

INTERVENTION PROGRAM FOR LITERACY DISABILITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Knowing how to read and write or literacy abilities are the most important basic skills that students need to acquire at the early years in school. Parents are sending their children to school with the hope that their children will be able to acquire these two important skills and to continue with their education at higher level without any difficulty. Literacy skills will help them to acquire other skills and help them to gather information through print and electronic media. Proficiency in literacy skills will help them to achieve better in the other subjects taught in classrooms. On the other hand, literacy disability will cause them to be left behind in many classroom activities. Studies in the United States have shown that if students were not able to read or write by the age of nine or third grade in elementary school, there is a great possibility for them to drop out from school at the higher level (Vellutino, Scanlon, & Lyon, 2000). This study will provide literacy disability students in Malay language with an intervention program using multimedia presentation. The aim of the study is to develop the multimedia materials and to look at the effectiveness of materials for reading disabled students in primary schools in Malaysia. The development of the material will be based on the requirement and the need to attract and motivate students who are being identified as disabled readers in the classrooms by The Ministry of Education's screening test.

Objectives

Objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate the problems faced by teachers in the literacy remediation program for Malay language in various primary schools in Malaysia.
2. To investigate various methods and materials used by teachers in the literacy remediation program in schools
3. To develop a multimedia literacy disability intervention program materials and to test the effectiveness of the multimedia materials for primary school

Research Questions

1. What are the problems faced by teachers in implementing reading remediation programs in schools in Malaysia?
2. What are the materials used by teachers in reading remediation programs in their classrooms?
3. What are the steps that need to be taken in developing multimedia materials for reading intervention programs for early level of primary school?

Methodology

In the first phase of the study, interviews were carried out with reading remediation teachers, experts in Malay language literacy programs, state and district education officers, lecturers in Institute of Teachers Education, and experts in remediation programs in school to find out the problems faced by teachers and schools in implementing reading remediation programs in classrooms. In the second phase, visits to several reading remediation classrooms were carried out to look at the materials used by teachers in their classroom to help students at early level acquire reading and writing skills. In the third phase, the researcher developed a multimedia literacy

disability intervention program to be used and tested in group reading remediation students in classrooms.

Findings

The study has collected data from a few reading remediation classrooms in five states in Malaysia. Interviews and observation were done to look at the problems faced by remediation teachers, methods they used to teach in the classrooms, and materials that they used in the process of teaching and learning. The study found that:

1. Most of the teachers teaching in reading remediation classrooms were not special education teachers. They were assigned as reading remediation teachers because they were Malay language teachers and no remediation specialists or special education teachers were available in the school. Some of the teachers were given some exposure to reading remediation programs through short courses that they attended during school holidays or weekends. Most say that they need more training in the program and they need to learn a lot more skills in dealing with reading disabled students.
2. The materials used by teachers were given by the district and state education department. Most of the materials were in the print form or photocopy of several materials that have been used by the teachers before them. Some teachers used charts and posters that were also provided by the district and state education departments, some schools bought their own posters and alphabet charts and the others made their own alphabet charts, flash cards, and posters. Most of these materials were similar to those found in regular preschool classrooms or kindergartens. Not many classes provide their students with audio visual materials, ICT software, and real objects, even though some schools were provided with laptop computers and LCD projectors. When asked, most of the teachers said that the equipment was frequently used by science and mathematics teachers in regular classrooms.
3. Multimedia literacy disability intervention materials were developed based on the concept of Information and Communication Technology to provide teachers with alternative materials in their literacy remediation program in school. The materials use multimedia elements such as graphics, text, video clips, still picture of real objects, music and audio system. The researchers used Vegas 5.0, DVD Architect, NeroExpress and ACDSsee to compile the materials and develop the program. The hardwares used were DVD burner, headphone and speakers, digital still and video camera, and audio and video system. At the pre-development stage, the researchers collected real pictures and video clips to be used in the program. There are five themes and each theme needed different materials. The pre-development stage is followed by three more stages to produce the program. The still picture and video clips were edited and selected according to various themes. The pictures and video clips were inserted in the Vegas 5.0 software according to the story board and channels that have been identified in the slots. Voice over and labels were inserted in the slots according to the scripts. Music and sound effects were also inserted in the final copy of the story board. Final editing work was done to ensure that the alignment of pictures and sounds was intact. Finally, the DVD were ready to be burned by using NeroExpress and DCD Architect, and the final products were available for use.
4. The second level of phase three, the intervention program developed in the study, was used in the remediation classroom in a primary school. The purpose of this level was to look at the effectiveness of the program to attract students in learning to read and write. Even though the researcher did not carry out experimental method in collecting data at this level, this study shows that students in the reading remediation class showed interest in the multimedia presentation, responded to

instruction in the video clips and the follow up tasks accompanying each topic in the presentation. Students tend to focus and pay more attention in the classroom and like to repeat the activities suggested in the multimedia presentation.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study found that more needs to be done to improve the process of teaching and learning in remediation classrooms. More trained special education teachers need to be employed, and longer terms of courses of at least one year should be given to those involved in school remediation programs. Teachers also need to be provided with teaching and learning materials other than work books or flash cards and posters. Reading remediation programs need to use various technologies to pull student attention to activities that help them to acquire literacy skills.

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