Conference e-Proceedings eISBN 978-967-2072-43-0

Physical & Online **-RoLE 2023** INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE EDUCATION 2023

EMBRACING CHANGE: EMANCIPATING THE LANDSCAPE **OF RESEARCH IN LINGUISTIC,** LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

13 - 14 MARCH 2023 NOBLE RESORT HOTEL MELAKA MALAYSIA



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Conference e-Proceedings International Conference of Research on Language Education 2023 e-ISBN: 978-967-2072-43-0

"Embracing Change: Emancipating the Landscape of Research in Linguistics, Language and Literature"

13-14 March 2023 Noble Resort Hotel, Melaka *Physical and Online Conference*









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Publisher: Zes Rokman Resources (2131022-P) Bandar Baru Bangi, Selangor Darul Ehsan



Conference e-Proceedings International Conference of Research on Language Education 2023 e-ISBN: 978-967-2072-43-0

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TRIPLE P WITH SANG KANCIL: PRONUNCIATION, PHONETICS, AND PLAYBOOK

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ABSTRACT:

'Triple P with Sang Kancil: Pronunciation, Phonetics, and Playbook' is an e-book for children of ages 10 to 12 years old, written in the form of a short story about one of the most famous Malaysian folktale characters, Sang Kancil, The Clever Mouse-deer. The purpose of this educational e-book is to help children pronounce English words correctly at a young age. Educators today are leaning towards a more modernised teaching method in using digital forms of teaching materials; hence, this e-book is ideal to be used by teachers in teaching English pronunciations. Equipped with exercises, learners not only practise their pronunciation by reading, but their pronunciation skill is further enhanced through completing these exercises. The method of completing this e-book includes doing some research on local and international children's phonetic books, writing a short story for the chosen folktale, proofreading and editing, exploring suitable platforms to create the e-book will gain recognition and subsequently be turned into a series of children phonetic and phonology books featuring more Malaysian folktales.

Keywords: English pronunciation, English phonetics, playbook, e-book, Malaysian folktale

1. INTRODUCTION

Language learning includes vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, and speaking. According to Ellis (1997) having accurate pronunciation is a vital skill for any speaker. Hence, learning proper pronunciation should also be a priority for students. However, it is worrying that there are second language English learners who have poor pronunciation skills. They struggle greatly with English pronunciation for several reasons. Firstly, there are a few sounds in English that are not familiar to non-native speakers. Secondly, it is more challenging for them to attain native-like English pronunciation since native speakers' pronunciation of ending sounds is radically different from the one ingrained in learners. As a result, they have been known to make phonetic errors that make their English unintelligible, which can have a devastating effect on their self-esteem and ability to communicate effectively (Zhang & Yin, 2009).

Due to this, an educational e-book called 'Triple P with Sang Kancil: Pronunciation, Phonetics, and Playbook' was created to teach young English learners the correct vowel pronunciation of English words by using a well-known Malaysian folktale, Sang Kancil, The Clever Mouse-deer. This e-book includes illustrations of the folktale and audio files of the word sounds so that readers can hear and follow the correct pronunciations. Furthermore, this phonics e-book is marketed towards English teachers and children aged ten to twelve. The specific target groups were chosen for two reasons: the exercises provided in this e-book are ideal to be used by



teachers as teaching materials, and both visual and audio elements presented in this e-book help with children's engagement and memorisation skills. Primarily, children are known to be attracted to vibrant visuals, especially in terms of bright colours and friendly graphics. Hence, the illustrations for this e-book are the most appealing aspect which was designed especially to attract children and may also create a sense of wonder while reading the story.

4.5. Project Objective / Purpose

Learners mostly rely on speaking skills when it comes to enhancing their language capabilities. The ability to communicate effectively is an essential skill in both the first and second language. According to Nunan (1995), the capacity to hold a conversation in a second or foreign language is widely considered the most crucial indicator of proficiency in that language. Therefore, enhancing pronunciation skills is vital at a young age. The 'Triple P with Sang Kancil: Pronunciation, Phonetics, and Playbook' aims to enhance children's pronunciation of English vowel sounds by reading a local Malaysian folktale along with an audio guide so they can grasp a better understanding of the story and correct pronunciations. The interactive elements included in this e-book, such as illustrations, audio guide, and exercises, will make reading and learning more enjoyable and effective for children.

Moreover, this e-book is also meant to provide teaching material for English teachers to be used in classrooms. In recent years, there have been major changes in how education works. As with most things in the modern world, technological advancements are being incorporated into classrooms to enhance students' participation and teaching efficacy. Given that the students of the current generation are exposed to technology at a young age, digital learning material is ideal for them as it is more convenient and engaging. Yip and Kwan (2006) studied the outcomes of digital vocabulary learning versus activity-based learning and concluded that digital vocabulary learning was superior because it was more engaging and motivating, leading to better outcomes. Thus, this e-book could assist both teachers and digital language learners during English pronunciation and reading lessons.

