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THE USE OF SAND PAPER LETTERS IN TEACHING THE ENGLISH ALPHABET

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Abstract

This study was conducted as part of the curriculum monitoring program to determine the level of student performance in English, specifically on letter recognition of Royal International School, 2nd Semester, SY 2014-2015. The experimental method was utilized using the Pre Test and Post Test Equivalent Group Design where the lowest performing class was the focus of the study of preschool department. The study involved a total of fourteen (14) students randomly selected from the kindergarten class. Seven (7) samples were identified as control group and seven (7) as experimental group using fish bowl technique to avoid bias, each with an equal chance of being selected. The researcher made sure that both groups were almost identical based on their Pre-Test results, and parameter such as the means were taken into consideration. Findings showed that the use of Sand Paper Letters in the experimental group has a significant effect on student performance.

Keywords

Kindergarten, Sandpaper, Student Performance, Teaching

1. Introduction

Teachers and school administrators are constantly searching for valid and measurable predictors of student achievement. One reason why educators are so concerned in letter recognition and phonics is that it is linearly correlated with early reading acquisition especially in the kindergarten. Once beginning readers have some awareness on letter recognition of the alphabets, further reading practice will increase their mastery of simple words and even sentences. Mc Cartney (2015), revealed that children benefited a lot from preschool. At early childhood education, children become familiar to letters, numbers, and shapes. And, more important, they learn how to mingle and get along with other children. Whereas, Undiyaundeye & Julius (2018) argued that speech development during pre-school allows the individual to function as a good listener and speaker in various communication circumstances where learning is completed through unspoken process with no prescribed process of instruction. On the contrary, children learn and acquire skills through a systematic method of instruction as Tridinanti (2018) concluded that digital storytelling learning activities improve the children's vocabulary acquisition of kindergarten students.

Kindergarten is the foundation of Qatar Educational System. It is where children start to recognize letters and blend letters to read simple words. For this reason, in order to ensure access to high quality K-12 education, the National Development Strategy 2011-2016 envisages mandatory kindergarten attendance for Qatari children from the age of 3. (General Secretariat for Developmental Planning, 2011).

So how can ABC's be taught better in ways more interesting, systematic and more relevant to the needs of the students? One of the widely used methods is the Alphabet Song. This is done by singing the alphabets together. It is fun and works well with children. Frost (2017) explained that around age 3 or 4, kids start to make connections between letters and sounds and start to recognize some letters and figure out which sounds go with them . According to Colombini (2018) this method is powerful and effective way to teach, but the problem is not with the method, but with the flawed subject matter. Another method is the Match the Picture. This is also known as "A is for Apple Approach" where letters are associated with pictures. Ferlazzo

(2012) argued that using photos with english learners can be tremendously effective in encouraging them learn many words. The disadvantage of this method is that children become dependent on pictures rather than the alphabet itself. Finally, Chitwood (2015) stated that Montessori sandpaper letters are wonderful for first introducing letter sounds with letter symbols.

For this reason, the research was conducted to study the effect of Sand Paper Letters in student performance and as an alternative method in teaching the alphabets.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

This action research was guided by four main questions:

1. What is the level of performance of students before the use of traditional method and sand paper letters in teaching the alphabets?
2. Is there a significant gain in the scores of respondents in the experimental group before and after the use of sand paper letters?
3. Is there a significant gain in the scores of the control group before and after the application of usual alphabet song and match the picture approach?
4. Is there a significant difference on the level of performance of students after the treatment?

2. Methodology

The Experimental method of research was utilized in the study. According to Singh (2006), experimental method is a scientific method which is oriented to the future in the sense that the researcher was seeking to evaluate something new. This conforms with the definition of Fraenkel, (2003) that experimental research is one of the most powerful research methodologies that establish cause-effect relationship among variables which enables researchers to go beyond description and prediction. In this study, the researcher sought to evaluate the effectiveness of use of Sand Paper Letter as a teaching method.

