

Does Interest mean Development?

-An analysis of classroom Interaction and Performance in Phonics Teaching and Learning

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I. Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem

It is widely believed that in many ways of language development, young learners are different from adult learners. One of the differences is that children have greater ability to play with language in a holistic way of language learning. A lot of researchers have claimed that motivation is one of the key factors in successful language learning development in various reasons. Some of them (Gardner, 1985; McGroarty, 1996) strongly enrich this claim. This persuasive idea is meant for foreign language teachers who work with young students concern how to encourage students to activate their potentials in a class. Most of all, students' interest and preference are concerned while making a plan for each lesson.

Another consideration of this study is the importance of phonics teaching in early beginner in EFL classroom settings. Phonics is now widely considered as an essential element in the language teaching. Korean young learners in the formal education settings with relatively limited exposure to target language reading and literacy experiences must be instructed through effective phonics teaching to develop their phonological awareness for becoming future skillful readers in early school year. Previous studies have been conducted in two different positions; one is Synthetic phonics teaching with sound-symbol relations, and the other Analytic phonics with spelling patterns for rimes. However, one of the purpose of this study is to examine which phonics instruction is the most effective way for early beginning readers in EFL context of Korea; analytic phonics or the same instruction with activities. First, two groups of EFL elementary school students were invited to examine the most effective phonics instruction based on the scores from the pre- and post tests. In addition, the experimental setting has the main purpose of this present study to investigate students' participation during the lessons. The group was conducted phonics activities provided based on students's preference. Therefore, to fulfill the aim of the present study, both groups' classroom interaction was analyzed and presented in a descriptive way, qualitatively. This comparison focused on their classroom interaction, especially on students' participation to investigate the effectiveness of activity-based teaching.

2. Research Questions

- (1) Do phonics instructions based on activities, such as games, chants, or songs predict students' development of phonics skills?
- (2) Does phonics instruction with activities designed to reflect the learners' preference encourage students' participation in class?
- (3) Are there meaningful differences on students' interaction between the experimental group and control group?

II. Theoretical Framework

There are activities which motivate young learners and encourage them to engage in language learning. Also, there are activities that help learners show their hidden potentials. Celce-murcia (2001) mentioned Peck's claim about using songs, poems, and chants in children's language classroom. Based on these educational view points of authentic materials use, this study set the experimental group in an Korean elementary language classroom with activities aiming to make young learners involve in communicative language games. The reason is from the author's strong intension about language teaching, that is, students' interest on the activities in language classroom may turn the classroom into a dynamic and productive spot.

Phonological awareness is essential to early literacy acquisition were clearly postulated by a number of researchers. Previous studies have been conducted in two different theoretical positions; one is Synthetic strategy, letter recoding with sound-symbol relations, and the other is Analytic strategy, in literacy education with spelling patterns for rimes. Although researchers agree on the importance of letter recoding or rime analogy strategy in literacy education, these two opposing instruction have been still controversial. Goswami (1999), whose claims on rime-based mechanism, suggests that the use of rime analogies may affect early literacy skills such as word recognition and word spelling. She insists that a child who learns the spelling patterns for the clue word like beak, can use the patterns to realize the correspondence between beak and peak using grapheme cluster. On the other hand, a synthetic phonics based on phonemic awareness places an emphasis on letter-sound and grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules to identify unfamiliar words (Bowey, 2006). This consideration on the significance of phoneme awareness was justified by the assumption that learning to read is primarily concerned about the knowledge of mapping graphemes onto phonemes based on one-to-one letter-sound correspondence (Share, 1995).

III. Method

1. Participants

This study invited fifty 5th-grade Korean elementary children with five 40-minute

teaching sessions over two months. According to two different instructions: analytic phonics vs. the same instruction with activities, pre- and post tests on phonological tasks are employed to explore instruction effect on phonological achievement. Pre-test scores proved that both groups' abilities are equal on phonological development before giving these experimental instructions.

2. Measure

Recently, the same author's previous study suggested effective phonics instruction, the priority order of teaching, such as phoneme-based before rime-based instruction, to appropriate L2 word reading abilities through investigating effective phonics approach to develop phonological awareness and word reading skill. Considering the participants' year of English learning experience, about 2 year-long experience prior to these instruction settings, we assume that participants have prior knowledge about letter-sound correspondence in a basic level, this study took a side with analytic phonics teaching, which can help guide early literacy instruction for Korean-speaking children learning to read and spell in English as a second language.

