

Innovative Techniques for Teaching English in Elementary Schools: Perspectives from Young Learner Educators

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Abstract

English is one of the most important languages needed nowadays. English has been introduced to children since childhood. An English teacher must be able to teach English to the children he teaches. The purpose of this study is to find out what techniques are used by teachers in teaching English to children in Indonesia. The method used by the author in this study is a literature review. This method uses several journals or books and then summarizes the results found in the journal and book collections. The results of this study indicate that the techniques often used by teachers to teach English to children in Indonesia include learning with games and songs.

Keywords: Elementary School, Games, Perspective, Teaching English, Young Learner

1 Introduction

The public often hears about globalization, modernization, and technological progress. The way people live their lives is significantly influenced by these factors. English is one of the influences of globalization, as evidenced by its status as a global language. During the colonial era, this language was first introduced to Indonesia. Since then, it has survived and thrived. English has spread to many other countries, including Indonesia. This is why English is known as a global language. As a result, everyone needs to speak English fluently. Learning activities can help achieve this. Most English learning activities start with the basics such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Elementary schools teach English both as local content and as an additional subject. At the education unit level, its existence is adjusted to the needs. so that each primary school can decide whether to teach English or other subjects, such as regional languages, not just English. Even though the level drops to additional subjects, English courses actually play an important role in preparing students for global interaction from an early age. Citizens from all over the world must interact with one another for the world to expand beyond national borders. Naturally, mastery of an international language is a necessary tool for contacts between countries and

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cultures. Understanding the languages spoken by people around the world can even help people understand one another's culture.

English plays an important role in education; it is important to find ways to help students improve their English skills through engaging and fun learning activities. An important part of the teaching and learning process is the teacher's ability to create various learning activities that allow students to interact with objects and their environment to improve their thinking, language, sight, and behaviour, as well as their willingness to learn. Learning activities that can accommodate students' needs to interact with objects, friends, and the surrounding environment with various student characters are available through various learning methods. Teaching is not an easy job. If someone wants to become a teacher, they must be good at teaching and have sufficient knowledge. In addition, teaching requires patience because not all students can be controlled like a robot. Many of them are bad kids who need to learn how to be better kids and learn more. On the other hand, teachers do not always do their job well. Many teachers face challenges, and some have stopped teaching. Therefore, the writer wants to study the techniques that are most commonly used by teachers so as to attract students to learn them in Indonesian elementary schools when teaching students in English.

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, the art of teaching English to elementary school students stands as a vital cornerstone. The acquisition of language skills during these early, impressionable years not only influences effective communication but also shapes a child's cognitive development and overall educational trajectory. With a constant quest for innovative and engaging teaching methodologies, educators have adopted diverse approaches to captivate young learners while ensuring the mastery of English. This research embarks on a fascinating exploration into the domain of elementary English language instruction, illuminating an intriguing teaching technique. What makes this technique so distinctive is not just its efficacy but its capacity to foster a genuine interest and enthusiasm for the English language. This technique, as perceived through the lens of the teachers themselves, takes center stage in our investigation. Through their invaluable insights and experiences, we aim to uncover the pedagogical strategies that underpin its success and gain a profound understanding of the multifaceted world of teaching English to elementary school students. In doing so, we delve into the intricate journey of nurturing linguistic abilities among young learners, laying the foundation for a lifelong proficiency in English and an enduring passion for learning. Join us as we embark on this enlightening journey, unravelling the "Interesting Technique" and its profound impact on English language education in elementary schools, one teacher's perspective at a time.

2 Methods

In this study, the authors used a type of library research or library research, namely a type of research centered on literature, by observing and analyzing reading sources related to the discussion of this study. For the nature of this study, using a qualitative approach which describes all explanations and information in a descriptive-analytic form, namely telling, describing, and classifying the data studied objectively as well as describing and then analyzing the data (Zed, 2004). The data collection technique used by the author is to review several journals that are related to the topic discussed by the author.

3 Results and Discussion

Teaching English to young learners is a captivating journey of introducing the world of language to children during their formative years. It's a specialized pedagogical approach that combines education with entertainment, fostering a deep and enduring connection between children and the English language. In this environment, educators wear many hats, serving as guides, mentors, and, at times, storytellers, using interactive and play-based activities to spark children's curiosity and enthusiasm. The focus is not merely on teaching vocabulary and grammar; it's about nurturing a love for learning and language. This process involves patient repetition, vibrant visual aids, and a strong emphasis on listening and speaking skills to build the foundation for effective communication. Ultimately, teaching English to young learners is about creating a positive and supportive atmosphere where every child can unlock the doors to linguistic exploration, cultural appreciation, and a lifelong journey of English language proficiency.

