

The Elements of Rewards Towards the Children in the Process of Mastering Malay Language Vocabulary

Suziyati Abdul Mad*

Vijayaletchumy Subramaniam, PhD**

Department of Malay Language
Faculty of Modern Languages dan Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia

E-mail: srikandikirana85@yahoo.com*, letchumy@fbmk.upm.edu.my **

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine closely the elements of reward towards children in their process of mastering the Malay language vocabulary. Researcher focussed on 3 types of rewards; words of compliment, stars and stickers. Besides, this study also looked at the most effective reward in enhancing the mastery level of the Malay language vocabulary of the children. The theory used was the the learning operant theory by B.F Skinner (1957). This theory refers to stimulus (Reflection) + Organism + Response. From this S+O+R, behaviour is passed down and followed by a reward that covers both positive and negative reward and act as the strong support to exercise. A case study has been conducted and 30 children from the Children Development Laboratory (MPK), Human Ecology Faculty, UPM were used as the respondents. Researcher used observation and interview as the methods in the study. The findings were then analysed based on frequency (percentage). The highest percentage towards the frequency of these children in answering questions on Malay language vocabulary was analysed in four weeks to see the most effective reward in raising the mastery level of the children's Malay language vocabulary.

Keywords: Rewards, Children, mastery, Malay language, vocabulary.

Background

In Malaysia most children who are in the process of mastering and building up their language are put at pre-schools; places where the children learnt basic things before they go to the real school. This is important because determining the children's level of Malay language is vital to prepare them to go to their primary school. Thus, teachers need to play important roles in making the vocabulary learning process fun and significant to make the students interested and motivated in receiving information from the teachers which finally helps the students to master the vocabulary exposed to them.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to determine the most effective reward in enhancing the mastery level of the children's Malay language vocabulary.

Importance of the Study

- i) Through this study, the party involved especially the pre-school teachers can determine the most effective reward in enhancing the mastery level of the children's Malay language vocabulary.
- ii) Besides that, through this study parents can be used as one of the guidelines in teaching the children at home.

Previous Study

International

i. Weiner (1990), explained that motivation is the main function to trigger feelings like hungry, sleepy and comfortable. Motivation is needed in learning and the level of achieving victory in learning has close relationship with motivation. Research also has showed that humans prefer tasks that are moderate in their difficulty level. Besides, students need higher achievement in the courses that are relevant to their career. Therefore, all of these matters could act as the students' internal motivation to be successful.

ii. Clark-Hull (1950) in Ma'arof Redzuan, Haslinda Abdullah (2001) has come up with his theory that is known as encouragement theory. Hull said that all living organisms have their biological needs that need to be fulfilled in order to survive. There are also needs that will trigger an internal stress. This is also a form of encouragement. By having stress, organisms will try to overcome and reduce the stress level in them. For instance if someone feels hungry it will cause the person to feel stress. Automatically, the feeling will lead the person to find food in order to reduce his/her hunger. In other words to fulfill his/her biological need.

National

i. R. Balan A/L Rathakrishnan (2006) in his PhD thesis with the title the effect of a reward scheme on the creative achievement said that the role of intrinsic motivation, self recovery, self perception and creative personality has touched on many aspects especially on the effect of a reward scheme on to the creative achievement. In this study he has highlighted three main objectives, and there are to determine the existence of intrinsic motivation, self recovery, self perception and creative personality, to examine all those variables on creativity in the contexts of local culture. Finally, he also wanted to show the effect of creative personality in reducing the strong relationship between reward and creativity.

Methodology

The psychology approach was used in this study. In this matter, researcher used observation to obtain information about the most effective reward that can be used to motivate the children in enhancing their level of mastery the Malay language vocabulary during the children's teaching and learning process (PPKBM). Moreover, to obtain support researcher also interviewed teachers who were involved in the study.

Samples of the Study

Researcher has chosen 30 children from the Children Development Laboratory (MPKK), Human Ecology Faculty, UPM as the subjects. Therefore, researcher has taken all population to be studied upon with regards to the objectives highlighted earlier.

Methods of the Study

- i. Library Research. This method is used to find supporting materials. The materials include refereed journals, past theses, books and other materials from the Internet.
- ii. Controlled Observation. This method is used to obtain accurate data. This kind of observation is usually used by researchers to run any observation. In the controlled observation, researcher will take down data, test results and types of response given by the subjects during the test session conducted.
- iii. Interview. Besides that, to yield the data on the reward elements towards the mastery level of the Malay language vocabulary among the children, researcher interviewed the pre-school teachers to get their perceptions and experience about the element of reward that they have been practising.

Instruments

I. Frequency Form. Researcher used this frequency forms to detect on the children's success in answering questions about vocabulary for four weeks during the PPKBM session.

ii. Interview Form. Researcher has listed questions related to the study to be asked to the pre-school teachers especially on the types of the most effective reward to enhance the mastery level of the children's Malay language vocabulary.

Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage were used for this study. The findings based on the 30 children were analysed according to frequency and percentage which involved the highest and lowest value based on the test scores. The analysis was presented in forms of graphs and tables.

Limitations of the Study

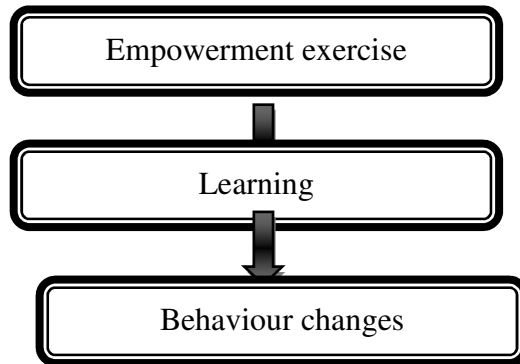
This study has limited objectives; to determine the most effective reward in enhancing the mastery level of the 6 years old children's Malay language vocabulary only. For this matter, researcher used types of rewards applied by the teachers who worked at the MPKK. Among the rewards (social reward) were words of compliment, star points and varieties of stickers. The researcher was focusing on the extrinsic rewards as the types of rewards to be studied.

Theoretical Framework

The normal learning pattern theory based on language learning as the mechanism activities which involved the physical activities only was adapted. According to Radna Wismawato Muhibah (2010) this theory is considered as the surrounding factors that act as stimulus and behaviour to the organism of the stimulus to reflect.

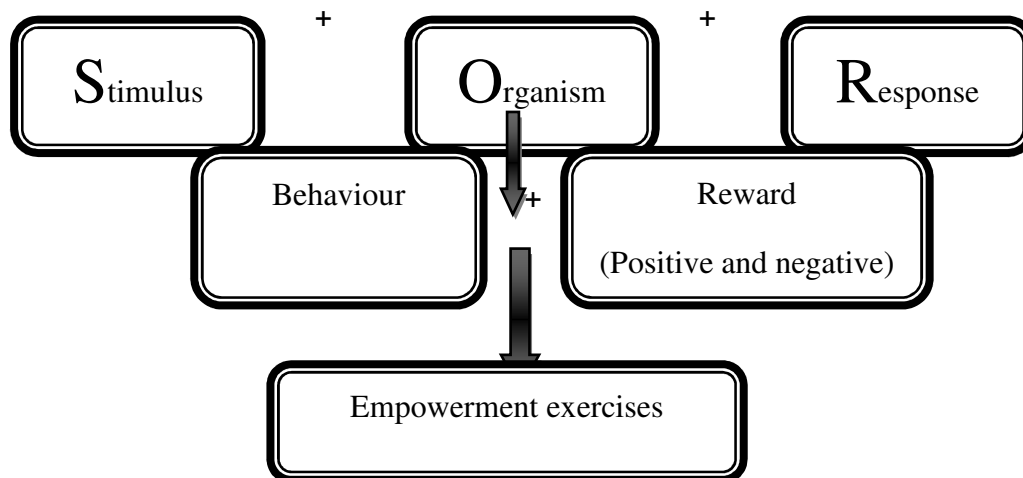
Moreover, the theory also explains that one behaviour has close relationship with the external factors. For instance, the reward system could strengthen stimulus and reflection. Skinner (1957) in Radna Wismawato Muhibah (2010) explained the model of the theory.

The Operant Learning Theory



(Source: Skinner 1957 in Radna Wismawati Muhibah Yahya Sawek (2010))

This model of learning operant theory is normally applied by an individual who plans to master any kind of learning. For example, in this study children who want to master the Malay language vocabulary need to undergo a learning that can determine their new behavior which the children themselves need to achieve. Besides, the learning must be meaningful and effective to the children. This is according to Skinner dalam Radna Wismawati Yahya Sawek (2010). Thus, Skinner also stated that his theory was based on the S + O + R principles. In this case Skinner named it as stimulus (Reflection) + Organism + Response. From the S + O + R the behaviour is passed down and followed by reward that covers both positive and negative reward and act as the strong support to exercise.