1) Phonological awareness test

Phonological awareness was measured with two different tests based on phoneme and rime. Phoneme test measured the ability to identify the initial, medial, and final sounds. Participants were asked to choose the word containing a targeted sound in each position after hearing the example sound from a teacher. Rime test assessed the sensitivity to patterns in each word. They were asked to select the word sharing a targeted rime in a multiple choice.

2) Activities based on Survey of Gaming Experience

- Chant, Doctor Siew's 'Hop On Pop'
- Games, such as BINGO, READ ALOUD in a group, SPEED SPELLING according to participants' interest, attitudes on previous experience through questionnaires
- Song, 'Lion sleeps tonight'

3) Questionnaires

To gather background information from the subjects, there are questionnaires distributed. Also students in two groups were asked to their previous experience about activities, which presented the preference of activities.

4) Analysis of Classroom Interaction

The I-R-F (Initiate- Response- Feedback) sequence (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975) was used as a tool to measure the frequency of classroom interaction. This study

counts on three kinds of interaction forms. One is Initiation–response–feedback as a set of interactional discourse. Another is Initiation–Response without feedback, which is sometimes performed in a language classroom in practice. The third is Student–initiated interaction, which is already mentioned in the category of the analysis of student talk.

5) Analysis of the Student Talk

There are three parts to analyze student talk; student response, specific, open-ended and student-initiated talk, which are modified from Brown (2001).

STUDENT TALK	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student response, specific 2. Student response, open-ended 3. Student-initiated talk
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<Table 1> Student Talk adapted from the FLINT system

As shown above in Table 1, when a student responds to a teacher within a specific and limited range of available or previously practiced answers such as reading aloud, dictation, or drills. This usually occurs when a teacher asks displayed questions whose answers are mainly expected by the teacher or previous knowledge. The specific examples were found from the present data as follows in result section. Second, Student response, open-ended is defined a statement which includes students' own ideas, opinions, reactions, feelings for students to response to the teachers questions or requests. Last, Student-initiated talk is defined as a statement with which a student initiates participation. Students' contribution is mainly used later in I-R-F (or I-R) sequence in classroom interaction.

IV. Results

1. Results for question 1

Do phonics instructions based on activities, such as games, chants, or songs predict students' development of phonics skills?

2. Results for question 2

Does phonics instruction with activities designed to reflect the learners' preference encourage students' participation in class?

Most of students' answers were expected by the teacher or students' previous knowledge, so student contributions in classroom interaction were rare in both groups.

3. Results for question 3

Are there meaningful differences on students' interaction between the experimental

group and control group?

In Korean context, language teachers have the predominant roles in the classroom discourse, so I-R-F sequence is usually conducted by teachers' initiating moves, then a student responds (response), and the teacher evaluates the response. This sequence may be illustrated following separately.

=> Results will be presented in separate handout, because of spacial constraints to show a number of data, which can be valuable to share with classroom teachers.

V. Conclusion

Acquiring literacy in the early years means that students need to develop explicit fluent knowledge of the sound structure of the language and its relationship to orthography in order to learn extensive, future reading effectively. The last two decades researches are conducted on linking children's ability with phonological awareness and their progress in beginning reading. Of these controversial, pedagogical views, this paper adopts the former method, analytic phonics which is based on rime-based instruction.

Though the result from participants' test showed that there are substantial improvement on post test, many of them still did not participate in activities, which cannot prove the relationship between the students' interest and the language development to be able to teach children about phonemes with certainty. Another noticeable finding is that student contributions in both groups' classroom interaction were rare in total. Because of teacher-fronted interaction found as the feature of the classroom interaction of the present study, the rare occurrence of student open response and initiative move can be explained by previous researchers' study.

In this study, the student talk in both groups similarly consists of a single word. Clearly, such interactions do not help the language learning development, one of the stated goals of activity use in language class. This also appears that students in a group with activities paid too much attention on the very nature of games, activities as competing and accomplishing them. It might cause the participants restricted variety of communication.

These results indicate that the students who are interested in the materials and activities, did not participate the activities with attention or action. We can assume that they are interested in materials provided in a class rather than the elements which they should pay attention on related to how to learn the language.

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