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INDEX

Sl.	Title	Page
1	Integration of ICT in Teacher Training Institutions: A Transformation in the Paradigm of Teacher Education Aamir Majeed and Prof. Syedah Fawzia Nadeem	6-15
2	Awareness on Utilization of Community Resources in Teaching Chemistry at Secondary School Level A.Devi and Dr.T.Kanakaraj	16-24
3	Teachers Professional Development and Job Satisfaction Ashish Kumar	25-30
4	Teacher’s Professional Development in Online Social Networking Sites Cathrine Asha S. and Dr. Blessing Mary	31-39
5	Life Style and Attitude towards Sustainable Development Goals among Prospective Teachers at Secondary Level Sreevidya R. and Dr. Mubi K. Mohamed Ali	40-57
6	Socio-emotional Skills among Secondary School Students of Standard Nine in terms of Gender and Demographic Location of Udupi District Rose Kiran Pinto	58-71
7	Blended Learning: A Vision for the Future Dr. Fatma Gausiya	72-87
8	A Study on Perception of Student Teachers on Professional Development Dr. Manju N.D	88-103
9	Emerging Need of Blended Learning Dr. Pratibha Khare	104-115

11	Role of Fourth Industrial Revolution and Education 4.0 on Sustainable Development in Education Dr. Seema Gopinath	116-124
12	Efficacy of Indigenous Rhymes in Developing Student Engagement and Motivation Dr. Prithi Venkatesh, Ms. Sreevidya MS, Ms. Nisha A, Mr .Srinivasa R	125-139
13	Transforming Education: Evaluating The Implementation and Effects of the 2020 Education Policy Dr. Veena Khilnani	140-146
14	Educational Significance of Inclusion in Reducing Juvenile Delinquency-Need for Multi-dimensional Approach Dr.C.B.Vikram	147-165
15	From Exclusion to Excellence: Overcoming Obstacles to Inclusion in Schools Dr. Rajeshwari Garg	166-176
16	Impact of Artificial Intelligence Enabled Technological Pedagogical Implications in Higher Education Dr.S.Ammami, Dr.M.Anita, Ananya	177-186
17	The Effect of Artificial Intelligence on Research Methodology Dr. Taiyaba Nazli	187-194
18	Empowering Educators: Navigating Continuous Professional Development In Alignment With NEP 2020 In India. Jagirdar Lubna Batool and Dr. Syed Azaz Ali	195-206
19	Inevitability of Assessment and Feedback Strategies in the Teaching- Learning Continuum Jasmine. J	207-214
20	Vital Role of Teachers, Parents and Students as a Joint Venture in Inclusive Education Mrs. Jyothi H.D.	215-221

21	Humour as an Effective Teaching Strategy Madan Kumar	222-229
22	Significance of Inclusive Education in Fostering Social Justice in India Mamta and Nivedita	230-243
23	An Investigation of the Gender Disparity in the Teaching Abilities of Trainee Teachers Mrs. Mirza Humaira Batul	244-256
24	Enhancing Learning of Students through Formative Feedback in Higher Education Monal	257-267
25	Exploring the Preparedness for LMS among Teacher Educators and B.Ed. Students in the Current Education Scenario Dr.M.Ponnambaleswari and Aswathy C.K.	268-281
26	The Family Environment Promotes Student Engagement and Motivation N. Revathy and Dr. A. Blessing Mary	282-285
27	Transformative Education Reforms: Catalyzing Social Justice in India Pooja and Nivedita	286-294
28	Exploring Participatory Pedagogy for Cultivating Inclusivity in Classroom Prabhleen Saini	295-307
29	Transforming Education: A Journey Towards Transgender Inclusion Prakasha C.	308-320
30	Impact of Competency Based Education on Learning Outcomes Prashasti Singh and Dr. Kalpana Thakur	321-333

31	An Introduction of Inclusive Education Rajesh Kumar Pathak	334-343
32	E- learning: Impact on Psychosocial Competence Ms. Rajwinder Kaur and Dr. Gagandeep Kaur	344-353
33	Computer-Based Programmes to Improve Communication with Children with Special Needs: Cerebral Palsy Ramesh	354-363
34	Nurturing Students Engagement: An Educator’s Role in Fostering Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness in Teaching-Learning Process Saroj Rani	364-388
35	Life Style and Attitude towards Sustainable Development Goals among Prospective Teachers at Secondary Level Sreevidya R. and Dr. Mubi K. Mohamed Ali	389-405
36	Perception of Pre-service Teachers towards Blended Learning in Teaching-learning Process Ghazala Parveen	406-429