The study made use of the Pretest-Posttest Equivalent-Group. It involved a total of fourteen (14) respondents drawn from the kindergarten department who took the first semester final exam in English, SY: 2014-2015. Seven (7) samples were identified as control group taught using the traditional Alphabet Song and Match the Picture Approach and seven (7) as experimental group taught using Sand Paper Letters using fish bowl technique or lottery method

to avoid bias, each with an equal chance of being selected to comply with the parametric reliability of the study. T-test for dependent and independent samples were used to analyze data.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Level of Performance of Students before the Use of Traditional Method and Sand Paper Letters in Teaching the Alphabets

Table 1 shows that both groups have almost the same level of performance as reflected in their mean scores of $X = 31.14$ and $X = 32.00$ respectively. T-test for independent samples revealed no statistical significant difference exists on the level of performance of students in the pre-test between the use of traditional method and sand paper letters. This could be reflected on the computed p value of 0.799. This implied that the groups are homogenous and therefore have an equal chance of receiving knowledge before the treatment.

Table 1: Pre-test Scores of Traditional Method and Sand Paper Letter

Variables	Mean	Computed t-Value	Computed p	Decision	Interpretation
Traditional Method	31.14	-0.263	0.799	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant
Sand Paper Letter	32.00				

3.2 Significant Gain in the Scores of Respondents in the Experimental Group before and after the Use of Sand Paper Letters

Table 2 illustrates that the experimental obtained a remarkable increase in the pre-test and post-test mean scores from $X = 32.00$ to $X = 37.80$ respectively. There was a gain of $X = 5.85$ in the mean score of the students. T-test for correlated samples revealed that this gain was statistically significant as reflected on the computed p value of 0.004 which is < 0.05 . This implied that Sand Paper Letter as a teaching method is effective to use.

Table 2: Pre-test and Post Test Scores of Experimental Group

Variables	Mean	Gain	Computed t-Value	Computed p	Decision	Interpretation
Pre-Test	32.00	5.85	4.3	0.004	Reject Ho	Significant
Post-Test	37.80					

3.3 Significant Gain in the Scores of the Control Group before and after the Application of Usual Alphabet Song and Match the Picture Approach

As shown in Table 3, the control group recorded remarkable increase of mean scores from $X = 31.14$ to $X = 37.70$ respectively. There was a gain of $X = 6.57$ in the mean score of the students. T-test for correlated samples revealed that this gain was statistically significant as reflected on the computed p value of 0.049 which is < 0.05 . This implied that traditional approach was effective.

Table 3: Pre-test and Post Test Scores of Control Group

Variables	Mean	Gain	Computed t-Value	Computed p	Decision	Interpretation
Pre-Test	31.14	6.57	2.45	0.049	Reject Ho	Significant
Post-Test	37.70					

3.4 Significant Difference on the Level of Performance of Students after the Treatment

Table 4 shows that both groups gained almost the same level of performance as reflected on their mean scores of $X = 37.7$ and $X = 37.8$ respectively. T-test for independent samples revealed that no statistical significant difference exists in the level of performance of students after the treatment. This could be reflected on the computed p value of 0.67. This means that both the use of Sand Paper Letters and the traditional approach is effective in teaching alphabets in Kindergarten.

Table 4: Post-test Scores of Control Group and Experimental Group

Variables	Mean	Computed t-Value	Computed p	Decision	Interpretation
Control Group	37.7	0.45	0.67	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant
Experimental Group	37.8				

4. Conclusion

The conclusions below were drawn based on the findings:

1. The Pre-Test scores of students revealed that before the use of Sand Paper Letters and the Traditional Approach, students have not fully recognized the alphabets and have the same level of performance before the treatment.
2. The experimental group performed better in letter recognition after the use of Sand Paper Letters. A significant increase on the post-test scores revealed that the use of Sand Paper Letters in teaching the English alphabet in kindergarten is effective.
3. The control group performed better in letter recognition after the use of the Traditional Approach. A significant increase on the post-test scores revealed that the use of Traditional Approach in teaching the English alphabet in kindergarten is still effective.
4. Both the use of Sand Paper Letters and the Traditional Approach is effective in teaching the English alphabet in Kindergarten.

4.1 Recommendation

Based on the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. That a pretest should be conducted to diagnose students' level of performance in letter recognition before teaching the alphabets.
2. That the use of Sand Paper Letters should be utilized as an alternative method in teaching the English alphabet in Kindergarten class.

3. That instruction in sand paper letter cut-outs attached in the Appendix B of this manuscript should be utilized in preparing the materials.
4. That both use of Sand Paper Letters and usual Alphabet Song and Match the Picture approach should be used at the same time in teaching the English alphabet for a better students' performance and well developed letter recognition skills.
5. That a similar study must be conducted in other schools in order to validate the findings of this study.

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