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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE EDUCATION 2023

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

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UPIN IPIN READING KIT

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ABSTRACT:

Cartoons are not simply created for entertainment among children, but they are also a tool for education purposes. This project is about the creation of a reading kit using characters from the Upin Ipin animation series. The aim is to create a reading kit based on the Upin Ipin characters. There are five stages of this project completion: word selection and story writing, Les' Copaque consent application, layout designing and product printing, children's observation, and a survey on the product. It can be concluded that the project is a tremendous success with the end product triumphantly produced and the children in a kindergarten showed keen interest in the product during the observation. The survey also received favourable responses from the respondents as they agree with the choice of design and layout, contents, and usefulness of the product. It is hoped that this product will be able to help children learn English vocabulary by drawing their interest to their favourite cartoon characters, Upin Ipin.

Keywords: Cartoons in education, children reading kit, reading in English

1. INTRODUCTION

Animation is the creation of a plot, character design, backdrop, and sound (Mohd Khalis & Mustaffa, 2017). In order to create the sense of movement, animation uses a series of images that are displayed quickly and change direction, location, size, or shape (Wong, 1994). In the 21st century, there are a lot of animation series produced for the children in Malaysia that they can watch on television or smart-phone. In addition, it is not uncommon for parents to use cartoons to fill their children's time and to shift their attention from disturbing their parents.

Upin Ipin, an animation series about two adorable kindergarten-going twins, is one of the most well-known cartoons among children and even young adults in Malaysia. It kicked start with a movie entitled *Geng: Pengembaraan Bermula* (Gang: The Adventure Begins) in 2007. Due to the outstanding response it received from the viewers, it was turned into a series. Upin Ipin is also acknowledged internationally and have received many accolades. New series of Upin Ipin are still aired up to this day not only on television but also on social media.

1.1. Statement of Problem

However, based on personal observation, children only watch the Upin Ipin animation series for entertainment purposes since there is no follow-up education contents, the reason being the absence of physical or digital education products for this series. At its best, they may have learned many good values from the story. Parents too are comfortable with the safe contents but it stops there and it does not go beyond entertainment.

Given that children are very attracted to cartoons, it is a great opportunity to manipulate them into educational contents. Thus, the aim of this project is to create an English reading kit based on the Upin Ipin characters that have sparked so much interest among the children. Bahrani and Soltani (2011) show that cartoons can be utilised at any moment during teaching or training as pedagogically beneficial sources of linguistic input as long as they are pertinent to the lesson or are created with a particular goal in mind. Therefore, cartoons can be a great tool for enhancing learning environment.

1.2. Project Objective

The following are the objectives of this project:

1. To produce one reading kit
2. To use the characters from Upin Ipin in the reading kit
3. To determine the perception of the users towards the reading kit

2. METHODOLOGY

The target group of this product is children between 3-6 years old. They are either not yet exposed to learning English or begin to learn the language. Therefore, the best way to begin the process of language learning is to introduce the English vocabulary. According to Biemiller (2003), learning root words or vocabulary may be crucial in kindergarten and grades one and two, before children can read fluently. Acquiring basic vocabulary needs constant support, especially for children who are less privileged and possess null or low vocabulary profile of the target language learnt. Biemiller (2003) further highlighted that there must be an ongoing effort to introduce and describe new vocabulary to students. The production of the reading kit was planned in five stages as described in the next sub-section.

2.1. Word Selection and Story Writing

The process of choosing the suitable words began by finding matching words with available images in the Upin Ipin animation series. For examples, the words used in the product such as 'ant', 'ball', and 'cow' are under the Tier One word category which are known to be the most regular words in English (Sibold, 2011). Most of the time, these words require minimal explanation (Wosley, 2009) as they are object referent. So, words chosen to be in the vocabulary and alphabet section totalled up to 26 object referent words beginning with all the 24 English alphabets. All these 26 words, along with their image, were used in the six short stories written. It may be noticeable that a lot of repetition of the words can be found in the short stories, as suggested by Sibold (2011), one of the strategies to learning a new word is repetition because it helps learners remember better.

