The Effects of Animated Film on ESL Learner's Pronunciation in Secondary Education Context

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Abstract
Accurate and clear pronunciation plays a major role in language learning in order to communicate verbally in target language. Most secondary students in Malaysia still face difficulty in pronouncing English words correctly even though they have learned English as a second language for at least six years. This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of using animated film in enhancing pronunciation and also explore its influence towards learner's motivation. A mixed method action research is used to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. Pre-test and post-test are carried out and a paired T-test is run with SPSS to investigate the effectiveness of the teaching method towards different phonetic groups. Meanwhile, a semi-structured interview is conducted with 16 participants to identify their confidence level in word pronuncing . Results show that there are significant improvements in pronouncing 'words with voiced and unvoiced consonant', 'words that look alike' and 'words with silent letter' but not in 'words with short and long vowel' and 'words with more than two syllables.' It indicates that the effects of animated film in pronunciation teaching are varied towards different categories of word due to several factors. Thus, educators have to be aware of the factors that diminish the effectiveness of intervention used and overcome them for better teaching and learning process.
Keywords: ESL, Animated Film, Pronunciation Teaching, Speaking Motivation

Introduction
The English Language is an international language that is used for communication. In Malaysia, 'Bahasa Malaysia' acts as the national language while English Language is taught as a mandatory subject in school as second language (ESL). As the fundamental skill in a language, speaking skill is the skill that give us the ability to communicate effectively. The skill involved in oral production and interaction are essential to achieve certain aims or to share one's thoughts, viewpoints and inquiries (Torky, 2006). Generally, speaking skill consists of three main components, which are fluency, accuracy and pronunciation. Despite Malaysian have learned English as a Second Language in public schools of Malaysia for 6 years in primary school and another 5 years in secondary school, most learners still face problem when it comes to speaking. Even though both writing skill and speaking skill are production skills,

Precintha Rubini et al (2019) claimed that ESL learners in Malaysia are able to perform in writing but not speaking.

The issue of Malaysian students' lack of English language speaking competence has been a hot topic among educators, particularly among teachers and policymakers. In the last three decades, English Language education in Malaysia has undergone at least three transformations (Azman, 2016). In 1990s, it first transformed from grammatical knowledge-based teaching into Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to induce student-centered basis and learning the language for communication (Aziz et al., 2018). However, due to its heavy exam-oriented principle, most of the teachers only emphasized on reading skill and writing because only these two skills were tested in Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM). School Based Assessment was then introduced to focus more on listening and speaking skill that were neglected (Darmi and Albiom, 2013). Yet, it wasn't effective to generate a four skills-balanced classroom. Lastly, it reforms with the implementation of Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) which covers all the four language skills.

Besides the influence of curricular system in Malaysia, learners are reluctant to use the language orally due to various problems. Up to date, factors identified by researchers include psychological problems i.e. anxiety, peer pressure, low self-esteem; social problem i.e. classroom environment, informal communication through social media and lastly linguistic difficulties i.e lexicon's size, inaccurate pronunciation, unable to comprehend syntax (Ali et al., 2020; Alrasheedi, 2020)

Over the last two decades, the rapid transformation of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and digital technologies has become one of the most important issues explored by researchers (Ghavifekr et al., 2014). It is obvious that the traditional models of language learning and teaching no longer suitable for the new generation learners as new technologies create more learning platforms. Over the century, lots of animated films were produced and it offers a rich teaching resource for educators to be implemented in classroom. Champoux (2001) claims that interspersing animated and live action film scenes in the classroom can add diversity and vibrancy in teaching and learning process. Likewise, Gonzalez (2007) argues that animated films has a linguistic and cultural impact. Hence, animated film is suitable to be adapted and implemented in a language classroom. In this case, the researcher focuses on improving the students' ability in English pronunciation by using animated film as medium. The researcher takes 'Inside Out' as the media for students in enhancing pronunciation.