In teaching English to young students, in this case elementary school students, teachers must understand the concepts of acquisition and learning. Acquisition can be defined as the process of having language naturally or subconsciously. On the other hand, learning is the process of consciously possessing language. Teaching English to young students, including elementary school students, is a bit of a challenge for a teacher. Children are still in the playing age, and being taught English may find it difficult to accept. With today's developments, a teacher must be more creative in teaching anything, including teaching English to elementary school children. An interesting technique used by a teacher in the process of teaching and learning English will make elementary school children interested and want to learn English. In the findings of this study from various journals that have been reviewed, it can be concluded that techniques that can attract elementary school students to learn English include using games and songs.

Language learning components consist of two components, namely knowledge and skills. The first component consists of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation. The second component is language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. How many of these language components and skills are applied simultaneously by the language user is a reflection of how well the language user can speak properly and correctly. To express ideas, someone needs a vocabulary that may be unlimited in number, according to the goals or objectives to be achieved through this communication. In this context, it is clear that vocabulary will affect the smooth flow of communication. However, scholars argued that the most difficult aspect of language learning is memorizing vocabulary (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Therefore, acquiring vocabulary quickly is seen as a very important thing in learning a language. According to its use, Harmer (2007) classifies vocabulary into two types, namely active vocabulary and passive vocabulary. Active vocabulary is vocabulary used in speaking and writing (productive skills), while passive vocabulary is vocabulary used in listening and reading (receptive skills). In accordance with the principles stated above, the vocabulary needed by elementary school children is certainly concrete.

3.1 Approaches to Teaching English

Douglas (Brown, 2007) stated that a 'language learning approach' can be defined as a coherent set of theoretical assumptions and beliefs about the nature of language and language learning, as well as the roles of teachers and learners in the language learning process. This underlying belief system acts as a foundation for the design and evaluation of classroom procedures, materials, and techniques. Brown points out that the foundational beliefs serve as the basis for designing and evaluating classroom procedures, instructional materials, and teaching techniques. In other words, a language learning approach informs how educators structure their lessons, create learning materials, and facilitate interactions in the language classroom.

Language learning approaches are based on several assumptions, theories, and perceptions about language and language learning. In its development, the approach to language learning has undergone many changes: starting from the grammatical approach, the notional approach, the genre approach, and the theme approach. The theme approach begins with selecting topics that are of interest to students, followed by designing activities that will engage students in exploring these themes and by using English as their exploration tool. It is assumed that students will be more motivated to learn when their focus is on a theme they are passionate about (Dörnyei, 2009). The theme that is built should be general in nature so that it can be developed into various sub-themes. The fulcrum of theme development is a concept or topic that fits the needs of students and accommodates the integration of the four language skills.

In real games, the teaching design covers a number of components, such as: syllabus, teaching materials, selection procedures, and theme development. The syllabus should side with the learner (bottom-up), where the teacher should act as an educator, friend, controller, facilitator, and place the learner as a subject, not an object (Ratminingsih & Budasi, 2018; Ratminingsih et al., 2018). Teaching materials and aids are needed to facilitate the teacher's task in making the far away close, the abstract becomes concrete, the impossible becomes possible. Realia, maps, globes, photographs, drawings, flashcards, clippings, calendars, postcards, various domestic and foreign stamps, foreign flags, and diaries are a series of textbook accessories that teachers can use in class. The procedure for choosing a theme and its development is the process of mapping the theme network along with the child themes as boundaries to be explored in class. For example, by choosing the theme of animals, the teacher can develop some children's themes such as: kinds of animals (classification); physical characteristics of animals; animal habitats; and animal life cycles.

3.2 Techniques to Teaching English

Teaching techniques are strategies, activities, steps, or procedures carried out by the teacher in presenting teaching materials to meet or achieve predetermined indicators. Teaching techniques are more operational, idiosyncratic, individual, situational, and contextual, so they are very diverse. A good technique for teaching English in elementary school is not necessarily the same as at the high school level. In connection with some of the principles stated above, prospective teachers are advised to follow the following practical instructions:

- Children aged 6 years live in the area of "now" and "present" (here and now). References

to past centuries of events and imaginary experiences in the African wilderness do not suit them.