Efficacy of Indigenous Rhymes in Developing Student Engagement and Motivation

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Abstract

Global awareness about disability in inclusive development is increasing. Children with below average intellectual functioning present from birth or infancy cause limitations in ability to conduct normal activities of daily living are children with intellectual disability. This affects their learning abilities and social skills. While teaching these children concrete examples, visual demonstration and songs play a vital role whenever necessary. Most of us grew up listening to nursery rhymes. The ready-made rhymes available in media are made uniformly for the purpose of learning in a joyful manner, but it might not meet the language requirement of children with special needs. The ready –made rhymes lacks in adapting the language and the themes required. Considering the above challenge in teaching through the readymade available rhymes. A need was felt to study the efficacy of teacher-made rhymes in Malayalam for children with Intellectual Disability. The language and structure of the developed rhymes was easy and indigenous in nature. The efficacy of the developed rhymes on the selected criteria's was evaluated. Seven

children between 4-10 years of age with moderate and moderately severe Intellectual disability was selected, they had previous years of pre-school training. The rhymes were prepared by the researcher and taught using appropriate and interesting teaching learning material. A single group pre-test post- test design was employed for the study. A comparison of scores was done using descriptive and inferential analyses. Thus, the children with ID were able to understand the concepts of the created themes and exhibit expected outcome. The results revealed that Children with Intellectual Disability performed well in criteria like phonological awareness, memory and sequencing, speech intelligibility and comprehension of 'wh' questions.

Introduction

Disability is a condition in which a person has difficulty in performing his fundamental activities. It can be physical, sensory, cognitive, behavioral, or emotional. Depending on the disability people are not homogenous in nature. They are expelled to exclusion due to the discrimination in the society. Intellectual disability is a term used when a person has difficulty in general mental abilities. It is characterized by below average intelligence or mental abilities leading to lack of developing skills of day today living. Individuals with intellectual disability learn new things very slowly. They show an overall lagging in motor activities like rolling over, sitting, crawling. They start talking late or have trouble in talking. In the severe cases signs can be identified earlier. ID is characterized by low cognitive ability ie $IQ < 70$ and low level of adaptive functioning. There are 7 types of learning difficulties according to Fisher and Cumings (2008): They are a) problems in speaking, b) problems in listening, c) in reading, d) in writing, e) difficulties in learning mathematics, f) in organization skills, g) problems with social skills and

motor skills. Developmental process of the child with ID is characterized by delayed and longer duration of individual phases of development (BalaandNovak, 1991).

As-long-as the modern perspective of interaction goes, children with learning difficulties shall be divided into three basic categories according to Adelman and Taylor, I 986.

The first category of problems includes the problem in learning because of inaccessibility, cultural and economic deprivation, multiculturalism, or some chronic stress in the children's environment.

The second category is a concoction of factors (reciprocal interaction). This concoction includes children with mild specific learning disabilities. The characteristics of the child such as: his activity, acceptance of new individuals, approaches in new situations, ability to adapt in new circumstances, mental strength, endurance, occur because of interaction between biological and environmental factors.

The third category includes children with problems that are resulted due to primary causes (neurological disorders, developmental or motivational problems and severe disabilities). These children are often impaired with rhythmic physiological activity such as sleeping disturbance. They have difficulties to learn out of experience, improper psychical condition and there are many hyperactive children among this group with adaptation problems. The challenges faced by intellectual disability children in learning atmosphere includes in adequate training for teachers, poor expectations from children, insufficient resources, and the need for specific plans and designs adapted to the capabilities of each student. These children highly depend on visual cues and the instruction should be clear and specific.

Concept development is an important component in the teaching and learning process.

Typically developing children learn from their day-to-day activities, listening to the conversation, interacting as well as through the class room teaching learning process. This is possible due to their intact senses and cognitive development. As stated by Schulz et al. in 2007, information around them are actively processed by young children and are not passive conduits into which information is processed.

According to Gelman stated in 2009, that much of children's knowledge is derived not from their direct experiences with the environment, but perhaps from the input of others. For children with special needs, this holds true as they might not learn from direct experiences but from input given through different resources and strategies. As per Vander Sluis, (et al., 2007) the ability to form and flexibly change concepts plays a significant role for the development of academic skills. This also holds true for children with intellectual disabilities. But the challenge these children encounter is that they may not be able to reap the benefit from literacy instruction since they view the task involved to be too complex for them to comprehend or perform. This perspective has led many special educators to forego literacy instruction for the children or to address it in superficial ways.

Most of us grew up listening to nursery rhymes. Nursery rhymes are part of our childhood days. They are full of funny words and interjections which help children to improve their vocabulary and have repetitions of different words which help them to repeat words to improve their speech. Songs and Rhymes facilitate as a great building blocks for creative dramatics. Children always like to act out the rhymes as they utter them, typically dramatizing the actions of those characters with the help of their hands and limbs and even their whole body. Nursery rhymes have a lot more to deliver other than entertainment value. They also introduce

children to creative idea of storytelling; promote social skills and language development. They also lay the foundation for learning to read and spell.