2.2. Les' Copaque Consent Application

The consent from Les' Copaque Production to apply the characters from Upin Ipin in the product was obtained after sending all the necessary information to the company through an email on 3rd November 2022. Consent was given with a condition to not mix Upin Ipin characters with other series.



2.3. Layout Designing and Product Printing

It is very important to figure out an appropriate layout that suits the likings of the target group as it could successfully attract the interest of the children as well as the parents. The researcher set the layout of the reading kit by considering the font size aspect. According to Halamish et al. (2018), font sizes in educational materials for young children is not merely for the purpose of reading but also for the purpose of learning outcomes. Therefore, all the 26 letters were made large for Stage 1. Colourful letters were used instead of plain black to captivate the children's interest.

A scannable Quick Response (QR) code was provided for every letter where the users could scan with their phone and listen to the pronunciation of the words as many times as they want, and it is easily accessible. Grande et al. (2022) proved that QR codes can be used to support comprehension. Additionally, Grande et al. (2022) also mentioned that QR code is simple and may offer chances to expand access for students with disabilities.

The matching card game was designed by putting the image on the top of the card and the users will have to paste the words under the image. B5 paper size was used for easy handling. Since hook and loop tape were used, the children can simply remove the word from the card to make changes. Other than that, the corners of the card were also made blunt to avoid the children from getting scratches and accidentally hurting themselves.

Next, for short stories, a picture of the related words were inserted each time the word appeared. This technique could help the young learners remember the words and images they learned in Stage 1. A study by Parede et al. (2022) discovered that vocabulary development is possible for learners using images as they were able to understand better, retain, and become engaged in word learning. Parede et al. (2022) also added students were encouraged to learn languages using visual media.

Last but not least, the most important part is to arrange the layout for the cover page which will highly influence and determine their first impression of the reading kit. Maniam (2011) stated that cover page should include huge beautiful, vibrant photos with no supporting information. Consequently, the researcher only included the title of the product, mentioned the Quick Response (QR) codes, and added the image of Upin Ipin main characters at the bottom of the cover page.

The paper material used for the reading kit is called 'art card' which is a little thicker than a regular A4-sized paper. Then, the printed papers were laminated. Since young children will hold books in their hands for a considerable amount of time, hence they should be made of durable materials like cloth, paperboard, or rigid plastics (Civaroglu, 2000; Ouzkan, 2001; Saçkesen, 2008; Tanju, 2010 as cited in Bartan, 2018).

2.4. Children's Observation

The product was tested on children at 'Taska Silaturrahim' in Pulau Indah, Klang, with a total of 29 children participated in the activity: nine 3-year-old children, nine 4-year-old children, seven 5-year-old children and four 6-year-old children. The contents and guides of the reading kit were shared to the teachers beforehand as they will be the ones who will introduce and use the product. The researcher observed the reactions of the children by recording as well as taking pictures.

2.5. Survey

A survey for the product was done through a Google Form and the respondents were selected using a random purposeful sampling method. They are the teachers from 'Taska

Silatunrahim', students of early childhood education from Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), and students from Institute of Teacher Education. The survey was divided into five sections. The first section consisted of a preview of the survey and the product in a form of video, 3-dimensional pictures, soft copy of the product and the contents and guides. The second section was the respondents' demography using the multiple-choice question. The third section consisted of five questions focusing on the design and layout of Upin Ipin Reading Kit, the fourth section asked questions related to the contents of Upin Ipin Reading Kit. Lastly, the respondents have to answer questions about the usefulness of Upin Ipin Reading Kit in the fifth section. A 4-likert scale method was applied in the third, fourth and fifth sections for their perception measure. A simple quantitative analysis was done to analyse the responses and the results were presented using descriptive statistic of percentage.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This project managed to achieve all the objectives.

3.1. Production of the Reading Kit

A reading kit (Refer to Figure 3) using characters from the Upin Ipin cartoon series was successfully produced. It consists of alphabet and vocabulary book, card game and short stories.