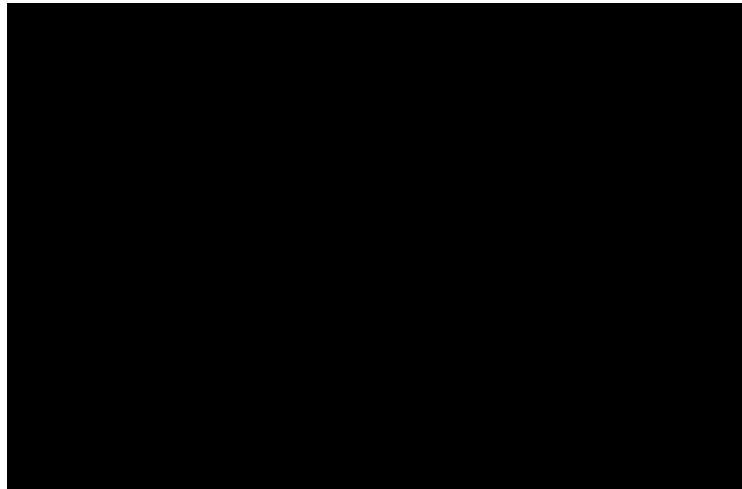


(Source: Skinner 1957 in Radna Wismawati Muhibah Yahya Sawek (2010))

Findings

At this stage researcher will determine the most effective reward in enhancing the mastery level of the children’s Malay language vocabulary. For that, to get the information researcher has jotted down the data based on the frequency of the children who answered correct questions everytime the question and answer sessions were on

form four weeks during the PPKBM was in progress. The results from week 1 till week 4 were presented in the graph below



(Figure 1: Totall frequency of Children who managed to answer Questions on Malay Language Vocabulary in Week 1)

Table 1: Totall of Frequency Children who managed to answer Questions on Malay Language Vocabulary in Week 1

Jenis ganjaran	Jumlah Kekerapan Kanak-kanak Berjaya Menjawab Soalan		
	Pujian	Poin Bintang	Pelekat
Jumlah (30)	14	16	19
Jumlah peratusan (%)	47	53	63

The table above showed the frequency of children who managed to give accurate answer during the question and answer session in PPKBM which involved all the three rewards in week 1. As shown on the above table, the sticker reward has the highest percentage with 63%. Nevertheless, the score for this reward is moderate. This is followed by the second higher percentage; 53% which puts star point reward. As for the score, this reward is also moderate but the value is lower than the value of the sticker reward. The words of compliment reward has the lowest percentage among the three and that is 47%. This reward also has a moderate score similar to the two just now in terms of determining the most effective reward for the children to master the Malay language vocabulary. Furthermore, researcher also came up with the findings of week 2 which also involved all the three rewards. The findings were presented in the graphs below. Figure 2: Totall frequency of Children who managed to answer Questions on Malay Language Vocabulary in Week 2

Table 2: Totall frequency of Children who managed to answer Questions on Malay Language Vocabulary in Week 2

Jenis ganjaran	Jumlah Kekerapan Kanak-kanak Berjaya Menjawab Soalan		
	Pujian	Poin Bintang	Pelekat
Jumlah (30)	12	14	21
Jumlah	40	47	70

peratusan (%)

In the table above, the responses given by the children in answering the Malay language vocabulary question in week 2 were shown. As stated, sticker reward has the highest percentage. This is proven by looking at the value of the percentage 70% from the overall value. This is also resulted in the score to be the highest score compared to other rewards. The second higher percentage, 47% is star point reward. As for the score, this reward is just average. Lastly, for the words of compliment reward, again it has the lowest percentage with 40%. The same result for the score when this reward has the lowest score among the three.



(Figure 3: Totall frequency of Children who managed to answer Questions on Malay Language Vocabulary in Week 3)

Table 3: Total Frequency of Children who Managed to Answer Questions on Malay Language Vocabulary in Week 3

Jenis ganjaran	Jumlah Kekerapan Kanak-kanak Berjaya Menjawab Soalan		
	Pujian	Poin Bintang	Pelekat
Jumlah (30)	13	16	23
Jumlah peratusan (%)	43	53	77



(Figure 4: Totall frequency of Children who managed to answer Questions on Malay Language Vocabulary in Week 4)

Furthermore, researcher continuously came up with other findings for week 3 which also involved the same three rewards. Based on the observation in week 3 sticker reward is still the highest reward with 77%.

This has made this reward has the highest score as well. Next it is followed by star point reward with 53%. In other way, star point reward has put itself to the average score compared to the first reward just now. The words compliment reward has only 43% and being the lowest in percentage as well as score among the other two.

Table 4: Totall Frequency of Children who managed to answer Questions on Malay Language Vocabulary in Week 4

Jenis ganjaran	Jumlah Kekerapan Kanak-kanak Berjaya Menjawab Soalan		
	Pujian	Poin Bintang	Pelekat
Jumlah (30)	8	18	25
Jumlah peratusan (%)	27	60	83

The findings above showed that from the 30 children in week 4 8% were found to be able to answer questions asked by the teacher and in other words the children could be said as have mastered the Malay language vocabulary. The value achieved is the highest value of percentage compared to the other two rewards. This result has made this reward has the highest score in totall as well. Moreover, based on the table, the star point reward has the second higher percentage with 60%. And again this reward has an average score only. The third reward-words of compliment has 27% only. This also has made this reward receives the lowest score below all.