Rhymes and rhyming words facilitate us to remember events/things. This is done through acoustic encoding, processing of sounds and words for memory storage and late retrieval. When children play with rhymes, they listen to the sounds within words and identify word parts. Repetition of rhymes and stories is good for brain and so children learn new languages easily. This even helps children's brain to differentiate between syllables and to identify similarities between words that rhyme or words that begin with the same sounds.

The ready-made rhymes available in media are made uniformly for the purpose of learning in a joyful manner, but it might not meet the language requirement of children with special needs. The ready –made rhymes lacks in adapting the language and the themes required. A 15 months longitudinal study conducted by Maclean, Morag & Bryant(1987) on 66 children in the age of 3.4 years. The study assessed the knowledge of nursery rhymes and their phonological skills. The results revealed a strong correlation between knowledge of Nursery Rhymes and the development of phonological skills. Another study on rhymes by Gauthier & Lejeane(2008) reveals that when children learn nursery rhymes, they face linguistic and musical challenges that trigger their cognitive development throughout pleasant social interactions. Furthermore, the researcher stated that nursery rhymes provide a unique learning framework which promotes explicit instruction that promotes early literacy and musical development in young children.

There is a gap in terms of material in the form of rhymes in the regional language of Malayalam as there are limited studies conducted. Also, the details highlight and reflect the

studies conducted in western countries. But not many studies were available in the Indian Scenario. Thus, the need was felt for the study.

To overcome the challenge of difficulty in concept development in children with intellectual disability, the probable solution is to incorporate alternate strategies such as story, rhymes, and field trips. The proposed study is an attempt to investigate the efficacy of developing concept among children with intellectual disability through rhymes. Rhymes are one of the techniques for teaching language in the most natural way. The words pattern and sequence in rhymes will develop children's memory skills. Nursery rhymes can also provide a basic introduction to match logic and organized writing. The rhymes further offer oral support which helps in developing pre-literacy skills which is an important aspect in their cognitive development. Benefits like developing children's language and learning foundation shall not be underestimated. The benefits of rhymes include developing phonemic awareness, building memory and articulations, understanding of concepts shall be assessed as it helps to paint picture in children's mind and even helps in development of social routine and listening skills.

Depending on the degree of intellectual disability involved the level of help and the support will also vary. Children with ID require special supplementary aids and services, adaptive skills and accommodations that enable children with disabilities to be educated. They also require skill training in communication, health and safety, living skills, social skills etc. As early as the child get exposure soon the transition happens.

And due to the lack of indigenous availability of materials, a need was felt to develop and learn its efficacy in student engagement and motivation, the study was taken up with the following objectives.

Objectives

The study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To develop concept-based rhymes for the 5 themes in the regional language Malayalam for children with intellectual disability studying at the AIISH pre-school training center i.e. for each theme, one rhyme will be developed.
2. To conduct baseline evaluation for the selected group of participants.
3. To utilize the developed rhymes for concept teaching in the selected group of children with intellectual disability studying at the AIISH pre-school training center.
4. To evaluate the efficacy of the developed rhymes on the selected criteria's like- Phonemic awareness, building memory and articulations, understanding the concepts.

Methodology

Participants

Children with intellectual disability (Moderate and moderately severe) speaking the native language of Malayalam as well as availing pre-school services at the Study centre will constitute the participants of the study. Even though the group is small they become the true representative of the sample selected because of their learning characteristics and other abilities. The study is intended on children with intellectual disability without additional disability. The chronological age of the selected participants were between 4 to 10 years, whereas the language age of the children were between 3-6 years. The assessment tool selected for assessing their language age was a standardized test developed by Swapna, Jayaram, Prema & Geetha(2010) "Development of an intervention module for preschool children with communication disorders"

assesses the receptive and expressive skills of children from 0-6 years of age. To assess their degree of intellectual disability, the report obtained from a psychologist working in the study centre will be taken into consideration. The language age of the selected participants was determined based on the results obtained in a standardized language assessment tool. Moreover, since the study has been involved reading and writing components, those children with intellectual disability availing 6 months to 1 year of pre-school training would be considered for the study. Consent was taken from the parents before the study was initiated.

Details of Participants

Sl.	Attributes	Details
1.	Number of children	7
2.	Type of disability	Intellectual Disability
3.	Severity	Moderate- Moderately severe
4.	Language	Malayalam
5.	Chronological age	4-10 years
6.	Language age	3-6 years
7.	Prerequisite	6months -1 year of preschool training

*Language age: Language age is a developmental stage in which a child can talk or understand language.

