

**REVITALIZING ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNERS TEACHING  
BOOKS (A CASE STUDY IN CIMAHI)**

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**Abstract**

Undoubtedly, today English is considered as an inseparable need in education. Many parents want their children to be provided with English skills as early as possible. Therefore it is not surprising that many schools offer English lessons from elementary level, even kindergarten. But on the other hand, this is not appropriate with the teachers' competencies. A Preliminary study at some elementary schools & kindergartens in Cimahi indicated that the teachers were still lack of competence in teaching English to young learners so that the teaching-learning process was still fewer children friendly.

This study aims to analyze the process of teaching and learning English at elementary school and kindergarten, to reveal the opinions of the English teachers, and to elaborate the teachers' response to the English for young learners teaching a book. To achieve the objectives, the researchers used Qualitative Descriptive method. The data were taken from primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the respondents (the English teachers in Cimahi) using observation and interviews. While secondary data were taken from some references related to this study.

The result showed that most of the teachers tend to use Indonesian language more in the process of teaching and learning English, they perceived that they do not know how to use English in classroom interaction, and they argue that it is necessary for teachers to be equipped with the English for young learners teaching book to be more competent in managing a creative class by conducting suitable techniques appropriate with young learners.

**Keywords: English for young learners, Teaching Books, Teachers' competence**

**Introduction**

The teacher has a key role in the successful implementation of learning in school. The teacher encourages the creation of teaching, learning, and schooling. The role of the teacher is very understandable because they directly interact with the students and know firsthand how the students learn. This is inseparable from the background of the teacher who teaches. Based on a survey conducted by the British Council, it was revealed that most of English language teachers in elementary schools and below did not have an

English language education background. Some teachers who are supposed to be student's role models, there are still many who do not have competence in learning English. Some even cannot communicate in English, they only rely on dictionaries as a medium in teaching English in class. So it is not surprising if the process of learning English will be more dominated by translating English vocabulary into Indonesian, or vice versa (Damayanti, 2008).

In line with this, Fadilah (Fadilah, 2017) argues some

problems in teaching English to young learners in Indonesia context. They are: there is no exact curriculum/lesson plan for teachers to teach EYL (English for Young Learners) conducted by the government in Indonesia, the English teachers in primary schools are confused about how to conduct a good lesson plan, and the stage is not clear enough to achieve the lesson's objectives which are appropriate for the level of students.

A Preliminary study was conducted by the researchers in some elementary schools & kindergartens in the Cimahi area, indicated the low competence of English teachers, teacher do not have an English education background, the learning process in the class that does not consider the characteristics of children, teachers' pronunciation are inappropriate, and lack of competence of teachers in choosing teaching techniques and media so that there are still many English language teachers who just teaching by translating English vocabulary into Indonesian, or vice versa, rather than using it in classroom communication.

Pinter (Pinter, 2017) claims that children are great imitators, they will imitate what the teacher says. Children also have their own ways of learning that are different from older learners (students at secondary school) or adult learners. It is necessary to understand that children

still have a low attention span. Inappropriate teaching methods/techniques can make students assume that English is a difficult lesson and frightening.

This research was conducted to find factual information about English teaching and learning process in elementary and kindergarten, teacher's opinion on language learning English in elementary and kindergarten, and teachers' responses on the English for Young Learners teaching books

### **Methodology**

This research was carried out in 3 months (from March - June 2019). The subjects of this study were 3 teachers (a teacher at a public elementary school, a teacher at a private elementary school, and a teacher at a private Kindergarten) in Cimahi area. The three schools were selected using Purposive Sampling techniques. According to Sugiyono (Sugiyono, 2017), Purposive Sampling is a technique of determining the sample with certain considerations. The reason for selecting the three samples is because of the accessible factor; the access was easier, the atmosphere was more conducive, therefore the researchers could obtain more comprehensive data.

This research used a descriptive qualitative approach. Qualitative research method is a research method based on the

philosophy of positivism, used to examine natural object conditions (as opposed to experiments) where the researcher is the key instrument, purposive and snowball sampling, data collection techniques, data analysis inductive/qualitative, and the results of qualitative research emphasize more meaning than generalization, (Sugiyono, 2017).

The data used in this study were primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from respondents (English teacher) by using observations, questionnaires, and interviews as the instruments. While secondary data were taken from some references related to this study. Then it was compiled and analyzed the phenomena that occurred, then drew the conclusions from the study.