The objectives of this research are to
  i.   investigate the effectiveness of animated film implementation in enhancing pronunciation in an ESL classroom.
  ii.   explore the influence of animated film to learner's speaking motivation

Literature Review
Approaches in teaching speaking is a collaboration of interventions and strategies used by teachers to overcome problems faced by learners in order to promote speaking among learners (Ahmed, 2018). One of the major speaking problems faced by Malaysian secondary school students is poor pronunciation as the sound system in English language is different

from their first language. A study done by Anikina (2020) has revealed that inappropriate pronunciation may prevent intelligibility in communication. As insufficient pronunciation skills may prevent successful communication and even lead to cross-cultural conflicts, educators tend to focus on polishing learners' pronunciation in target language. There are many studies about pronunciation teaching to ESL/EFL learners (Hismanoglu, 2010; Nikbakht, 2010). Nevertheless, educators have to bear in mind that the purpose of teaching pronunciation to ESL/EFL learners is not to sound like native speakers but for oral communication without causing miscommunication (Celce et al, 2000). In this 21st century, the goal of modern teaching approaches is to efficiently educate oral communication in creative ways (Abdurahmonova, 2021).

Traditionally, phonetic alphabet has been used to drill learners' pronunciation through transcription practice and diagnostic passages. However, Morley (1994) argues that teaching should be meaningful which can cater learner's needs to apply the knowledge in real-life situations and to communicative language teaching (CLT). Later on, Celce-Murcia (1996); Dodson (2000); Burgess & Spencer (2000) started to teach pronunciation using trendy methods such as drama and roleplay. Consequently, studies in improving pronunciation ability using cartoon films started as early as in 2010s. Pratiwi (2010) has discussed how to improve pronunciation by using cartoon films. In her research, final result proves that cartoon films could improve the students" pronunciation ability. Likewise, a study conducted by Rayasa (2018) showed a positive result in developing students' pronunciation skills. On top of that, not only the result in a study carried by Topi et al (2019) proves that animated film is effective in pronunciation teaching, they also claimed that such method boost learners' motivation as they often imitated particular dialogue even after the class. Indeed, there are many studies focus in pronunciation teaching using animated film as teaching material such as the study conducted by (Rasyid, 2016; Pratama, 2019). However, there are limited studies to see the degree of effectiveness of animated film in pronunciation teaching to ESL learners. In other word, the studies merely identify the effectiveness of animated film in pronunciation teaching generally but not a specific segment. Therefore, this research looks into the effectiveness of such methods towards different segment of pronunciation.

The research is based on the action research model suggested by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) with the four steps, reflect, plan, act and observe. It starts with reflection of classroom situation to identify a problem, followed by planning strategies to solve the problem. In this case, the implementation of animated film is planned to improve learners' pronunciation in English language. Next, in the 'acting' stage, a present, practice, produce approach is adopted to conduct the teaching and learning process with the implementation of animated film. The result is then observed and reflected. Shortcomings identified during the reflection can leads to a new cycle with new plan. This could also be a continuous cycle to adopt new planning and new action to refine the implementation and teaching approach. The conceptual framework is shown in Diagram 1
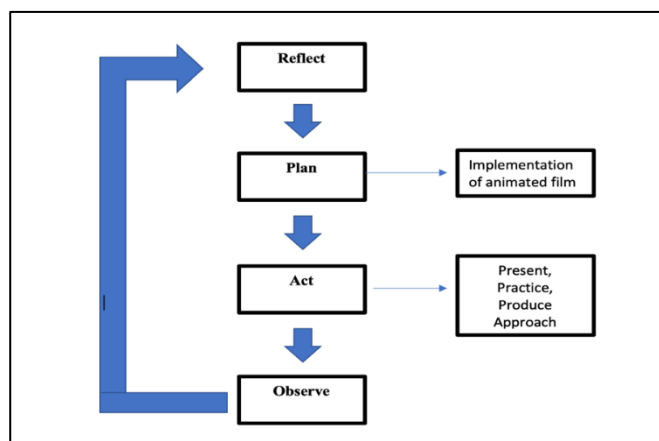
Diagram 1

Methodology

A mixed method action research (MMAR) design was used in this research. According to Bergman (2008), mixed methods research refers to a single study project or program which combine at least one qualitative and at least one quantitative component. Shorten & Smith (2017) add on to define mixed method as a research approach whereby researchers collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data within the study.

