

Oral Reading Intervention for an English Language Learner: A Single-case Design

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Abstract—The purpose of this paper was to investigate the effectiveness of conducting a reading intervention in a public primary school setting in Chinese vernacular school in Malaysia. Literature indicated that struggling readers did not master letter-sound correspondences despite the phonics was emphasised in to date curriculum. One male learner who was identified by his classroom teacher as needing special assistance in reading performance participated this research. Using a single-case research design, the participant's oral reading fluency (ORF) in terms of word correct per minute (WCPM) was measured. Several nonparametric statistics methods, such as Tau and percentage of nonoverlapping data (PND) were applied to compute the degree of association and effectiveness of the intervention, respectively. Visual analysis was carried out to interpret the graph. The data collected was also compared with the updated ORF norm that was established in the United States. The results revealed that the reading intervention facilitated the improvement of ORF of the participant. The significant implications and future research recommendations on the development of reading intervention were highlighted.

Index Terms—reading difficulties, phonics, oral reading fluency, single-case research design

I. INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education in Malaysia has implemented the Standardized Curriculum for Primary School (KSSR) with the goal of fostering learners' phonics in standard British English starting from Primary One (Ali, Hamid & Moni, 2012). However, there are learners still struggling to master the phonics to read (Su & Hawkins, 2013). Regardless to the sociolinguistic background of the learners, all of them learn English language as a second language (ESL) compulsorily in Malaysian public schools. Educators (Chitravelu, Sithamparam & Teh, 2005) reported the common pattern of oral reading problems that the Malaysian ESL learners encountered according to their ethnicities and their first language (L1; see examples Chitravelu et al., 2005). The negative interference from the L1 happens among the Malaysian ESL learners during English oral reading because of the lack of familiarity with their second language (L2; Khor, Low, & Lee, 2014; Pillai & Paramasivam, 2014). It is not an unusual phenomenon for ESL learners to get confused between languages in Malaysia.

Scholars defined struggling readers are those having problems to translate the printed or handwritten words (visual stimuli) into oral language (verbal response) accurately and fluently (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'ennui, Tarver, & Jungjohann et al., 2006). Despite the struggling readers may be skillful in daily language use, thus, they have no problem in daily conversation, they are cognitively challenged in literacy. Learners come from all walks of life and have varying degrees of literacy abilities. The whole-language approach does not work well for learners with reading disabilities, considering the different background of each learner (Turkington & Harris, 2006). Educators understand that there is no single best recipe for the pedagogy on reading. Even though phonics is taught in the schools, phonics alone is insufficient to nurture excellent readers because one size does not fit all.

Hitherto, research on effectiveness of oral reading intervention was heavily done in the United States learners using single-case research design (e.g., Lo, Cooke & Starling, 2011; Tam, Heward & Heng, 2006; Young & Daly, 2016). To delve it deeper, comparatively, similar research design on evaluating the effectiveness of oral reading intervention in English as a second language (ESL) nation such as Malaysia is very rare (Su & Hawkins, 2013).

Since struggling readers have problems in sounding out the printed words accurately and fluently, reading accuracy and fluency can be used to gauge the progression of the readers. Such literacy-related skills are the important factors to predict a child's reading abilities, and hence, are rational to be addressed in a reading intervention.

The primary goal of delivering reading intervention to an emerging English as a second language (ESL) reader who was struggling to master letter-sound correspondence in the present study was to provide an explicit and systematic