

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background of the Study

Writing words is a skill that should be trained to students, especially the kindergarten students. As they are in the beginning of writing, they will write letters that they know or memorize. Some of them might be able to recognize the sounds and the letters that enable them to write independently, while others who are learning to recognize letters find writing really frustrating. Therefore, it is important for the teachers to bridge the problem so that the students improve in their writing.

Kindergarten B students are required to be able to write words as the preparation for the Elementary level where they must read and write in various subjects. In order to equip the students with the writing ability, they need to learn spelling. Moreover, they can learn spelling with the combination of phonics. Learning spelling and phonics are best when they are combined (Stevens, 2010). There are five steps in spelling developmental stage: The Precommunicative Stage, The Semiphonic Stage, The Phonetic Stage, The Transitional Stage, The Conventional Stage (Gentry and Gillet as cited in Burns, 1999).

The teaching materials that the teachers use might affect the students' spelling achievement. Therefore, it is important for the teachers to design appropriate teaching materials for the students' learning level and the target of learning. By spelling practice, hopefully the students could improve their spelling achievement. Moreover, it should be easy to be learned considering the kindergarten students' short attention span.

Thus, in doing the spelling practice, teachers not only have to build their intellectual growth gradually but also create enjoyable and fun activities for the students. In addition, teachers can ask the students to engage in various activities that influence all senses and challenge them to do exploration, testing, as well as investigating opportunities. Here is why the teachers of young learners need extra preparation and skills to equip the students with not only physical activities but also lots of logical reasoning tasks.

The Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the problem is as follows:

Will there be any effect on Kindergarten B students' spelling achievement after having spelling practice?

The Purpose of the Study

In line with the background of the study and the statement of the problem above, it could be concluded that the purpose of the study is to see the effect of spelling practice on Kindergarten B students' spelling achievement.

Theoretical Framework

Students learned spelling in five stages: The Precommunicative Stage, The Semiphonic Stage, The Phonetic Stage, The Transitional Stage, The Conventional Stage (Gentry and Gillet as cited in Burns, 1999). Each stage had its own characteristics. In Precommunicative Stage, the students realized that meaning is conveyed and words are written with the alphabet. Some of them added letters or symbols to their scribble writing, mixed with uppercase and lowercase letters. In Semiphonic Stage, the students attempted to represent phonemes in words with letters. They might write one or two letters to represent a word. In Phonetic Stage, the students might begin producing a readable writing. They might write "primary" to "pri-mr-e". In Transitional Stage, the students realize that words must look right as well. They need to learn the possible alternatives and finally the correct spelling. In Conventional Stage, the students use a variety of strategies such as visual information, root words and affixes. They also have the ability to visually recall words. These five stages might help the teachers to choose the appropriate strategies to be applied in each stage after diagnosing the work of the students.

Besides spelling, phonetic was also one consideration in this paper. Teacher must make the students conscious of the fact that in every word they spoke there were phonetic elements (Wingo, 1954). Students needed only to distinguish between vowels and consonants. There were the voiced and voiceless or breath sounds, stopped consonants, continuants, and nasal sounds.

Another important discussion was teaching spelling, which started from letter recognition, consonants, short vowel, long vowel, and consonant blend. When they were able to differentiate the sounds, they would be able to write the words and spell them. It was important to review after each meeting as the students were young learners who needed exploration and exercise (Linda Ward Beech, 1984).

The techniques in teaching spelling and phonics were taken from Jolly Phonics, which suggested a fun and child-centered approach to teaching literacy through synthetic phonics with a multi-sensory method. The other techniques were suggested with various activities by Leonez and Lopez (1998), Estacio and Chan (2003), and Bunton (2002) who suggested reading the words, completing sentences, and singing the lyrics after students read them aloud.

Definition of Key-terms

1. Teaching spelling

Teaching spelling is teaching a complex system that includes alphabet knowledge, sound-symbol relationships, visual memory, knowledge about common patterns and alternate patterns, and the peculiarities that the orthographic system uses to maintain sounds or alter sounds due to adjacent letters (Burns, 1999:64).

2. Teaching phonics

Teaching phonics is teaching the speech sounds and sound patterns (Clarence Sloat, 1978).

3. Spelling achievement

The spelling achievement is the spelling ability of the students to spell words correctly.

4. Kindergarten students

Kindergarten students are learners aged 5 to 6 who join formal education in school and have a fairly good understanding of many literacy practices and activities and are well on their way to beginning to decode the system of symbols for reading and writing (Pinter, 2006).

Significance of the Study

The study was expected to give contribution to the teaching of spelling at the Kindergarten level. It would help the teacher to evaluate the spelling materials and find out the effect of spelling practice on the students' spelling achievement.

Assumption

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. The teacher was qualified in teaching spelling to young learners.
2. The students' score of the pre-test and post-test represented their spelling achievement.

Delimitation and Limitation of the Study

The study was carried out on Kindergarten B students of X school in the academic year of 2013/2014. It was limited to the teaching of long vowel sounds, following the scheduled lesson and using the teaching materials designed by the English teacher.

Thesis Organization

The study was organized in five chapters. In Chapter One, it discussed the reason why the writer chose the topic. She had been teaching in kindergarten for six years. During the teaching period, she observed that the students need to work in spelling. Therefore, she would like to know the effect of spelling practice on their spelling achievement.

In Chapter Two, there would be a discussion about previous studies, the stages of spelling development, phonetics, teaching phonics, teaching spelling, techniques in teaching spelling and teaching phonics, the theory of speaking, the characteristics of students, teaching English as a foreign language, and hypotheses. Teachers might have a bundle of ideas and techniques to teach phonics and spelling. However, they must consider the students' ability level where one student is different from another. Therefore, the teachers took an important role in designing the spelling lesson.

In Chapter Three, the writer explained the research method that she used in the study. The study was a pre-experimental study with single group pre-post test design. She would give pre-post test about the long vowel sound. After the pre-test, the English teacher would give spelling practices to the students. At the end, the writer would deliver the post-test.

In Chapter Four, there were discussion about data analysis and findings. The writer would analyze the data that she has collected, counted, and reported it.

In Chapter Five, conclusion and suggestion would be written for the final result of the study and a reference for the coming studies.