Figure 3: The front cover of Upin Ipin Reading Kit, card game and short story

3.2. The Children's Reaction

At the beginning of the activity, all the children appeared to be very curious and interested with the product when they saw the image of Upin Ipin displayed on the cover page. They looked happy and also kept asking the teachers about the book. As expected, all the children have watched or knew the animation series, Upin Ipin. Next, when the teacher read the letter and vocabulary, most of the children were able to repeat them. The children also listened to the audio from the scannable QR code attentively and followed the pronunciation of the vocabulary.

Moving on to the next activity, which is matching card game, majority of the children were able to recall the vocabulary that they have learned and match images with the correct word read by the teacher. It was also noticed that those who actively participated in the activity helped their friends that could not recall the vocabulary.

Finally, the teacher read three short stories for the last activity and put a stress on the words from the earlier activities. This time the children also repeated the words fluently, and they even pronounced new words in the stories. The children gave full attention when the three short stories were read.

3.3. Perception Towards the Product

The following tables show the results obtained from the 28 respondents' response. The 4-likert scales are; 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - agree and 4 - strongly agree. They are presented in Table 1: Survey Results.

Firstly, for section 3, most of the respondents chose 'Strongly Agree' indicating the design and layout of the product are ideal for a children's educational book. Next, Majority of the respondents answered 'Strongly Agree' for section 4 which confirms the contents of the product are all suitable to be used by the children for educational purposes. Lastly, 'Strongly Agree' received the highest percentage among the four options which shows that most of the respondents agree with how beneficial and useful Upin Ipin Reading Kit is for children.

Questions	Scale / Percentage			
	1	2	3	4
Section 3: The design and layout of Upin Ipin				
Do you like the design of the reading kit?	0%	0%	32.1 %	67.9 %
Do you think the colour used in the reading kit is suitable for children?	0%	0%	28.6 %	71.4 %
Do you think the font size is suitable for children?	0%	0%	35.7 %	64.3 %
Do you think the design of the reading kit is suitable for children?	0%	0%	28.6 %	71.4 %
Do you think the layout of the reading kit is suitable for children?	0%	0%	35.7 %	64.3 %
Section 4: The contents of Upin Ipin Reading Kit				
Do you think the choice of vocabulary is suitable for children?	0%	0%	50%	50%
Do you think the stories are suitable and appropriate for children?	0%	0%	42.9 %	57.1 %
Do you think the matching card game is attractive?	0%	0%	28.6 %	71.4 %
Section 5: The usefulness of Upin Ipin Reading Kit				
Is the book suitable for children?	0%	0%	35.7 %	64.3 %
Do you think the removable words for the matching card game is suitable and easy to use for children?	0%	0%	28.6 %	71.4 %

Will the children be able to learn from the reading kit?	0%	0%	32.1 %	67.9 %
If you are a kindergarten teacher, would you buy the reading kit for the kindergarten's children?	0%	0%	35.7 %	64.3 %
If you are a parent, would you buy the reading kit for your children?	0%	0%	39.3 %	60.7 %

Table 1: Survey Results

3.4. Entrepreneurial Opportunities

There is a probability that the physical 'Upin Ipin Reading Kit' could be put on the market to generate profitable income, considering that it received a great response from the target community which is the children in 'Taska Silaturrahim'. They were very excited to see the contents of the book as soon as they saw the cover page which showed the characters from Upin Ipin. Furthermore, parents are likely to purchase the product as it comes in a complete 3 in 1 set that consists of English vocabularies, short stories, and a matching card game. As a result, parents do not have to buy other materials for their children, which leads to spending more money to get the things that have been provided in the reading kit. Besides, the respondents who are future teachers also gave positive feedback indicating the likelihood that they will use the reading kit for their lesson. In addition, this could also create job opportunities at the publishing house like Les' Copaque to hire language education graduates that could transform the Upin Ipin animation series into products of educational purpose instead of just focusing on having creative workers to draw and publish the cartoons.

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the findings from this project which are the children's engagement with Upin Ipin Reading Kit and the respondents' perception towards the product proved that utilising cartoons in children's educational books is excellent for language learning. The chance for entrepreneurship of this product is also high and it is worth developed. However, since the researcher is lack of design knowledge, an improvement in the design and layout is recommended for future research. This is because it was discovered after the observation that the size of the book is small and only suitable to be used for one person and not for whole-class use.

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