

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING ELECTRONIC LANGUAGE GAMES IN DEVELOPING READING SKILLS AMONG THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN SKAKA CITY OF SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT: *The present study is aimed to investigate the extent of the electronic language games effectiveness in developing reading skills among year one primary school children in Skaka, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. To achieve this, the researcher used quasi-experimental approach, and chose a group of primary school children consisting of 60, divided into two equal groups: experimental group and control group consisting of 30 children each. The contents of the course, "My Beautiful Language" of unit five "My Games and My Hobbies" were analyzed to determine the list of reading skills (auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, oral discrimination and perception). Additionally electronic language games were designed according to suitable prototypes of electronic games in order to develop the reading skills of the first grade children. Note cards and achievement test on reading skills were also developed, and followed by the experiment, which utilized the application tool, and data analysis. The results of this study show that the first grade students were positively affected by the use of electronic language games in developing reading skills (auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, oral discrimination and perception). As the implication of the study, the researcher recommends the development and the design of electronic language games for all units in the course, "My Beautiful Language" and for the other different grades at school.*

KEYWORDS: Effectivity, Educational electronic games, Linguistic skill, Elementary Phase

INTRODUCTION

Business Allah has sent the Holy Quran in Arabic tongue, giving Arabic language value and loftiness and eternized it through this noble association. It has been strengthened by Quran's rhetoric and miracles and become of importance among other languages and even surpassed them.

Thus Arabic language has been the very strong cord binding whole Muslims regardless of their races and mother tongues. People learn by it the principles and rules of their religion and preserve their cultures and heritages. Accordingly, Arabic language gained highest attention all over the Arabic and Islamic worlds and became the language of learning and teaching in different studying stages such as schools, institutes and universities, as well as the language of books, researches, studies, and different magazines and dailies. So mastering diversified Arabic language skills i.e. reading, writing, talking and listening guarantees coherence of Muslim society.

Since Arabic language consists of four techniques (listening, talking, reading and writing) every technique has its own importance in the life of the individual and society. Reading and

writing are considered as the most important linguistic techniques. Since, they are two inseparable mutually effective operations; student must learn reading besides writing side by side. Hence student learns pronunciation through vocalization, and then he tries to write it or express it by any mean.

Accordingly, reading skill is one of the skills to be mastered by elementary school student. Since it is the basis of learning, upon which student's general learning is established, it should be emphasized due to its status and sensitive importance. It has attracted many researches and studies such as Mohammad (2010), Sallout (2010), Abdul Fattah (2012), all of them agreed upon the weakness of elementary school students' in reading skills. The researcher has observed that too through the followings:

- The researcher has worked for a long time in the governmental education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where has observed the complains of Arabic language teachers from the weakness and low level of the first phase of the elementary education students in reading skills.
- The researcher has acquainted with transcripts of scores, follow up reports and supervision reports in some schools, which have exposed to him students' low level Arabic language skills generally, and in reading skill particularly.

According to the foregoing, a weakness in reading skill among elementary phase students, that needs to be studied in order to define the reasons of this weakness and propose remediation methods. The current research is considered as one of those researches aiming to treat this weakness in the first phase of the elementary education through adopting modern teaching methods appropriate with the nature of the elementary education and its teaching methods, as well as with the students' nature and characteristics, among which is the tendency to play. Play technique considers using games in teaching as a strategy, is one of the most modern and sophisticated teaching techniques, due to its tendency to consider the psychological aspects of the learners, in particular first elementary class students as well as their likings, desires and interests. Since this technique is based on the psychological side of the learner to transfer him to learn through play activity. Hence teaching is apparently just play, nevertheless its reality indeed is teaching purposes, been strived for realizing them through this amusing and excitative activity (Ibrahim & Balaawi, 2007, 241).

Educationists recommend applying educational games in the scientific attitude since they are one of the most important educational activities due to its potentials in Providing students with a quasi-real life experience, Offering them safety and security, Being economic, Contribution effectively in developing and enhancing self-confidence, Acquiring a set of desired value they need, Contribution in diagnosing problems they face (Ali, 2001, 296).

Educational games are considered effective tools helping students to recognize all forms of the Alphabetical letters learn their writing techniques and help students linking different symbols and meanings. These games make students familiar with new words and vocabulary through amusing and interesting style, since they bring them out of dealing with inactive symbols to a stage of interacting with them through different linguistic games (Raslan, 2005, 25-26).

Implementing play in teaching process draw the attention of students, in particular elementary phase students due to their strong tends to mobility. If we could benefit of this character and

orient it through playing, we would absolutely develop and enhance their different linguistic skills enabling them to learn writing and reading quite well (Matar, 2004, 151).

Many researches and studies dealt with educational games in details due to their importance in the teaching attitude, such as the studies of Nguyen (2003), Ahmad (2011), Abdul Hamid (2012), Suleiman (2013), all of them agreed upon the positive role of the educational games in the educational attitude generally and in developing the linguistic games particularly.

With the wide spread of modern electronic devices, the society and parents are keen to provide children with up-to-date smart phones, tablets, laptops and similar modern mobile communications devices. Family and/or school are concerned to keep children pace with modern devices, considering them as tools for leaning and for educational and cultural progress through play and amusements, regardless the negative and positive side effects on children using such devices for long times.

In light of this, the idea of the research was originated which is the search for original linguistic games appropriate for present day children who are accustomed to use all kinds of technology and how to implement PCs in the educational process.

The research idea benefits of the electronic games' role in supporting the contributions of learners attractively and effectively; and providing them with experiences in an amusing atmosphere dominating over their emotions and feelings, hence increasing concentrations and diversifying students' mental processes operating during play such as comprehension, analysis and decision making (Al Far, 2006, 67).

The current research strived to use technology in developing elementary phase's students skills through design electronic linguistic games able to develop and enhance their reading skills and activate their leaning process.

The current research aims as well to explore and evaluate the effect of electronic language games in developing and activating reading skills of the elementary phase first level students through evaluating this measuring this effect by mastering these skills in "My Beautiful Language" course.

Statement of the problem

An international symposium was held in Morocco in 2011 about the new approaches for teaching Arabic language. Fifty five countries have participated in the domain of international evaluation of reading sufficiency of mother tongue, among which are five Arab countries i.e. Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Morocco. The conclusions of the symposium indicated that all participating Arab countries achievements, particularly Saudi Arabia, were less than the *International Benchmarks of Reading Achievement*. This confirmed the presence of a serious problem in teaching and learning process concentrated in reading and writing (IEA, 2011).

Al Amri study (2011) has done on a group of Arabic language teachers of different teaching stages in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to prospect the students 'achievement levels in Arabic language. The results and conclusions revealed clearly the presence of weakness in students' achievements in Arabic language throughout all phases, ascribing that to adopting traditional teaching methods and to the lack of modern techniques in teaching process.

Many modern educational trends stressed on disassociation from the traditional teaching methods and replacing them by teaching strategies through play instead. This necessitates the search for modern means and techniques capable to help developing reading skills of young generation. Some studies revealed that applying electronic games in the teaching attitude incites children's motivation to learn reading skills such as Danesi (1993), Crystal (1996), Herselman (1999), Mioduser et al. (2000). Accordingly electronic linguistic games are considered among the best means in this regard. The current research strived to design electronic linguistic games and to explore their effectivity in developing some reading skills of the first elementary level students in Al Skaka city.

Purpose of the Study

The research aims to realize the following:

1. Defining the subsidiary reading skills (auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, comprehension and oral discrimination) developable by the first elementary level students.
2. Designing appropriate electronic linguistic games capable to develop reading skills of the first elementary primary class students.
3. Defining the effectivity of the electronic linguistic games in developing reading skills of the first primary class students.