4.6. Entrepreneurial Opportunities

The e-book will be marketed to children aged 10 to 12 and English teachers, the majority of whom are technologically literate, hence, making this product easily accessible. This e-book also has audio files linked to YouTube videos. One of the exercises has a feature that direct users to a particular website, which is 'Roll The Dice'. Furthermore, this product's selling point would be its educational content, which includes appealing visuals and great exercises that help readers test their pronunciation skills. Meanwhile, the price point would be RM10, which is affordable for the targeted groups from diverse income backgrounds. Future plans for the e-book include publishing this book digitally on e-book platforms like Google Play Books, Apple Books, and Kindle which offers more entrepreneurial opportunity for this product. Should this e-book gets the attention it deserves, more collections of folktales together with more pronunciation words will be produced and sold locally and internationally.

4.7. Literature Review

The ability to communicate orally is generally seen as a precursor to literacy in later years. Still, this only captures part of the story. Because those who have mastered a language are known as "speakers" of that language, speaking is arguably the most crucial of the four linguistic abilities (Ur, 1996). Hence, providing students with the competence to communicate effectively and accurately in English is the primary goal of English language lessons (Davies & Pearse,



2000). However, it appears that language learners are unable to communicate effectively and fluently. For children to be able to speak English fluently, they must learn how to decode written words into phonemes and comprehend their speech sounds. According to Talbot (2022), understanding the relationship between the fact that words are composed of phonemes and that phonemes are represented by graphemes is essential in improving one's speaking skills. Understanding the alphabetic concept, that letters and letter patterns replicate the sounds of spoken language, is crucial to a child's growth as a reader. Children can learn to read more proficiently after they understand the regular links between sounds and letters, which they can then apply to both familiar and unfamiliar words (The Alphabetic Principle, n.d.). Once they have mastered their reading skills, that means they have also improved their ability to speak English more fluently. In addition, because individual letters in the English alphabet represent specific sounds, children must have a firm grasp of the relationships between letters and the sounds they represent (Russak, & Wong, 2019). This kind of knowledge is taught in phonics to help children learn to speak and read. Children learn the relationship between letter sounds and word meanings and the impact of rearranging letter sequences. For instance, should the letter order is ignored, learners might misread the terms "dog" and "pat" for "god" and "tap." Thus, young learners must be encouraged to actively develop pronunciation skills to understand the English language's phonetic and phonological structures at their earliest language acquisition stages.

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Storybook reading, a teaching style that involves reading stories to children and demonstrating words through the pictures in the books, may be an effective way for young English students to pick up vocabulary through exposure to stories, teacher's instruction and assistance. Storybook reading is not only an excellent way to teach students new words in English, but it also helps them improve their speaking and listening skills. Huang (2010) stated that the Reading Aloud Method would improve one's speaking skills, particularly in terms of pronunciation and fluency. This could be due to the excitement and dramatic effect is storybooks which ignite students' engagement. The contexts provided do "not only spark imagination but also encourage conversation" (Grugeon & Gardner, 2002). Therefore, when teachers want to boost the development of young students' English vocabulary through storybook reading, they can choose between two approaches: interactive or dialogic. The first is how teachers get students interested and involved by asking them questions and encouraging them to figure out what the story is about and what the words mean by looking at the illustrations. The second one, on the other hand, requires the students to read the story with teachers assistance. This e-book presents both perspectives; hence, demonstrating that it is a big initiative with real potential in pedagogy.

2. METHODOLOGY

The flowchart below outlines the steps taken to create the phonetics and phonology e-book for kids. To better understand what should be included in the e-book, market research was done prior to its creation. A short story of the chosen local folklore was also written by the author, along with the illustrations and exercises. Additionally, a follow-up interview was conducted to gauge customers' satisfaction with the final product. The final product is shown below:





Figure 1: Triple P with Sang Kancil: Pronunciation, Phonetics, and Playbook flowchart



Figure 2: Triple P with Sang Kancil: Pronunciation, Phonetics, and Playbook cover page and contents.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1: Interview Between The Author and Two English Teachers.

An interview with two English teachers from SK Gong Pasir, Dungun, Terengganu was conducted to determine the overall quality and effectiveness of the e-book as teaching material. Teacher 1 teaches the advance to intermediate proficiency students whereas Teacher 2 teaches the low proficiency students of Year four. The results from the interview are shown below in the form of excerpts:

Question 1: Is this e-book practical to be used as teaching material?

Teacher 1: "I had used your e-book to teach my students the correct pronunciation in class, and from my observations, I found that the students were more engaged and interested than usual. Maybe it's because they haven't been exposed to this kind of digital learning material before. During the online class phase, I would distribute exercises for them to complete, but with an ebook like this that has unique features like the audio guide, I would say that it is much more practical."



Teacher 2: "I really like that you provided exercises in the e-book. Since I teach the last-class students, their interest in learning is not much compared to the students of the front class. However, it seems that they were more interested in learning while playing. They found it less stressful and much more fun when they tried the exercises in your eBooks. They were competing with each other to pronounce the words from Exercise 1. I found that to be helpful to me!"