In this research, Stephen Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) Model is referred. It consists of four steps which are 'reflecting', 'planning', 'acting',and 'observing'
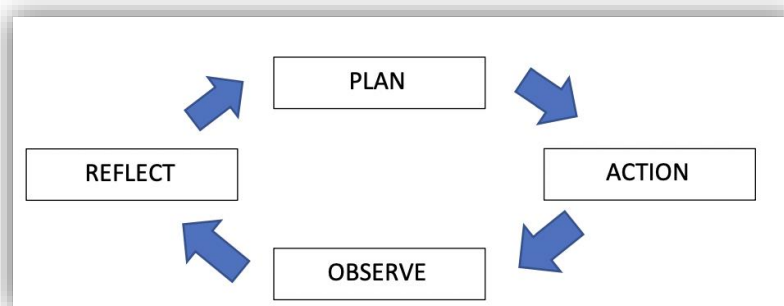

Diagram 2 : Stephen Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) Model

Research Site

This study was conducted in an urban national secondary school located in Malaysia. It consists of a multilingual population with different first language (Malay, Tamil, Mandarin and Punjabi). Due to this, the medium used in most of the school events and classroom is the national language, Malay Language while English language is used in classroom and special occasions. Nevertheless, Dual-Language Programme (DLP) was implemented in the school in which it emphasizes the use of English Language in the subjects Science and Mathematics. However, not all the classes implemented DLP. For each form, one or two classes are learning Science and Mathematics in Malay Language instead of English. On top of that, sometimes English is not fully used in the DLP classroom as some of the Science and Mathematics teachers were not fully trained to teach the subjects in English. Code-switching is seen frequently in the classroom.

Research Participants

A purposive sampling and convenience sampling is merged and utilized in this research. As purposive sampling is a technique where researcher chose participants based on own judgement, 16 participants from a same class were selected based on their poor speaking performance in the class. They are 13-year-old Form One students. All participants are from non-DLP class, which are learning Science and Mathematics in Malay Language instead of English Language. Based on classroom assessment, their speaking proficiency is weak. Out of the 16 participants, 14 of them are Malay with Malay as first language, one of them is Punjabi with Punjabi as first language, another is Indian with Tamil as first language.

Instruments

The researcher has designed pre and post-tests to examine participants' word pronunciation. 20 words were selected from the animated film 'Inside Out'. The words were selected carefully to ensure it covered a wide range of variance in phonetic, including short vowel, long vowel, up to 6 syllable words and silent 'h'. This session was recorded and transcribed with phonetic symbol based on IPA chart symbols.

Second instrument is semi-structured interview to provide participants with an informal atmosphere to share their opinion and express feeling without being restricted with specific set of questions. The interview was conducted twice before and after the treatment to explore participants' speaking anxiety, motivation and perceptions towards using animated film as instructional tool. The interviews were recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

Initially, the score of pre-test and post-test were tabulated. The means of both tests were calculated and compared using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Next, researcher ran a paired t-test to determine pronunciation development among the students.

As to the semi-structured interviews, the recorded interviews were initially transcribed in Microsoft Word. The responses on speaking motivation were tabulated to be compared and contrasted.

Findings

Results for Pre-test and Post Test

Besides pre-test and post-test, a The results of the pre-test and post-test were tabulated with 5 tables based on their categories, namely 'voiced and unvoiced consonant', 'short and long vowel', 'words with more than two syllables', 'words that look alike' and 'words with silent letter'. Each table shows the number of participants who pronounce each word correctly during pre-test and post-test. The pronunciation is transcribed using the international phonetic alphabet (IPA) symbol chart as shown below:

Diagram 3: IPA symbol chart

Table 1
Pre-test and Post-test score for voiced and unvoiced consonant

Voiced and Unvoiced Consonant	Pre-test	Post-test
To	12	16
Do	16	16
Think	5	12
The	11	16
Total	**44**	**60**

Most of the participants pronounced 'think' [θɪŋk] as [ðɪŋk] because they can't differentiate between this pair of voiced unvoiced consonant. Nevertheless, there is a significant improvement after the treatment, all participants can pronounce 'to', 'do' and 'the' correctly.