- Children have an extraordinary ability to acquire language through exposure, namely by seeing, feeling, touching and hearing. The teacher's job is to provide these exposure opportunities.
- Use as much English as possible, but don't hesitate to use Indonesian when necessary.
- In everyday life, the response to utterances is not always in the form of a verbal response; because of that, don't always expect a verbal response from the learner.
- Children's memory does not allow them to concentrate for long; therefore, learning activities must be varied so they don't get bored.
- Children like to play actively, so make it a habit to change their sitting position and class atmosphere.
- Try to keep their work partners alternated.
- Correct their mistakes in speech, but that correction should not interfere with communication, let alone discourage them.
- Create a fun learning atmosphere and instill in them a positive attitude towards English.

Richards (2001) puts forward five objectives of using the thematic approach, namely to:

- Guarantee the link between the concepts contained in library materials and the world of learners.
- Present satisfaction for students because of the suitability of the chosen theme.
- Explore the everyday problems of learners.
- Integrate the four language skills.
- Develop teaching strategies for the four language skills.

According to Wulandari (2020), teaching English at the SD/MI level began in 1994. With the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture No., this was stated in government policy. 060/U/1993, dated 25 February 1993, discussed the possibility of local content subjects for SD/MI in English. Since then, English is taught in grades 4, 5, and 6 and is part of the local curriculum. There are several reasons why SD/MI subjects are taught, including the importance of English as one of the most essential languages of communication. Considering that Indonesia will face competition from all over the world in the fields of education and trade. English is very important not only in educational settings but also in the workplace.

The Indonesian government's decision to teach English to primary school students is partly based on the fact that English is used in every aspect of public life. The rapid development of information technology is the reason. Therefore, the ability to speak English is very important.

Lesia (2021) stated that English should be taught as part of the curriculum because it helps the Indonesian generation develop. At SD/MI, teaching English is more emphasized on learning simple vocabulary such as the English alphabet and the nouns around it. This is because students at the SD/MI level have not learned much about English grammar. One of the international languages used for communication in international relations and in all fields of study is English for children in teaching English. Brown (2007) adds that English is rarely studied as a means of teaching and understanding British or American cultural values. However, English has emerged as a means of international communication in areas such as tourism, technology, diplomacy, trade, banking, transportation, and scientific research. English should be part of the local content of the elementary school-based curriculum because of this fact. In order to achieve the best results, the methods of teaching and learning English to young learners (elementary school students) must be considered.

In the golden age when children could easily learn anything, teaching and learning English in primary schools provided students with English competence. Linguistic performance and linguistic competence are the names given to the two skills. According to Chomsky in Clark and Clark (1977:6), linguistic performance is the actual application of linguistic competence in speaking or listening, while linguistic competence is a person's capacity to use language. In addition, according to Brown (2001), competence is defined as a person's fundamental understanding of a system, event, or fact. It is an ideal, non-observable capacity to perform a task. Performance is the embodiment or realization of competence that is clear and real. This is what happens: talking, walking, singing, or dancing. Considering that elementary school students go through what are called golden and critical periods, where they can easily learn anything, giving them English lessons is the right choice. Their brains are still flexible at this time, allowing them to learn just about anything, including languages. Children also have an open attitude towards other cultures and languages, which helps them learn new languages.

Teachers use Listen and Repeat, Listen and Do, Question and Answer, Guided Writing, and Pair strategies to teach English to young students to play and learn cooperatively. Diptoadi et al. (2018) Listen and Repeat, Listen and Do, and Question and Answer are commonly used in student practice on learning material. When the drill is used, all students get the same opportunity to ask and answer questions. The teacher begins by preparing questions for students who are closest to the teacher. The teacher then starts the chain by asking questions to the student closest to the teacher. The chain continues until all students have had the opportunity to ask and answer questions (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). After that student answered, it was his turn to ask the next student.

The guided writing strategy is another method used. Students' writing ability is the main focus in this regard. In guided writing, the instructor directs students as they work on the text in small groups. In this case, students follow the teacher's instructions. It leads them through the writing process. Scholars found that teachers use guided writing to teach writing skills, especially English, by making models, providing media, and preparing or providing written materials that can be used to guide students. The instructor can provide a series of exercises that emphasize vocabulary development and sentence structure in relation to the text. Therefore, before being able to write, students acquire various vocabulary and sentence structures. As a result, students'

writing ability will increase.