Research Questions

1. What is the list of the students' reading skills (auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, comprehension and oral discrimination) developable in the selected unit of the "My Beautiful Language" course book of the first elementary primary class students?
2. What is the appropriate design of the electronic linguistic games capable to develop reading skills of the first elementary primary class students?
3. What is the effectivity of the electronic language games in developing reading skills of the first elementary primary class students?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses tested at .05 level of significance guided the study:

H₀₁: There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the students' scores averages in the pre-test of all reading skills between the experimental group and the control group.

H₀₂: There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the students' scores averages in post-test of all reading skills between the experimental group and the control group.

H₀₃: The electronic language games are effective in developing reading skills among the first primary class students at Skaka City.

METHOD

The current research adopted the descriptive methodology to describe the elementary first level students' real performance in reading skills and derive the theoretical framework. This methodology is often applied to track phenomena and events under study after collecting quantitative and qualitative data on them according to the periods of tracking to define their relationship with other different phenomena for understanding the reality in order to contribute in developing it. Quasi experimental methodology was also applied when research tools were applied on students. This methodology adopted in this research is based on The Pre-test Post-test Equivalent Groups Design. After finishing the preparation of the current research tools controlling them and assuring their validity, the researcher reviews in the following the steps and procedures for applying them:

- an issued official approval for performing the research and facilitating the task of the researcher in the targeted schools in Skaka region has been obtained.
- The site has been ideally prepared by the researcher for applying the basic experiment.
- the researcher has controlled some variables he has deemed important and need to be controlled such as age, parents education, student general achievement in the previous semester, student achievement in "My Beautiful Language" in the previous semester and the achievement in pre-test designed for the current research.
- A pre-application of the research tools (achievement test) has been performed on the experimental and control group. The achievement test has been applied in the first classes lasted one and half hour i.e. forty five minutes for each sample. The grades the pre-application of the achievement test for the experimental and control group have been collected, monitored and statistically processed and presented in table (1).
- From the previous table (1), it is evident that there are no statistically significant differences in the results of the achievement and note card pre-test of the experimental and control samples for the reading skills (auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, comprehension and oral discrimination). it is also evident that Z value for the sum of the achievement and note card pre-test is (1.422) with a significant level more than (0.05) indicative for equality between the two samples before performing the experiment.
- After finishing the pre-application of the research tools, the researcher has applied the electronic language games strategy in teaching the targeted educational context on the experimental sample for one month during a (45) minutes lasting class delivered in the computer lab every day. Hence the program consisted of 20 classes prepared in anticipation. That means, all PCs are on and the game is running on the introductory page and ready to sail from. Before play the simple introduction is given over ten minutes. Then the students play for twenty five minutes. In the last ten minutes all notes and remarks gathered through play time are ordered and students' leave is arranged. The control sample has been taught through the usual tradition style.
- A post-application of the research tools (achievement test) has been performed on the experimental and control groups. The achievement test has been applied in the first classes lasted one and half hour i.e. forty five minutes for the experimental and control groups have been collected, monitored and statistically treated for analysis and

interpretation to answer the research assumptions.

Skill	Test	Experimental				Control					Mann-Whitney test
		Min	Max	Aver	Median between quarters	Min	Max	Aver	Median between quarters	Z	
Auditory discriminati	Pre-test	00.1	75.4	75.4	75.4	50.1	75.4	00.3	25.1	054.0	957.0
Visual discriminati	Pre-test	00.2	5.5	5.5	5.5	25.2	50.5	13.4	75.1	002.1	316.0
Comprehension	Pre-test	24.0	25.2	25.2	25.2	50.0	25.2	38.1	56.0	134.1	257.0
Oral discriminati	Pre-test	00.0	00.4	00.4	00.4	00.0	50.3	00.2	75.0	617.0	537.0
Sum	Pre-test	75.5	00.13	00.13	00.13	75.7	50.14	38.10	31.2	422.1	115.0

Table 1. the results of the achievement pre-test

- After finishing the preparation of the current research's special tools and conducting its relevant special experiment and reviewing its results, the students' scores in the achievement pre-test and post-test were observed. The achievement pre-test and post-test, designed specifically for this purpose, to measure the ability of the first primary class students (the study sample) of reading skills in the fifth unit of the My "Beautiful Language" course book.
- Accordingly, the students' scores acquired through pre-test, post-test, have been analyzed through applying statistical methods, approaches and procedures using (SPSS) program, in order to ease answering the research questions and verify its hypothesis.

