

Investigating the effects of authentic childhood games in teaching English

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of authentic childhood games in teaching English. The study group of the research consists of 43 5 year old kindergarten students. The study was carried out in the first semester of 2014-2015 academic year. An experimental method was used in this study to state the effects of teaching English vocabulary through authentic childhood games. There were 22 students in the experimental group and 21 students in the control group. To the experimental group the topics were taught through authentic childhood games. Same topics were taught to the control group through traditional methods. According to the results, it is seen that teaching English vocabulary through authentic childhood games have positive impact on academic success.

Keywords: authentic childhood games, kindergarten, teaching English

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, it's crucial to teach or learn a foreign language throughout the world. Especially English, as a foreign language, also takes place in kindergarten curriculum. It is also stated in many researches that teaching English at an early age enables students to acquire the language naturally and easily. Children between 0-6 year olds learn better through games, songs, toys and rhymes. Thus, for this age group English should be taught in natural contexts. Games are seen as the most important activities. Games motivate students and make them learn easier. It is also stated in many other studies that using games in language learning is very effective (Coskun, 2008).

Through games, children learn a language in a natural environment by having fun. Games are also considered as a task that has an important function (Basal, 2010). According to Ayan and Dundar (2009), teaching with games are an important factor of basic training and the most effective tool that teachers use to achieve their aims. Learning through play not only helps students to use their senses but also it makes the teaching happen by real life experience. Due to this reason learning occurs in more natural and effective way (MEGEP, 2009). Furthermore, using games in teaching brings the world into the classroom. As mentioned above, teaching through authentic childhood games is seen as the most natural environment that teaching can be done. Authentic childhood games are also known as traditional childhood games. These games were used to be played for fun (Geleneksel Çocuk Oyunlari, 2014). Childhood games are influenced from society and culture; so besides education these childhood games are important for cultural development (Kayar, 2008). There are many authentic games and these games are being played differently in many cultures (Ercelik and others, 2011). According to Hedberg (2010) these games are used in language teaching and they increase the motivation during teaching-learning process. In this context, the aim of this study is to investigate the effects of authentic childhood games in teaching English vocabulary. In this respect, this study tried to find out the answers to the following questions;

1. Is there a significant difference between the academic success of students who are taught vocabulary through authentic childhood games and those who are not?
2. What are the teachers' views on authentic childhood games?

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The study group of the research consists of 43 kindergarten students. There were 12 girls and 10 boys ($n= 22$) in the experimental group and the topics were taught through authentic childhood games. On the other hand, there were 12 girls, and 9 boys ($N=21$) in the control group and the topics were taught through traditional methods. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) there isn't any specific rule to set the number of the experimental group. So, the number of the experimental group and the control group is seen as satisfactory.

Both experimental and control groups show homogeneity. Due to this, a pre-test was conducted to the participants. The results were analysed with "independent samples t-test". According to the pre-test results, the analysis of the scores is presented in the below table;

Table 1. Comparison of the Pre-test Scores of the Experimental and the Control Groups

| | Group | N | Mean | SD | Sd | T | P |
|----------|--------------------|----|-------|-------|----|------|------|
| Pre-test | Experimental Group | 22 | 46,16 | 16,60 | 41 | ,523 | ,604 |
| | Control Group | 21 | 3,92 | 10,66 | | | |

*Significant at the .05 level of confidence

The analysis of the results of the pre-tests conducted for both groups shows that, there is not a significant difference between the proficiency level of the students in both experimental and control groups in terms of their word knowledge ($t=.523$, $p>0.05$). According to this finding, it can be understood that both experimental and control groups are equal.

2.2. Data collection instruments and data collection

An achievement test was conducted between the experimental group who were taught vocabulary through authentic childhood games and the control group who were taught through traditional methods to specify the academic success of teaching English vocabulary. The achievement test was prepared by the researchers (Hursen & Salaz, 2015). While forming the test, interviews were done with experts ($n=11$). These experts were from English language teaching ($n=4$), teaching ($n=2$), assessment and evaluation ($n=2$), division of curriculum and instruction ($n=3$). The test consists of 25 questions. After getting comments from the experts the test was conducted. Then the validity and reliability analysis of the test was done and the test had 17 questions. After this procedure the achievement test was conducted to the participants ($n= 43$) as pre-test and post-test.