Tool Preparation

Selection of rhymes

Five creative rhymes in Malayalam have been prepared on different concepts like Pulliuduppu (Dress) Ice-cream (food) , Colors, Police (Profession) National Flag. These concepts

are taken randomly from a standardized pre-school curriculum which is being followed at Pre-school training center at the Department of Special Education at All India Institute of Speech and Hearing Mysore (study centre). The concepts selected would be customized as per the learning requirements of the selected group. The rhymes developed based on these concepts are unique in terms of its discourse, sentence structure, language used, sentence complexity, appropriate picture, interesting rhythms etc. The concepts have been taught using appropriate flash cards and other teaching-learning materials like videos, which will also be developed as a part of the project. The rhyme was recited to the children in a rhythmic manner with appropriate teaching learning materials.

Validation

The rhymes developed were given for validation. The criteria for validation would be appropriateness of age, language, content, vocabulary, and complexity. The validators were experts working in the field of special education as well as regular school teachers who are well versed in Malayalam language and having an experience of more than 5 years. Two special educators, two regular school teachers, and one parent of child with intellectual disability who are well versed in Malayalam language will be selected as the validators. As these children were included into mainstream set-up, the language taught was at par with his/her typically developing peers.

Picture preparation

A graphic designer was selected to create the pictures required for the rhymes. Four pictures were designed for each rhyme depending on the theme.

Procedure

A single group pre-test post-test design has been employed for the study. The researcher administered a pre-test on the selected group to determine the entry level of the children. This test was developed for all the five selected themes and has been administered prior to teaching from the developed content. Apart from assessing their receptive and expressive aspect of a concept, the test item selected for pre-test will also assess phonemic awareness, building memory and articulations, understanding of concepts. The selected concepts taught through developed rhymes and with other teaching material such as – flash cards, word cards, rhyme strips etc. The pre-test and a post-test was conducted for each concept, to learn the efficacy of the developed rhymes. The researcher took five sessions to teach a rhyme after conducting the pre-test. After the rhymes were taught a post test was conducted. The data was collected for a total of 30 days.

Discussion of Results

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation, Median and the Summary of Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test in Pre-Test and Post-Test for the Five Rhymes

Concept	Statistics	Pre test	Post test
Rhyme 1	Mean	9.00	24.57
	Median	9.00	25.00
	STD	2.309	1.134
	Max marks	12	25

	IQR	5	0
Rhyme 2	Mean	6.86	23.29
	Median	6.00	24.00
	STD	3.338	1.380
	Max marks	12	25
	IQR	6	2
Rhyme 3	Mean	7.00	23.14
	Median	8.00	23.00
	STD	2.000	0.690
	Max marks	9	24
	IQR	4	1
Rhyme 4	Mean	9.286	23.000
	Median	8.000	24.000
	STD	3.8929	1.7559
	Max marks	15.5	25.0
	IQR	5.0	2.5
Rhyme 5	Mean	2.86	22.714
	Median	3.0	22.500
	STD	0.900	1.0746
	Max marks	4	24.0
	IQR	2	2.0

The study was conducted to check the impact of rhymes in teaching concepts for children with intellectual disability. Hence, a comparative study was done between pre-test and the post test. The data collected was statistically analyzed using SPSS software. The results obtained from the analysis were described herein after. The result shows that the subjected children performed well in the post test. Thus, the efficacy of the rhymes was also evaluated and the impact that the rhymes has made on the children was also exhibited. The children were able to remember the lines of each rhyme and sequence them in the proper order and it is revealed that their number of vocabularies is also increased. The data displays that the children also understood the concept which were expected from each rhyme. Overall these have been an improvement and thus the developed rhymes were effective in the teaching – leaning process. However among all the rhymes taught, the first rhyme “Pulliuddupu” scored more, this could be due to the fact that children could relate to the concept of “Pulliuddupu” (Doted Dress).

Thus, the efficacy in learning and enjoying rhymes could be attributed and supported by study of Dunst, Meter and Deborah (2011), Boyant,et.al (1980) which reported that by teaching through the nursery rhyme experience and knowledge expedited children’s phonological processing skills and print-related outcomes which improved the association between nursery rhymes and literacy improvement among young children.

Conclusion

Thus, it could be concluded that the effectiveness of rhymes in teaching concepts among children with intellectual disability is an important area of study. The concept-based rhymes is beneficial learning experience for this group of children, leading to improvement in phonemic

awareness, cognition, vocabulary and memory. The results obtained also signify the efficacy of the rhymes in teaching new concepts to the children with intellectual disability.

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