Table 2
Pre-test and Post-test score for short and long vowels

Short and Long Vowels	Pre-test	Post-test
Foot	1	5
Food	14	15
Desert	7	9
Dessert	4	7
Total	**28**	**36**

During the pre-test, only one participant pronounced 'foot'[fʊd] correctly where majority of them pronounced it wrongly as [fʊːd] which is long vowel and same with 'food'. Nevertheless, fourteen out of sixteen participants able to pronounce 'food' correctly during pre-test. However, less than 50% of the participants able to pronounce 'desert' [dezə(r)t] and 'dessert' [dɪˈzɜː(r)t] correctly. The number of participants who can pronounced the words in this category correctly after the treatment is the lowest among the 5 categories.

Table 3
Pre-test and Post-test score for words with more than 2 syllables

More than 2 syllables	Pre-test	Post-test
Electricity	10	10
Fantastic	9	12
Overwhelming	2	12
Opportunity	5	8
Total	**26**	**42**

During the pre-test, most participants couldn't pronounce 'overwhelming' correctly but there is an obvious increment in the post-test for this word. However, there are only little or no difference between pre-test and post-test for the other three words.

Table 4
Pre-test and Post-test score for words that look alike

Words that look alike	Pre-test	Post-test
Through	12	12
Though	0	6
Tough	1	8
Thought	6	13
Total	**19**	**39**

Generally, participants get the lowest score in this category during pre-test, most participants were confused with the words that look alike and mispronounced 'though'[ðəʊ] and 'tough' [tʌf] as 'through' [θruː]. Meanwhile some participants pronounced 'thought' [θɔːt] as [ðəʊt] Nevertheless, a great improvement can be seen in the post-test.

Table 5
Pre-test and Post-test score for words with silent letter

Words with silent letter	Pre-test	Post-test
Often	3	11
Island	11	13
Honest	9	10
Listen	15	16
Total	**38**	**50**

Participants can pronounce the word with silent 't' as in 'listen' but not in 'often'. 12 of them made the same mistake by pronouncing 'often' [ɒfən] as [ɒtən]. Nevertheless, many of them manage to pronounce it correctly after the treatment.

Table 6
Paired samples test for the five categories

Paired Samples Test

| | | Paired Differences | | | | | | | |
| | | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pretestA – posttestA	−1.00000	.81650	.20412	−1.43508	−.56492	−4.899	15	<.001
Pair 2	pretestB – posttestB	−.62500	.71880	.17970	−1.00802	−.24198	−3.478	15	.003
Pair 3	pretestC – posttestC	−1.00000	1.09545	.27386	−1.58372	−.41628	−3.651	15	.002
Pair 4	pretestD – posttestD	−1.31250	.94648	.23662	−1.81685	−.80815	−5.547	15	<.001
Pair 5	pretestE – posttestE	−.75000	.68313	.17078	−1.11401	−.38599	−4.392	15	<.001

Table 6 shows T-test results. There was a significant difference for three groups, which are 'Voiced and Unvoiced Consonant' (pair 1), 'words that look alike' (pair 4) and 'words with silent letter' (pair 5). On the other hand, another two groups 'short and long vowel'(pair 2) and 'words with more than two syllables' (pair 3) are less significant.

Results for Semi-structured Interview
Besides pre-test and post-test, a semi-structured interview was conducted to explore participants' speaking anxiety, motivation and perception towards animated film as intervention. For this session, participants were allowed to inquire and provide feedback in their first language when necessary. Researcher translated the responses into English and summarise them in the table below:

Table 7
Summary of Interview Result

Theme	Before treatment	After treatment
Speaking Anxiety	• 14 participants gave negative feedback towards speaking activity as they claimed that they are 'not confident', 'shy' or 'not good'. • 2 participants gave positive feedback that they can speak in daily life like buying stuff in mall and ordering food.	• 6 participants claimed speaking isn't as scary as they thought. • 7 participants believe that they can speak better if they practice more • However, 3 participants are still not confident in speaking because they feel that they might 'get nervous and forget how to say', 'still shy' or ' people around will laugh at their speaking'
Motivation	• 9 participants gave negative feedback as they thought speaking is 'difficult' and they prefer not to use the language in daily life. • 7 participants gave positive feedback as they think it is 'cool', 'awesome' and they would love it if they can speak well.	• All participants are motivated to use the language in daily life as they 'want to give it a try' , 'not as difficult as imagined' or 'didn't expect they can actually speak like xszprofessional (native-like)'.
Perception towards animated film as intervention	• All participants are excited with the idea of learning through film. They assumed it to be 'interesting', 'fun' and 'enjoyable'. • Despite the excitement, 4 participants were concern with the effectiveness	• All participants agree that they learnt something from the film. It is indeed 'interesting' and 'fun' to learn speaking from the scene. • The 4 participants who were concern with

