, while the post-test is done after students get treatment. Both of these tests serve to measure to what extent of the program brings change on the students' reading fluency.

On the pre-assessment, a set of 15 words of Dolch sight words was given to the students to test their reading. The same set of flashcards would be used during the intervention and the post assessment. The sight words list is:

a	and	big
can	for	go
here	I	in
is	it	me
said	the	to

All sight words were printed on single flashcards.

The next step was the intervention sessions which was done for three times with the activity described below:

1. The researcher explained the activity by telling the participants why they needed to know the sight words that they would learn and practice.

2. Showed the students the first flashcard with the word and read it for them. For example, the words "big" and asked the students to repeat after the researcher. The students would say it chorally or one by one.
3. Read through all the sight words with the students repeating after the teacher and ensure that they said it correctly.
4. Next, reviewed and repeated the sight words without modelling and asked the students to say them.
5. After completing the flashcard sequence for all the sight words, ensure that all students knew the words by asking them to take turn to read. Drilling is the key
6. To confirmed that the students knew all of the sight words, the researcher mixed up the cards and had the students read one by one.
7. Provide corrective feedback when students made any mistake or responded too slowly.

The final step was to give the student a post-assessment at the last meeting. Each participant was given the same list of cards and tested to how they did with the sight words they have learned.

The test result was as follows:

Table 4 Post Test Reading result

No.	Name	Result
1	Ally	able to read correctly 13 cards out of 15 which was categorised as Good
2	Benny	able to read correctly 10 cards out of 15 which was categorised as Satisfactory
3	Claire	able to read correctly 13cards out of 15 which was categorised as Good
4	Devon	able to read correctly 12 cards out of 15 which was categorised as Good

Discussion

All of the participants have shown improvement based on the post-test results considering that they all started from unsatisfactory or required improvement level and ended with satisfactory and good level. This study has proofed that the usage of flashcards in teaching sight words indeed benefited the students in developing their reading fluency.

The researcher also recorded various points on the field notes during the pre, and post-assessments so that the analysis could be examined from all angles. It was found that all participants were familiar with flashcards therefore it was not too difficult to get their attention on learning the sight words but they were used to flash cards with pictures. This could affect the students who were used to see words and rely on pictures. The researcher found it on Benny who said he liked to read words that had pictures in them and it was assumed that because he used the pictures to visually identify the words. This could be the reason why he was the students with the lowest achievement among all.

Conclusion

Memorizing sight words is absolutely a straightforward task and what it takes is time and repetition. The exploitation of drilling systematically will increase mastery because students are provided what they need to learn to read.

This research showed that teaching sight words using flashcards is one of the ways teachers could implement in their teachings in order to increase reading fluency. It helped the students to be familiar with the words in their early reading.

Teachers might also use sight words with pictures but just be sure to select pictures cues that are clear and would not require a great deal of explanation. In doing so it would be easier for the students to understand because the point is to make learning sight words easier, not more complicated.

Since they are already a lot of visual demands on our students in the conventional learning environment, kindergarten students need to incorporate their bodies into their learning. Therefore, it is recommended that teaching sight words using songs and dance movement might be another alternative to try.

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