## **Discussion**

### **Characteristics of Children**

According to Lenneberg in Ashadi (2014), elementary school and kindergarten children are in a "critical period", which is an important period (sensitive period) to be able to easily and quickly master the language. This happens before the child enters puberty. When puberty comes, the "critical period" fades so that it will have difficulty mastering the foreign language. This was a myth that the younger a person learns the language, the better it will

be in imitating and adopting new pronunciation and sounds.

Chapelton (Chapelton, 2016) elaborates further the benefit of learning more languages, as follow: Children learning an additional language tend to score better on standardized tests because learning languages develops listening, observation, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills; These are transferable skills that are of life-long benefit, both personally and professionally; and Encouraging in children a love of language at an early age prepares them well for school and for life.

In general, elementary school and kindergarten children have language skills, they are able to understand the meaning in English but have not been able to interpret/analyze further. Children are great imitators, so they are very much influenced by the methods techniques that teachers use when teaching. Therefore the teacher should be able to be a good model for his students. If the teacher is wrong in pronunciation, then this will have a long effect because the child will continue to practice it with the wrong pronunciation. Similarly, if the teacher teaches without understanding the characteristics of the child, the child feels that English is difficult (Pinter, 2017, Damayanti, 2017)

It is important for children to be able to interact in

English so that their language skills will be as natural as when they learned their first language. The more examples of communication in English used in the classroom, the easier it is for children to acquire the language. With the ability to concentrate is still low (short attention span) children are easily bored, so teachers need to optimize learning with various activities.

### **Learning English for Children**

Learning English for children cannot be separated from the central role of the teacher. Teachers as the key role should be able to deal with the characteristics of children so that learning objectives can be achieved. The approaches, methods, and teaching techniques of English for young learners are different than those used when teaching students in secondary schools.

Ideally, English learning uses a "whole language" approach, where learning involves all English language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) and carried out in an integrated manner (Bland, 2015, Garton & Copland, 2019). They further emphasized that learning English for children was focused on listening, and if the child was ready, he would be able to practice speaking. Reading and writing skills will follow in time. In other words, it is very inappropriate if the teaching method/technique of the teacher only translates English vocabulary into

Indonesian, or vice versa, without using it in classroom communication.

Regarding this, the researchers argued that teachers who teach English for children need to receive adequate education in the field of English, which is mastery of four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), grammar, speech, vocabulary, teaching methodology, evaluations, and other relevant skills such as classroom management, singing, developing teaching materials and media. In addition to these, the teacher is also expected to have characteristics of a teacher for young learners' qualities: likes children, likes humor and friendly, creative, can create a variety of interesting activities, can teach children to sing and do English-language games, can tell in an interesting tone of voice, patient to face children as active learners, like to give praise or reward when needed, and have high enthusiasm so that the EYL class becomes active.

There are some aspects of English teacher competence: mastery of models/methods/teaching techniques that are children friendly, use classroom language as class routines, and able to be role models for students in learning English. Meanwhile Musthafa (Musthafa, 2010, Mubar, 2015) elaborates the requirements for effective teaching English to young learners, as follow:

- a. English should be used all the time to ensure that children have relatively much exposure to English.
- b. The print-rich environment in English should be created and around the classroom.
- c. Teachers of EYL should use activity-based teaching-learning techniques such as TPR, games, & projects.
- d. The teachers should use various techniques for short periods of time to maintain the interest level of the children in engaging the English lessons.
- e. The teachers should focus on functional English for vocabulary development & for immediate fulfillment of communicative needs of the learners.
- f. The teachers should reiterate often to ensure the acquisition of English expressions/vocabulary items.
- g. The teachers should provide useful, acquisition-promoting routines.
- h. The teachers should have a good command of English & have the ability to act as a role model for the learners they teach.

### **EYL Teaching Book for Teachers**

Based on the preliminary study, it revealed that English learning in elementary and

kindergarten in Cimahi was relatively not optimal. The competence of English teachers is still low, not all of the English teacher has an English education background, the learning process in the class does not consider the characteristics of the children, teachers' problems in English pronunciation, and lack of teachers' competencies.

The ability of teachers to open the class, deliver the lesson, and close teaching-learning process is still dominated by using the Indonesian language. As persons who are the source of motivation for children, and model imitated by children, teachers need to be provided with methods/techniques, knowledge of children psychology, as well as the ability to manage good English teaching-learning process. Eventually, teachers could be more competent and able to develop children's abilities in English.