Cooperative learning is the next strategy used. Currently, it is recommended that teachers choose teaching methods that place students at the center of the learning process. Cooperative learning is an approach that places students at the center of the learning process ((Ur, 2012)). The term "cooperative" refers to when students collaborate to solve a specific problem. According to scholars, education experts agree that cultivating a sense of "we're all in the same boat"—a basic principle of cooperative learning (CL)—can maximize student learning and improve academic achievement. Students' sense of belonging is greatly enhanced by this strategy. Students are placed at the center of the learning process in cooperative learning. If a student has difficulty, the teacher's job is to help and direct them.

The instructor uses this strategy by considering four skills. Teachers used to listen, repeat, and listen, doing a lot in the listening skills section. Meanwhile, the instructor uses questions and answers to teach speaking skills. In contrast, teachers tend to use guided, paired, and cooperative written learning for reading and writing skills. To improve students' listening skills, the instructor asks them to participate in an activity called "listening and repeating," in which the instructor speaks a few words, and the students listen attentively. While the students were repeating it aloud in their seats, the instructor stood up and said the words. Plus, the instructor explained what the spoken words mean. The students were then asked to listen and act after the message was repeated. In this method, the instructor speaks the words, and the students listen to what he has to say. In this case, the instructor says the word while standing in front of the class. The students who understood the meaning of those words would then immediately take action.

Students can directly participate in these activities, which encourage positive interactions with their environment. Scholars argue that when students are encouraged to listen in their environment, they increase their vocabulary. The teacher uses questions and answers in speaking skills. The students can, in this case, suggest some questions related to the previous material. Other students will raise their hands to answer the question. These things are done by accident. In reading skills, the activity is guided writing, with the instructor giving instructions and students following along. Students continue the teacher's sentences on their worksheets after the teacher writes one straightforward sentence on the board. Students can benefit from using cooperative and pair strategies, especially for reading and writing skills. Students can use their partners or groups to find information on reading skills. The information they get from books can also be shared. Students are asked to organize direct paragraphs with their partners or groups, especially for writing skills. To check their work together, students switch jobs with a friend. It helps students develop their social and personal skills through cooperative learning. The teacher's last tactic is to play games. Games are often used by teachers to invite students to move or participate in activities. Young learners need activities such as games. According to Ratminingsih et al. al (2018), games are a good way for students to improve their English, especially in terms of vocabulary mastery. Therefore, games must be included in the language teaching process.

The most effective methods used by teachers to teach English to young students include playing games; observations show that playing games is quite effective in increasing students'

enthusiasm for learning in three classes: Kindergarten A1, A2, and B. In addition, the class atmosphere was fun and not tense, and students asked that the games be continued. Because it is built using games, learning becomes easy for students to understand. Demonstrating, judging from the observations and interviews, the use of demonstration methods in education was quite successful for students to stand out. When students in science class make arts and crafts and do experiments, observations show that there is interaction between teacher and students. Students enjoy following lessons because they can see and participate directly.

Observations showed that the teacher used presentation, practice, and production (PPP) to conduct the class and explain the main topics. Students lack sufficient background knowledge, so teachers must use presentation techniques as a first step to introduce new information to young learners. Students pay close attention to the presentations made by three teachers using the PPP technique. The teacher freely discusses the material because the class atmosphere is so quiet and serious. In addition, exercises based on the lessons explained by the instructors are given to students. The practice questions were completed correctly by almost all students.

4 Conclusion

Teaching English to children is one of the international languages that is widely used in all fields of study and as a means of communication in international relations. In the golden age, when children can easily learn anything, elementary school English instruction provides students with English language competencies. Linguistic performance and linguistic competence are the names given to these two skills. Teachers frequently employ watch and repeat and watch and do when teaching listening skills. In the meantime, the instructor uses question-and-answer to teach speaking skills. Teachers typically employ guided, paired, and cooperative written learning for reading and writing skills. Students are required to participate in listening and repeat activities as part of their listening skills instruction. In these activities, the instructor speaks a few words to the students and then asks them to follow along. However, while teaching children English. In order to increase students' enthusiasm for learning English, teachers frequently employ storytelling, song, and game strategies.

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