RESULTS

The data collected were analyzed and presented in the following tables according to research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question 1: What is the list of the students' reading skills (auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, comprehension and oral discrimination) developable in the selected unit of the "My Beautiful Language" course book of the first elementary primary class students?

To answer this question, the researcher has analyzed the entire fifth unit "My Games And Hobbies" of "My Beautiful Language" course book of the first primary class. The researcher has prepared a list of all reading skills developable in the selected unit. The list was presented

before a group of experts and specialists in the field of curricula and Arabic language teaching methods as well as to another group of Arabic language teachers and inspectors of the primary phase, to verify it from their perspective, and evaluates the need to be improved, in order to fulfil the goal of creating it. The verification and evaluation of the list were performed according to the following main axial topics:

- List's adequacy to the test.
- List's contents of sample students' skills.
- Skills' forgoing methods and presentation style.
- The importance of these skills and their age-related scientific impact on the students.

Through the experts, specialists and teachers verification and evaluation, the researcher got sufficient conclusions and instructions which contributed in his modifying the list and excluding inadequate items from it. He selected a set of skills which are more than 80% in common between the referees, and rearranged them alphabetically in a modified new list according to their importance. Hence the list guaranteed a thorough coverage of the entire unit under study and realizing its goals. A specially-designed table was put clarifying the skills.

Research Question 2: What is the appropriate design of the electronic language games capable to develop reading skills of the first elementary primary class students?

To answer this question the researcher has worked out a list of the reading skills of the entire fifth unit "My Games and Hobbies" of "My Beautiful Language" course book, needed to be developed among the first primary class students. The researcher has first reviewed previous researches and studies such as: Richard (2001), Din (2001), Seonju (2002), Rosas et al. (2003), Al Abbadi (2005), Akinsola (2007), Mubarak (2012). Second, he has defined the suitable educational content of the reading skills compatible with the research goals to design the scenario of the electronic language games. Hence, the needed multimedia (writings, images, still and animated drawings) were defined collected and produced. Software special audio clips were recorded. Sound affects files, music clips and songs adequate for the electronic games and for the primary phase, were downloaded using Courselabe 2.4 software. After having the electronic game produced, the researcher presented it before a group of experts and specialists in this field. Their views and instructions have been considered to make the designed game in a form that guarantees realizing and achieving its goals it was designed for.

Table 1 Research Question 3: What is the effectivity of the electronic language games in developing reading skills of the first elementary primary class students?

To answer this question, the researcher has applied the research's tools represented by the achievement pre-test on the two research experimental and control samples. The experimental sample was taught using the electronic games designed for this research, while the control sample was taught using conventional method. After conducting the experiment, the research's tools were applied in a post-test on the experimental and the control samples. The scores of applying these tools in pre-test and post-test were observed and statistically treated to answer the main research question, verify the validity of its hypothesis and analyze its scores. The results are as following:

The first hypothesis states that, there are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the students' scores averages in the pre-test of all reading skills between the experimental group and the control group.

The second hypothesis states that, there are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the students' scores averages in post-test of all reading skills between the experimental group and the control group.

The researcher applied Kolmogorov-Smirnov test on the second pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group and the control group, to examine the distribution equity of both tests scores, Table 2.