With the condition of learning English which is still fewer children friendly, the EYL teaching book that is comprehensive is a necessity. Recently, some related books are available but in the context of learning English in other countries. Our teachers need knowledge about learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia so that the teaching-learning process could be more effective. In the long run, it can equip students with a fun, more

meaningful learning experience in English.

### Discussion

The researchers used questionnaires, observation, and interview as instruments in data collection. The results from the questionnaires showed that the age of the teachers was between 30-49 years, with their educational backgrounds were Bachelor of PAUD (kindergarten teacher) and English education. They have been teaching for 5 to 13 years. In teaching, they took the learning materials and learning resources for English from various sources, such as online media, books, dictionaries. One of the teachers took the learning resources from textbooks only. The teaching-learning process was based on the theme of learning in RPPH, oral tests, while teachers at elementary school claimed 80% theory and 20% practice. Unfortunately, teaching methods suitable for young learners are often neglected. The Lesson Plans were made in the previous year/semester. The teacher in Kindergarten did not know the teaching method she used, she just taught some English vocabulary and singing, whereas teachers at Elementary School applied Grammar Translation Method and the materials based on the KTSP theme. Furthermore, the teachers described that the students were still shame and fear to speak up,

while Elementary School students had difficulties in applying the sentence structure in English (grammar). Lack of knowledge of teaching young learners could be the problem. The Kindergarten teacher stated that she never heard English for Young Learners teaching book for teachers, while teachers at elementary school claimed they ever heard but haven't read. All of them perceived that they need the book, to guide teachers in teaching English for children, facilitating some activities appropriate for their students.

The observations revealed that all of the teachers used the Indonesian language mostly in their instruction with the students. The use of English only occurs when giving praise by saying "good" to students. In Kindergarten, the use of English only occurs in songs and giving praise.

It was found that the pronunciation errors in English were made many times by the teacher, though she can manage the class well so that all students involved in class activity. On the other hand, a teacher at Elementary school had better pronunciation but poor class management. They tend to just sit down delivering the lesson, didn't go around, almost all of the learning time. There were 35-40 students in the class, who were busy with their own activities, not paying attention, and noisy. Another Elementary school teacher managed the class better than the previous one. He

arranged the seating position of students with U-shape. He guided them to analyze the words to be translated, encouraged them to find out the meaning in English, encourage students to think, guess, before knowing what is right. Thus, the method of translation is used through an approach that encourages students to discover. Then, when the teacher delivering the lesson, he stood in front of the whiteboard, then he went around the class to check whether the students had finished working on the exercise or not. The teacher only repeated the material that students have understood. Both of the Elementary school teachers didn't use any teaching media when delivering the lesson, on the contrary, the Kindergarten teacher used media in her teaching. The teacher did not give feedback before the lesson ends. It is wise for the teacher to review the material they have learned on that day. In line with this, as Lenneberg in Pinter (2017) stated that the strengths of a child's brain plasticity will be better developed if the child is exposed to the environment that supports his/her language development.

Accordingly, Maili (Maili, 2018) explained the purpose of teaching English to young learners is to provide students' competence in understanding oral and written information and simple expressions. Furthermore, he claimed students learn English better at Elementary school because there has not been a process of separation of left brain and right brain function in children (Lenneberg's theory), and learning English at elementary school can help the students in learning English

at Junior high school. Then, he suggested the teaching method, model, materials should be varied and appropriate with the children's development & characteristics.

### Conclusions

The result showed that all teachers used Indonesia language more in the teaching-learning process rather than the English language, they perceived that they do not know how to use English in classroom interaction. It is wise for teachers to use English in classroom interactions as exposure to their students as children are good imitators. The teachers admitted that they lack of knowledge on how to teach English to young learners. They argued it is necessary for teachers to be equipped with the English for Young Learners (EYL) Teaching Book to be more competent in managing a creative class by conducting suitable techniques, able to find media appropriate with students' interests, and can create an effective language learning process for students.

The more Kindergarten and Elementary schools taught English to their students, they need some consideration. To gain the students' highest level of proficiency in English is not only a matter of students' motivation but of learning condition. The researchers believe that the revitalization of EYL teaching book is a necessity, Teachers need knowledge about learning English as a foreign

language in Indonesia context. Currently, some books are available but in the context of learning English in other countries. EYL teaching book can equip teachers better class management in teaching and learning English. Eventually, they can teach students with a fun, more meaningful learning experience in English, so that students are prepared with English language learning material at the next level.

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