		because they 'usually can't understand the dialogue as the characters speak fast'.	effectiveness claimed that trimming of certain scene and watching it repeatedly can help them to understand and follow it.

Discussion and Conclusion

Results of this study show statistically significant improvement in pronouncing voiced and unvoiced consonant, words that look alike and words with silent letter. Before the treatment, participants can differentiate voiced and unvoiced consonant upon listening but they do not have the conscience to enunciate it. Based on the feedback from a participant during the interview, she claimed that watching and imitating the animated film helps her to practice enunciation in voiced and unvoiced consonant. Hence she can pronounce it correctly during post-test.

Meanwhile for the category 'words that look alike', most of the participants couldn't differentiate the meaning of the words and thus they failed to pronounce them correctly. They even overgeneralise the pronunciation by adding a 't' sound after 'through' when they tried to pronounce 'thought'. This is due to their assumption on 'words with same spelling should have the same pronunciation'. During the treatment, participants realised the selected words were used in different scene in the film and they manage to differentiate the pronunciation. Thus, a significant difference is spotted for this category.

Before the treatment, participants are aware of silent letter as most of them can pronounce 'listen' correctly without the 't' sound. Nevertheless, they are not familiar with the silent 't' in 'often'. Likewise, they are not familiar with other words with silent letter. They were requested to pay attention to these words when watching the film. After noticing the silent letter words, they can relate it with the word 'listen' and make the correct pronunciation. Thus, the result shows a significant difference.

However, there is only a little improvement in the post-test for the category 'words with long and short vowel'. Feedback given by participants indicates that they are not aware of the differences despite they were being told to take note. This might be caused by first language interference. In their first language, pronouncing a word with short or long vowel doesn't change the meaning of the word. Therefore, they are not used to pronouncing words with different length of vowels to mean different things.

Besides that, the category 'words with more than two syllables' doesn't show significant difference. It indicates that participants couldn't fully master the pronunciation of lengthy words through watching animated film. Nevertheless, their post-test score for this category increases generally. It demonstrates a slight improvement.

Based on the t-test result, it can be concluded that using animated film in pronunciation teaching is efficient for pronouncing 'words that look alike', 'words with voiced and unvoiced consonant' and 'words with silent letter' but not towards 'words with short and long vowels' and 'words with more than two syllables'. On the other hand, the interview results signify teaching pronunciation with animated film can reduce participants' speaking anxiety and

boost speaking motivation. Generally, participants felt that such intervention is interesting and help them to learn how to pronounce better.

In short, the results of this research show that the effects of animated film in pronunciation teaching are varied towards different categories of word. This study serves as a guide for educators globally, that even though animated film is effective to teach pronunciation in general, the effects could be diminished due to other factors such as first language interference. It is important for teachers to identify the factors and overcome them. This study also verifies that animated film helps to lower speaking anxiety and boost learner's speaking motivation. In a nutshell, using animated film to teach pronunciation in secondary context is effective to increase learner's performance in pronunciation as well as build up their speaking motivation.

Limitations

The treatment was conducted during the pandemic through online teaching. Researcher couldn't monitor participants' involvement whether they follow the instruction fully. For instance, researcher couldn't ensure all participants watch certain trimmed scenes repeatedly as instructed. The variation in participants' commitment might affect the result. For better supervision, further research could be conducted in blended learning which combine face to face and online teaching.

Another limitation is the lack of multiracial participants. Despite Malaysia is a multiracial country, participants selected were majority Malay. There is only one Punjabi and one Indian participant. As discussed earlier, first language interference might affect the effectiveness of the intervention. Further research can be conducted to explore the effectiveness of such intervention towards difference races.

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