The study took 6 weeks. Both groups had 3 days and 3 lesson hours per week. Each lesson was 30 minutes. Every week a new topic was given to the groups. Each topic had 5 English vocabulary words to teach. The process was recorded by video by the researcher. The researcher also took diaries. During teaching the experimental group was observed and evaluated by 6 teachers. The teachers evaluated each lesson with an "evaluation form" prepared by the researchers. At the end of 6 weeks, one to one interviews were done with the same 6 teachers. The form for the interview was semi-structured and was also prepared by the researchers. The interviews took 15-20 minutes and were recorded too.

2.3. Data analysis

In order to analyse the results percentage, mean, standard deviation, independent samples t-test and repeated measures ANOVA analysis were used in the study. According to the results of the analysis the results were found significant 0.05. The recordings of the interview were grouped by the researchers.

3. Results

The results based on the aims of the study were given below.

3.1. Findings Of The Academic Success Of Students Who Were Taught Vocabulary Through Authentic Childhood Games (Experimental Group) And Who Were Not (Control Group)

Independent samples t-test analysis were used to find a significant difference between the success of experimental group whom were taught through authentic childhood games and control group whom were taught through traditional methods. A pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the study to see the vocabulary knowledge of both groups and it was found out

that both groups were equal (See Table 1.). Again an independent samples t-test analysis was done at the end of the research to investigate the effects of the study. The post-test results of experimental and the control group were given in Table 2.

Table 2. Post-Test Results of the Experimental Group and the Control Group

| | Group | N | Mean | SD | Sd | T | P |
|-----------|--------------------|----|-------|-------|----|-------|------|
| Post-test | Experimental Group | 22 | 89,17 | 8,73 | 41 | 7,352 | ,000 |
| | Control Group | 21 | 62,16 | 14,73 | | | |

*Significant at the .05 level of confidence

While both groups pre-test results showed that there weren't any significant difference ($t=.523$, $p>0.05$), the post-test results showed that there was a significant difference ($t=7,352$, $p<0.05$) between both groups. The post-test results of experimental group ($M=89.17$, $sd=8,73$) and the control group ($M=62.16$, $sd=14,73$) showed that the experimental group had a significant difference. Also a repeated measures ANOVA analysis was done to the participants before and after the study in order to find out the difference and change in their scores. Repeated measures ANOVA analysis results also shows that there was a significant difference ($M=89,17$) in the experimental group ($F_{(1-41)}=25.34$, $p<0.001$). According to the findings above it is seen that teaching English through authentic childhood games are more effective than teaching through traditional methods.

3.2. Teachers' Views On Authentic Childhood Games

The teachers, whom observed the experimental group for 6 weeks, stated that authentic childhood games motivated and entertained students and also made them participate willingly during lessons. Teachers also stated that authentic childhood games helps learning English easier. Due to this, the teachers believe that whatever students acquire will be remembered. On the other hand, most of the teachers also mentioned that a teacher has to have a good classroom management when using authentic childhood games. They expressed that they could have lack of classroom management when using authentic childhood games. The teachers also mentioned that planning should be done before using games and followed during procedure.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This study was aimed to investigate the effects of authentic childhood games on student success. Firstly, the results showed that using authentic childhood games were more effective than using traditional methods. The students in the experimental group whom were taught through authentic childhood games were more successful. Other studies show that there were similar results found in teaching through authentic childhood games (Aydin, 2014; Kilic, 2010; Susuzer, 2006). Also, the teachers who observed the experimental group stated that teaching through authentic childhood games are an effective was in teaching English. The teachers added that the students participated well during the activities and thus they learned more effectively.

In conclusion, teachers can use different activities to get students participate actively in kindergarten classrooms. Also, these games can be adapted and used in other lessons too.

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