

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter describes the approach, the selection of subjects, the procedures, design of the study and the analysis used.

3.1 Approach

The researcher used a qualitative approach for this study. Students were exposed to new vocabulary relevant to certain topics, such as food, clothes and family. The new vocabulary was introduced through various activities conducted in class (Appendix I).

A total of five vocabulary activities were carried out in this study. The topics of the vocabulary activities were food, clothes, family, directions, and occupation. The vocabulary for each topic was introduced using different activities. The purpose for the variety in activities was to maintain the students' interest and make learning new vocabulary fun for the students.

In order to study if the new vocabulary was effective in encouraging

students to speak, students then carried out speaking activities. The speaking activities were selected to correspond with the new vocabulary introduced earlier.

A total of five speaking activities were selected according to the topics of the new vocabulary. All the activities required the students to use as much of the new vocabulary as possible. The reason for this was to study if the new vocabulary introduced had been effective in encouraging the students to speak.

3.2 The Subjects

Initially this study was planned for 15 standard four students of very low proficiency. However during the school holidays, only an average of seven students attended the classes taught by the researcher. Nevertheless, the study was still carried out on these students.

The subjects comprised of Malay students who attended schools in the district of Petaling Jaya, Selangor. Based on information gathered from the students and parents, these students did not use nor read in English outside the classroom. In fact, they were even reluctant to use English in the classroom. When questioned, these students explained that they did not know enough words to express themselves.

3.2 Materials

For the purpose of this study, five vocabulary activities and five speaking activities were designed and adapted by the researcher (Appendix I). Each vocabulary activity corresponded with a pre-selected topic. The topics were food, clothes, family, directions, and occupation. These topics were selected due to several reasons. The first reason was that these topics were frequently used in their KBSR syllabus, second, the students were familiar with these topics, and finally, they would be able to use them in casual speech.

In order to provide opportunity for the students to use the new vocabulary, five speaking activities were carried out. Similarly, the speaking activities were designed to correspond with the five topics selected earlier.

3.4 Procedure

In order to carry out the activities for this study, five lessons were selected and recorded. The lessons chosen started on the 18th of December 1999 and ended on the 12th of January 2000.

Initially the researcher had to determine the appropriate vocabulary relevant to the students. References used for this purpose were the standard five KBSR textbooks and KBSR revision books. The reason for this was so that the vocabulary introduced to them would not be entirely useless to the students, as they will be revised in the new school term. Furthermore, knowing the vocabulary in advance will prepare them for a better start in their English lessons.

All the vocabulary activities were carried out during the first half of the lessons and the speaking activities in the second half. All the lessons were recorded on audiocassette, however only the speaking activities were transcribed (Appendix 3). Recordings of the vocabulary activities were used as reference for this study. The researcher also kept a teaching journal of the lessons.

Saturday, 18th December 1999

The first vocabulary activity was carried out on Saturday the 18th December 1999. The vocabulary focus was food-related items, which included fruits, vegetables, and drinks. The researcher first wrote all the words on the board and encouraged students to give the meanings of these words. The researcher provided clues to the words, which were unfamiliar to the students.

The students were then divided into two groups; 'student A' and 'student B' and then were given the respective crossword puzzles. They were instructed to write definitions for the missing words allocated to the respective puzzles. Then they were told to read out the definitions to a student from a different group.

Students were told that they were going to simulate going shopping for groceries. A student was selected to act as the 'seller' and the rest as the 'customers'. The 'customers' would request for certain items they want

from the 'seller'. If the 'customers' used the right word, then the 'seller' would give them cards with pictures of the items requested.

Wednesday, 22nd December 1999

For the second vocabulary activity, students were exposed to words used to describe the physical appearance people such as curly hair, moustache, and hair color. The researcher introduced the activity by selecting several students in the class and asked the class to give words, which described these students' physical appearances. The words given were written on the board and the researcher encouraged the class to correct any mistakes or inaccuracies.

Students were then divided into groups of three. They were given two sets of cards, one with descriptions of people and the other with pictures of people corresponding to these descriptions. The instructions were to turn over one card from each set at a time and to try to find a match.

The second speaking activity had the students pretend to be detectives and try to identify the thief who stole a friend's bag. One student who was chosen to be the victim had to select a picture and describe it to the rest of the class, who were the detectives. The detectives, then had to identify the perpetrator from the collection of pictures laid out for them.

Wednesday, 29th December 1999

The third vocabulary activity was a simple one, where the students were exposed to words, which described items of clothing such as striped shirt, leather boots, blue skirt and long pants. First, the researcher showed the class some pictures of items of clothing and asked the students to identify them.

Again pictures and photos were used for this activity. They were instructed to include colors and patterns of the items of clothing in their descriptions.

The speaking activity required the students to pretend talking on the phone. The scenario was two friends on the phone planning to dress alike for a party. One of the pair described to the other what he or she planned to wear to the party using pictures from the vocabulary activity as a guide. The other pair drew these items of clothing on a piece of paper. The pair who matched each other's pictures won.

Wednesday, 5th January 2000

The fourth vocabulary focussed on occupations and words related to various occupations, for example, sales promoter, shift, and factory. The researcher began by writing an occupation on the board and asked the students to give any word related to that occupation, such as the place of work, kind of work or any tools used.

This activity is similar to the TV game show 'Win, Lose or Draw'. The students were divided into two teams. Each team member had to pick out a card with words

related to different occupations. That team member then had to draw clues on the board while the other members guessed the word.

The fourth speaking activity is similar to the second speaking activity with one exception. This activity required the rest of the class to ask questions about the occupation chosen by the student. The class then had to guess the occupation.

Wednesday, 12th January 2000

The fifth vocabulary activity emphasized words used in giving directions, such as turn right, drive along and next to. The researcher introduced the vocabulary by demonstrating with a toy vehicle on a map.

Each pair of students was given a small toy vehicle and a street map for the last vocabulary activity. The researcher wrote directions on the board to several places on the map and the student marked each place they arrived.

The speaking activity also used the same city map and toy vehicles. The students worked in pairs again for this activity. One became the 'taxi driver' and the other the 'passenger'. The 'passenger' had to draw two cards, one for his current location and the other for his destination. The 'taxi driver' was not told of the destination. The 'passenger' had to give directions to the 'taxi driver' who moved the toy vehicle according to the directions.

After each lesson the researcher made entries in her teaching journal in order to monitor interaction with the students and any problems that arose during the lessons. The researcher also took notes on the observed reaction and behavior of the students during the lessons particularly in carrying out the activities.