Table 2. The Scores of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test That Examined the Distribution Equity of the Second Pre-test and Post-test Scores and the Percentage Difference Between Them

Skill	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Statistic	Degree of Freedom	Significance
	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>df</i>	P
auditory pre-test	0.119	60	0.035
visual pre-test	0.109	60	0.076
comprehension pre-test	0.126	60	0.019
oral pre-test	0.261	60	0.000
total skills pre-test	0.076	60	0.200*
auditory post-test	0.111	60	0.062
visual post-test	0.124	60	0.022
comprehension post-test	0.136	60	0.008
oral pre-test	0.174	60	0.000
total skills pre-test	0.107	60	0.087

*Significance minimum value

Table 2 shows the scores of Kolmogorov-Smirnov that examined the distribution equity of the second pre-test and post-test scores and the percentage difference between them. A lack of distribution equity in the second pre-test and post-test scores and in the percentage difference between them was realized as seen in the significance level values depicted in the table, with exception in the visual discrimination pre-test scores as the significance value = (0.076) and in the auditory discrimination post-test scores as the significance value = (0.062). These values as presented previously, necessitate the use of non-laboratory-based tests and the use of median and range as measures of central tendency and dispersion between the two groups respectively.

after that The researcher applied (Mann-Whitney) Test and (Wilcoxon) Test and (Signed rank Wilcoxon) for comparing the pre-test and post-test scores in the entire skills of the two groups, Table 3.

Table 3. Scores of (Mann-Whitney) Test and (Wilcoxon) Test and (Signed rank Wilcoxon) for comparing the pre-test and post test scores in the entire skills of the two groups.

Skill s	Test	Experimental							Control							(Mann-Whitney)	
		Minimum	Maximum	mean	median	Post-test within the two groups	(Wilcoxon) Signed Ranks Test		Minimum	Maximum	mean	median	Post-test within the two groups	(Wilcoxon) Signed Ranks Test			
							(z 2)	Significance						(Z 2)	Significance		
All read ing skill	pre- test	.575	13.00	9.83	9.88	2.00	.463	.463	.775	14.50	10.48	10.38	2.31	.096	.033	1.422	.0115
	post test	7.00	15.50	12.56	12.75	1.81			8.25	14.50	10.15	10.38	1.53			4.554	0.001

From Table 3 it is clear that the mean of the pre-test in the entire skills of the experimental group was (9.83) and of the control group was (10.48). Whereas the mean of the post-test of control group's entire skills was (12.56), and for the control group was (10.15). The mean *percentage difference of the* pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group was (+27.77%) and of the control group was (-3.1%).

From the analysis of (Mann-Whitney) test) scores and the percentage differences between the two experimental and the control groups in the pre-test and post test of the entire skills, *it was concluded that there is no statistically significant difference between them*. This confirm the homogeneity of both groups before the experiment, as the (Z1) parameter value = (1.422) and a significance level value = (0.115).

Nevertheless, a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of the groups was observed, as the (Z1) parameter value = (4.554) and a significance level = (0.001). This indicates that the mean of the post test scores of the entire skills experiment group was higher than its counterpart of the control group as shown in the table.

(Wilcoxon) Test indicates a difference between the pre-test and post test results in favour of the experimental group. As the (Z2) parameter value for comparison among each group independently = (4.638) and the significance level = (0.000). While (Z2) parameter value in the control group = (0.960) and the significance level higher than (0.337), hence indicating a lack of difference between the pre-test and post test results of the control group.

After Reviewing and Analyzing the Previous Results, the Researcher Concluded the Following:

The **first hypothesis** assumed that there is no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between students scores' means of the experimental and control groups in the pre-test of the entire reading skills.

No statistically significant differences in the pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups were recognized, as *the* (Z1) parameter statistical value = (1.422) and a significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), which confirms the homogeneity of both groups before conducting the experiment. Thus, the null *hypothesis was accepted as is*.

The **second hypothesis** assumed that there is no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between students scores' means of the experimental and control groups in the post-test of the entire reading skills.

Accordingly, after statistical treatment of the post-test results of the experimental and control groups, statistically significant differences at a significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.01$) for the favour of the experimental group were recognized. They are attributed to the application of the electronic linguistic games in teaching, as *the* (Z1) parameter statistical value = (4.554) and a significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.01$). Thus, the null *hypothesis was rejected*.

The third hypothesis assumed that the electronic language games are effective in developing reading skills among the first primary class students at Skaka City. Accordingly, the researcher has calculated the (Z) value, the value of Eta-squared (η^2) and its effect size, Table 4.

Table 4. (Z) Value of the (Mann-Whitney) Test for Testing the Difference Between the Two Groups' Total Results in the Posttest, the Note Card, the Value of Eta-Squared (H^2) and Its Effect Size

(Z) Value	Eta-Squared Value (η^2)	Effect Size
4.554	0.302	large

Table 4. shows the (Z) value of the (Mann-Whitney) Test for testing the difference between the two groups' total results in the post-test, the note card, and the value of Eta-squared value (η^2) and its effect size. It was clear from the previous table that the (Z) calculated value is a statistical parameter at significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.01$) to differentiate between the two groups in the total scores of the post-test and note card. This indicates the presence of statistically significant differences in the total scores of both experimental and control group. The differences were for the favour of the experimental group, this means, the software has an effect in deed. The researcher has calculated the effect size using Eta-squared value (η^2), which attained (0.302), hence the effect is large.

Through answering the questions of this research and reviewing the results of the previous assumptions, the effectiveness of the electronically designed linguistic games in developing reading skills (auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, comprehension and oral discrimination) for the first primary class students at Skaka City. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The most important results of the research are summarized in the following:

1. A weakness in students' reading skills level: This was evident through reviewing the mean of the experimental group scores in reading skills pre-test, which was at (9.83), while the mean of the control group scores in the same pre-test was around (10.48). This called the researcher on trying the implementation of different strategies and means to raise the students' scientific and practical level and develop their different reading skills through implementing and applying different electronic linguistic games to remedy this weakness.
2. The possibility to implement the content of "My Beautiful Language" course book of the first primary class and adapt it to be taught through special electronic games purposely produced with the aim of developing reading skills in particular and different Arabic language in general.
3. The current research presented a clear conception on the most appropriate way of implementing electronic linguistic games in developing reading skills of the first levels of elementary education.
4. A remarkable improvement and a great change in the post-test scores of the experimental group in comparison with the control group in reading skills (auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, comprehension and oral discrimination) was observed.

Implication of the Study

The implementation of electronic linguistic games has a great effect on the theoretical and practical educational level in developing students' reading skills. The whole effect size of the total post-test attained (0.302). The researcher attributed this result to the implementation of electronic linguistic games applied in this research, which increased students' tendency and motivation to study due to the amusing and exciting atmosphere that brought them out the traditional and familiar teaching frame to an adventure and playing teaching style.

CONCLUSION

The results of this research are in conformity with the results of some studies which emphasized the implementation of the electronic educational games in developing the linguistic skills in reading and writing such as the studies of Din (2001), Rosas et al. (2003), Abou Mandil (2006).

The current research is in conformity with many studies which agreed upon the role of the electronic educational games in enhancing achievement, developing skills and different students' abilities in different other study subjects, such as the studies of Richard (2001), Seonju (2002), Akinsola (2007).

According to the previously mentioned results, the researcher stressed that the implementation of the electronic linguistic games is able to contribute in developing reading skills of the elementary first level students effectively.

Recommendations

1. Conducting special training courses for teachers, educationists and decision makers to clarify the importance of using electronic games in teaching Arabic language in particular, and in all study phases as well.
2. Paying attention to develop, design and produce electronic linguistic games for all “My Beautiful Language” units and in all different study phases as well.
3. Setting incentives and motivating awards for teachers and educationists who produce electronic educational games in their field of specialization, patent, register and classify their production, to ease retrieving and acquisition by another teacher for using it, hence reserving the rights of its designer and producer in accordance with the reservation of the intellectual property rights adopted by the ministry of education and teaching.
4. Conducting more educational studies and researches on the effect of the electronic linguistic games on developing Arabic language different skills, particularly in the first elementary teaching levels.
5. Offer a teaching environment adequate for using electronic linguistic games in order to bear their expected results for exact evaluation.
6. Implement every new and adequate different educational techniques particularly those relevant to educational computer games and cease teaching in a steady routine manner, in order to guarantee diversification of teaching methods and keep students’ excitement and thrilling, which are very important in learning among students.

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