Question 2: Do the students comprehend the overall content of the e-book?

Teacher 1: "Of course they didn't know anything about the basic IPA, but it is understandable considering their educational level. However, it wasn't difficult to explain to them because your content is already straightforward. Plus, the audio guide is very helpful as they can directly listen to the correct pronunciation of the words."

Teacher 2: "Hmm. To be honest, those symbols are a bit tough for them to comprehend. But rather than focusing excessively on the symbols, I emphasised on the pronunciation instead, and your audio guide is effective in helping them grasp a better understanding."

Suggestion to Improve The Quality of The E-book

Teacher 2: "I think it would be better if you also include a voice narration because the students' knowledge of the English language is still poor; so, there are words that are difficult for them to pronounce and sadly, they do not have the audio guide. It won't be a problem during the class period because I can help them. But if they were to read by themselves, they might not be able to read it fluently."

3.2: An Observation Regarding The Students of Year 4's Pronunciation Skills Before and After Listening To The E-Books' Audio Guide.

An observation regarding the Year 4 students' pronunciation skills before and after listening to the e-book's audio guide was made with the help of Teacher 1. The results are shown below in the form of tables:

Students of 4 Ihsan					
Words in The Ebook and Their Phonetic Transcriptions	Total of Students Who Know The Correct Pronunciation Before Listening to The Ebook's Audio Guide	Total of Students Who Remember The Correct Pronunciation After Listening to The Ebook's Audio Guide			
Spanky / spaŋkj/	7/27	27/27			
Chew /gg/	23/27	27/27			
Knit/ngt/	10/27	27/27			
Island / ailgod/	\$/27	27/27			
Sneeze /unj.z/	27/27	27/27			
Fragile /' frgedjail/	0/27	23/27			

Table 1. Pronunciation Skills of 27 Students of 4 Ihsan

Based on the table above, only seven out of 27 students knew how to pronounce the IPA symbol /i/ in the word 'spunky' correctly before reading the book. The rest of the students mispronounced the syllable '-ky' at the end of the word. They thought it was pronounced the same as the word 'sky.' However, after listening to the audio guide, Teacher 1 tested them again, and all of them managed to say the correct pronunciation. Next, a total of 23 students knew the



correct pronunciation of the word 'chew.' The rest of the students mispronounced the IPA symbol /u:/ in that word. The result after listening to the audio guide is that they all managed to pronounce it properly. Moreover, only ten out of 27 students correctly pronounced the word 'knit' before listening to the e-book's audio guide. The rest did not know that the letter 'k' was silent. The audio guide helped them practise the correct pronunciation. Meanwhile, most of the students mispronounced the word 'island.' They thought the syllable 'is-' in that word should be pronounced like the verb to be 'is.' Only five students pronounced it correctly. However, when the teacher asked them again, they all remembered the correct pronunciation due to the audio guide. The word 'sneeze' was correctly pronounced by all students of 4 Ihsan even before listening to the audio guide. On the other hand, the word' fragile' was mispronounced by all of them, as they were unfamiliar with it. Nevertheless, 23 over 27 remembered the correct pronunciation after listening to the audio guide.

Overall, from the results and discussion above, it is concluded that this e-book is successful in achieving its purposes which is to enhance children's pronunciation of English vowel sounds and provide teaching material for English teachers to use in classrooms.

4. CONCLUSION

The distinctiveness of 'Triple P with Sang Kancil: Pronunciation, Phonetics, and Playbook from other children's phonics books is the key in attracting readers and helping them obtain more profound knowledge of English vowel pronunciations. In addition, the completion of this project provided a plethora of invaluable insight and lessons for the author, where newfound skills in illustrating and designing were discovered. In order to improve the quality of this product, it would be best to add more advanced interactive features, such as animated objects, background music, and voice narration. By adding these features, reading and learning will become far more interactive and exciting.

Based on the results and discussion above, this product is able to fulfil its targeted customers' needs in terms of improving their pronunciation skills, which will, at the same time, aid in improving their overall English skills and academic performance. Furthermore, in line with this project's objectives, it is also able to lend a helping hand to educators when it comes to teaching and providing students with appropriate and effective materials.

In light of this, it is hoped that this e-book will be a successful educational e-book in the market and expand its recognition globally. Additionally, it would be very appreciated if this e-book became part of a series and eventually spawned its own collections.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Allah SWT for allowing me to successfully produce this children's phonetics book for my final year project. Furthermore, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the wonderful supervisor. She made herself available at all times in order to provide me with inexhaustible assistance and advice to ensure that I was able to publish a high-quality and knowledgeable book. Her support was indeed helpful.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to my family members, who were helpful to me by offering input on how the overall quality of my book may be improved. Their insightful comments and helpful suggestions were of immense value to me in ensuring that the ultimate result of my book would be of high quality, and I am incredibly appreciative of their contributions.



Last but not least, it was always my friends who consistently encouraged me whenever I felt that the task was beyond my capabilities. They gave me ideas on what I should include in my book. As a result, despite the obstacles I encountered, I was able to publish my book on time.

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