All in all, from the analysis of week 1 till week 4, it is clearly showed that the percentage of the sticker reward maintains as the highest percentage throughout the four weeks. This is followed by the star point reward and words of compliment. From the observation we can say that the most effective reward to the children for them to enhance their mastery in the Malay language vocabulary is the sticker reward. Moreover, to support the results, researcher interviewed the teacher in the MPKK to get her views on the adoption of reward elements during the PPKBM session. The interview session was conducted with two teachers. The teachers were named as Teacher A and Teacher B. Based on the observations done by the teachers, they collectively felt that the children were more affected by the sticker reward compared to other types of reward. The reason being was that the children's stimulus towards the sticker reward was positive. This could be seen clearly when the students were competing with each other in answering questions asked by the teachers in the PPKBM. And when the answers given were wrong the children would try to correct them without giving up until they managed to give the correct answers. They looked thrilled and happy whenever they could give the correct answers.

Besides that, researcher also interviewed the children spontaneously to get their reasons on why sticker reward was their choice. As for the responses, majority said that sticker reward could be taken back home with them and pasted anywhere they like; on the pencil case, bag, drink container and even their watch. Some of them even said that the sticker could be shown to their parents at home. This situation has encouraged them to work harder to get the reward and at the same time remember and master the Malay language words exposed to them by the teachers. As for the researcher, sticker reward is concrete and tangible; something that can be seen and touched by the senses. It is the nature of children to like these kinds of objects; beautiful, big and impressive. This could be seen through their response when they appreciated the stickers given to them.

According to the teachers, the sticker reward could make the children pay more attention in the classroom. The children somehow know and understand that they are required to remember the words taught by the teachers so that they could answer the questions later on. This scenario is different from the words of compliment reward as this reward is the lowest reward for this study. According to the teachers, this kind of reward still can be used in the learning session especially to change the behavior of the children. The teachers also said that by giving words of compliment or praising the children, they will appreciate them and later decide to make some changes to themselves and to others who hear it as well. For example if a teacher compliments someone who walks properly in a class, that compliment will be heard by others and they will also follow what is said to be right. In the issue of

PPKBM, they showed their positive reaction when compliments were given to them. Hence, to some children they were not affected with the compliments. In this study also, researcher could see that children who came from other countries like Nigeria and Iraq, since they do not understand the language, they did not show any reaction when the compliments were given to them in Malay. Since they did not understand nothing positive could be seen.

Furthermore, Teacher A said that children who are passive, showed less reaction towards the compliments given during the PPKBM session. This is because the children are more comfortable being in a quiet condition when the question and answer session was on. This kind of attitude makes them less encourage in putting effort to remember words given to them by the teachers. Besides, researcher also found out that children who paid less attention during the learning session, gave less stimulus reflection to the test. If they failed to answer the questions they were reluctant in giving another answers. This situation contributed to the percentage result of words of compliment reward being the lowest score compared to the other two rewards.

This matter has a significant different in terms of reaction given by the children towards the sticker reward. From the observation, even the passive children will try their best to answer questions many times until they managed to give the correct ones. Almost all children whom majority were passive showed positive reaction or response towards the sticker reward. This could be seen when the shy students who hardly speak would do so though in their low tone of voice to answer questions. This is clearly shown that children as the living organism would be influenced to react towards stimulus that captures their attention. The main thing here is the types of stimulus play important role in making the organism reacts towards it. The more effective the reward, the more positive the stimulus would become. Indeed, sticker reward from this study is the most effective reward during the PPKBM.

Conclusion

In conclusion, study showed that stimulus which accompanies positive reward like what Skinner has told us in his learning operant theory will result in response. In this matter, stimulus consists of reward and children are the organisms who receive the stimulus until they produce positive response; mastering the Malay language vocabulary. Through the researcher's eyes positive response could be obtained from the attractive rewards given to the organism. Therefore, the sticker reward could be said as the most effective reward given to the children to enhance their mastery in the Malay language vocabulary.

References

- B. F. Skinner (1957). *Verbal Behavior*. London : Harvard universiti
- Radna Wismawati Muhibah Yahya Sawek (2010). *Hubungan Motivasi dengan Perilaku Pembelajaran Bahasa Melayu Pelajar Dwibahasa Peribumi Sarawak*. Tesis sarjana. Selangor: Universiti Putra Malaysia
- R. Balan A/L Rathakrishnan (2006). *Kesan Skim Ganjaran ke Atas Pencapaian Kreatif: Peranan Motivasi Interinsik, Kemujaraban Kendiri, Persepsi Diri dan Personaliti Kreatif*. Tesis ph.D, UKM, Bangi.
- Atan Long (1982). *Psikologi Pendidikan*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka
- Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia (2003). *Huraian Kurikulum Prasekolah Kebangsaan*. Kuala Lumpur: Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum