

# **The Teacher's Perspectives About Challenges of Teaching English for Young Learners: A Case Study at English Course for Young Learners**

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**Abstract:** This study is done in an English course for kids in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The objectives of the study are to know the teacher's perspective on the challenges while teaching English for young learners and the challenges for the teacher in teaching English for young learners. This research uses the qualitative researcher so that the data will explain in detail. The data come from the teacher and the students by using direct observation and interview. The teachers have the challenges of teaching English for young learners. There is a teaching approach in the class, using monotone media, the different class sizes, the different characteristics of the students, the difficulties language skills. The most difficult is managing the class. The teacher should prepare the techniques to solve the challenge.

**Keywords:** *teacher's perspective, challenges, young learners*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Perspective is related to the point of view of something. The researcher can think about the problem with a reasonable way to analyze it. The perspective can take from their own experiences or view. The perspective can give the image to know furthermore about something. According to Crotty (1998), teaching English for kids is not easy for the teacher. The teacher can find several challenges to teach them. It is an approach to understand and explain society and the human world, and grounds a set of assumptions that symbolic interactionist researchers typically bring to their methodology of choice. According to Damar (2013), the children start to write and read in L1 to help children to learn another language. They emphasize the importance of starting at an early age in terms of having positive attitudes towards learning another language.

In teaching-learning for young learners, the teacher should give real things in the class for the children are more comfortable recognizing the vocabulary presented. Thus, young learners need real stuff as the media in the learning process. It will make them interested to learn English. According to Myrtis & Philomena (2006), young learners tend to have short attention spans and much physical energy. Also, children are very much linked to their surroundings and are more interested in physical and tangible. According to Harmer (2007), students of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) tend to be learning. They can use English when travel or to communicate with other people, from whatever country they also speak English. According to Myrtis & Philomena (2006), to teach English to children, the researcher has the challenge to deliver the materials. This is one way to make learning more fun is to involve students in the creation of the visual and realia.

It can develop the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor for the children. Harmer (2007) states that many people learn English because they have moved into a target language

community, and they need to be able to operate successfully within that community. Gautam (2014) states that to teach English to young children effectively, the teacher should have knowledge and skills of how the language should present at a very young age. According to Harmer (2007), children usually respond well to activities that focus on their lives and experiences. However, a child's attention span - their willingness to stay rooted in one activity - is often relatively short. Teaching English for younger children is not easy for teachers. Many problems can find during class. If young children move to a new country and go to school there, they seem to 'pick up' the original language with incredible ease.

The activities can use from the visual object, realia, toys or dolls, and can deliver by using the full color and song. They will be interested when they hear the song or movie given. They are easy to pay attention to when they are interested in the object, and the teacher can follow up or make the activity by retelling the story or guessing vocabulary. Shin (2006) states that one way to capture their attention and keep them engaged in activities is to supplement to the children. According to Elttayef & Hussein (2017), there is rarely an examination when they use the speaking skill examed, but in the learning process is needed. The study will focus on reading skills, writing skills, grammar, and vocabulary. Speaking ability can take overall skills like reading and writing skills so that the teacher will focus on reading and writing skills than speaking skills.

The children who want to enter the course, they should do the placement test. It can be used to measure the young learners' ability in English so that they can enter the appropriate level in a course. According to Lightbown & Spada (1999) states that successful language learners may not be active in all of the components of aptitude. Some individuals may have strong memories but only average abilities in the other parts of the skill. Ideally, one could determine learners; profiles of strengths and weaknesses and use this information to place students in appropriate teaching programs. Ansari (2012) states that in the process of teaching speaking, a teacher is a role because the teacher is the first model for the students. It is from him that students directly listen to spoken English. Automatically, the students will dictate or follow the rules given by the teacher. The students will imitate or produce the language that comes from the teachers. So, a teacher should try to be a real model for students. Thus, the teacher must give the right pronunciation when they teach the children because they will repeat the words that they hear from the teacher.

Speaking skills are comfortable than reading and writing skills because they young learners can say or produce sentences or words. Elttayef & Hussein (2017) states that the most crucial in the learning process that it can apply for the students are confident. The children feel satisfied because they are afraid to make mistakes. SO, the teacher should encourage them to be convinced. The teacher should make an activity that can practice in class. According to Ansari (2012), teaching English Writing to EFL students is not easy. It is a challenging job. While teaching an EFL, a teacher faces many problems. Most of them are unaware of cursive writing. To solve the issues, we have to take practical approaches while teaching an EFL class. Thus, writing and reading skills are the most difficult skills for the young learner, especially in English.

Teaching English as a foreign language is more complicated than teaching English as a second language because English rarely uses in Indonesia. Certain people use English as a communication language. Spearman & Eckhoof (2014) states that while young children are not capable of the multifaceted understandings expected of individuals in adolescence and adulthood, their opinions of sustainability are valuable. According to Shin (2006), young

learners should have fun with English to make the theory and practice of teaching young learners in the EFL classroom successful. Nunan (2011) states that children are at pre-school or in the first couple of years of schooling. The children have limited reading and writing skills, even in their first language. They enjoy fantasy, imagination, and movement.

Educators or teachers should have a high skill or specific skills to make young learners enjoyable to learn English. According to Colarusso (2010), as with most teachers of language arts, English teachers face growing pressures to identify the needs of diverse learners, both in terms of ethnicity and language, but also in terms of economic and social circumstances. According to Gajdos (2016), it should be one of the essential high-level skills for teachers' needs. It can answer the challenges which face on every level and every aspect of the profession. Therefore, the research question is the point as the methodological point in-depth questions because there is a limitation of the research. To help the writer to find the data, the writer gives two research questions like the following:

1. What is the teacher's perspective on the challenges while teaching English for young learners?
2. What are the challenges of the teacher in teaching English for young learners?

Thus, teachers' perception of teaching English to young learners is needed because they will explain the language. Language is a subject to be taught, especially the English language, which is uncommon for the children. Some young learners can speak in English because it influences from his/her background. The habit of teaching English for young learners also can help the teacher to know the stages to show.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The researchers will use the observation and guided interview to collect the data to get the data. The method was related to how the researchers collect the data or how to analyze the data came. According to Vanderstoep & Johnston (2009), this study uses qualitative research. The methodology will describe to be the point of research methods and collecting the data. Qualitative research produces narrative or textual descriptions of the phenomena under study. "It will focus on the research questions in this study. Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants (Creswell, 2014). According to Rossman & Rallis (2012), qualitative researchers learn to anticipate the time involved in gaining access. So, the process of negotiating entry can be as insightful about the people or setting as following observations and interviews themselves.

The researcher used triangulation to collect the data. To use triangulation data, the researcher needs some steps to do the research. The data collection could help the researcher to get the data from interviews and observation. If the researcher wanted to use triangulation, the researcher should use more than one method to collect the data. It was used to make the result active and valid. It can ignore bias data. So this research would use observation and interview as the data collection. Merriam & Tisdell (2016), observation is one of the kinds of research that will show the specific research question, and when it is subject to the checks and balances in producing accurate results. According to Bernard & Ryan (2010), field notes will take the things which you see and hear in natural settings, photographs of the content of people's houses, audio recordings of people telling stories, video recordings of people.

The researcher uses a semi-structured interview. According to Stake (2010), it takes a terrific discussion or survey question for most interviewees to get genuinely into the complexity of the

thing studied. Sometimes it helps to have exhibit questions, which we will talk about next. According to Bernard & Ryan (2010), interview guides and instructions to probe the essential when there is more than one interviewer on a project so that people will ask roughly the same questions.

Thus, the sample is needed for the writer to know the right target in research. ]The sample is from 2 English teachers. The writer will describe the English teacher's perspective. As a result, we will find the code ET1 & ET2. ET1 is the first interview (the first English teacher), and ET2 is the second interview (the second English teacher). Denzin (1970) states that the subject of this research is from two English teachers. The topic or the participants can help the researcher to find the data. The researcher uses the purposive sample. Purposive sampling considers appropriate participants who are a small group, and the characteristic studied intensively. According to Creswell (2014), purposeful sampling, this is the primary sampling strategy used in qualitative research. It means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and the central phenomenon in the study.

The place is one of the kid's courses in Yogyakarta. It locates in Yogyakarta's course. The course focuses on 2-9 years old.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Teacher's Perspective***

The first, the teachers use a monotonous teaching method. Based on the observation, the teachers use a teacher-centered approach. The teachers are always the role or model in the learning process. The teacher will ask and require the students to follow every activity in the class. The teachers also instruct their students. Based on the situation, the teacher can use the variety approach in the class by using the student's centered approach. It can build their communication and confidence when the teacher asks them as the primary model. To deliver the materials, the teachers use some methods used in the learning process like Total Physical Response (TPR), Direct Method, and Audio-Lingual Method. The teachers can use several ways in a meeting so that it can help the teachers to give the variation activities.

The second, the teacher uses annoying media in teaching English. From the observation, the researcher found that the leading media in teaching English for kids is flashcards. The teachers will give several flashcards based on a specific topic. The teacher will drill the vocabularies to the students like "drink." The teacher will drill one vocabulary fifth times in order; then, the students will repeat the word. Based on the observation, it is better when the teacher gives several media so that the students do not feel bored. Based on the interview, the researcher finds several results like:

"But while I teach here, I never find that it is not appropriate for children in the class, it is all complete." (ET1)

"For the media, it is complete and appropriate." (ET2)

### ***The Challenges of Teaching Young Learners***

In teaching English for young learners, the teachers find the challenges. The teacher must solve the problem in the class. The teacher can be creative to make the learning process fun. So, several challenges can find in the learning process.

The first is the class size. Based on the observation, the type of group is a small group. It can be 1 to 8 students, but the researcher found that there are 3 to 5 students in each class. The small group in the class, it can help the teacher to be effective and easy to manage the class. However, teachers feel challenging to handle or manage the class because young learners have different characteristics. The teacher can rearrange the place to do the learning process like circle group, letter U group, sitting on the floor, and sitting on the chair. It can help the teacher to give the variant learning style. Based on the interview, it shows that:

“The challenge is when the children are noisy, and we are difficult to manage the class.” (ET1)

“Sometimes, it is difficult if they are not obedient.” (ET2)

The second is the different characteristics of the children. The young children have different characters in order; the teacher must pay attention to recognize the student's personalities. The different characteristics are one of the challenges for the teachers. The teachers will not focus on one student, but all of the students in the class. Based on the interview, it shows that:

“I have a student that he is so difficult to adapt to the new place. He is too shy, not confidence ..., and has the kinesthetic student in the same character in the class. They are hyperactive, and it is also the challenge in the class.” (ET1)

“I think it is reasonable because all the children have a different ability. I teach one topic, a student is easy to absorb the material, but the other students are not easy. It is the challenge, and I also have one shy student.” (ET2)

According to the observation, the researcher found that several students have different characteristics each other like an active student, shy student, enthusiastic student, and silent student. The teacher feels challenging to handle the class, but the teacher gives the solution to handle it.

We know that the young learner, especially kids, are complicated when the stranger people want to close to them. Several students feel comfortable to socialize with others, or several students are not easy to socialize with others. According to observation, the researcher established that the teacher could close to her students. The students can work well to do their tasks. They are also active in asking vocabulary when they do not know the vocabulary. This approach can help the teacher to be close to their students.

“How the way to persuade when they got moody.” (ET1)

The third is difficult language skills. According to the observation, the researcher found that the students feel difficulty in writing and reading skills. The children will learn how to spell the English alphabet. Several students use the Indonesian alphabets. The children range 4 to 6 years old feel challenging to read an English word. The researcher found that fewer students can spell or can read sentences or words, but they still use the technique to read Indonesian words or sentences. The short transcript can show below:

“As far as my experience as a teacher, I have difficulty in reading or writing skills when we want to introduce English letters to children. I found the difficult how to teach them to write in English because it affects the Indonesia way.” (ET1)

“The difficult skills are reading and writing skills.” (ET2)

According to the observation, the researcher found several problems in each English skill like speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. The researcher can find the same problem.

- Listening skill

The students feel easy on listening skills, but the young children have limited sentences when they receive the sentences. The children think difficult to hear long or complex sentences. They still receive simple sentences or phrases. Listening skill

- Speaking skill

The teacher can be a role model for young learners. The children will repeat, dictate, or reproduce the vocabulary from the teacher so that the teacher should give the right pronunciation for them. If the teacher does the wrong pronunciation, the children will do the mistaken pronunciation too.

- Reading skill

The researcher found that teachers feel painful when they teach reading the time. The young learners still recognize the alphabet so they can learn the alphabet (2 to 5 years old). The researcher found that there are fewer students who can read the sentences or words in English, but it influences in Indonesia language.

- Writing skill

The researcher found that the most challenging professions in English are writing skills because it is related to psychomotor skill. The young learners (2 to 3 years old) still learn how to hold a pencil or color pencil. They always do the tracing letters. The young learners (4 to 5 years old) can hold a pencil or color pencil. They are ready to write, but they still learn to read the letters first.

The teacher can determine a variety of appropriate approaches to teaching the young learner. The teacher can measure from the direct understanding of the children. The teacher can identify the children that can understand or produce the language. When the children can repeat or use the words, we know that the learning objectives achieved. Yildirim & Dogan (2010) states that since children are growing at different rates (mentally, emotionally, and physically), the potential of each child needs to be measured individually. The youngest children should not be formally tested and graded; in an active mode, they can frequently assess as to understanding and production. Saracho (2012) states that play is a medium for different types of learning (such as achieving social competence, learning about their world, developing knowledge in various subject areas). Playing provides the optimum learning conditions when the environment and approaches focus on the children's interests and developmental levels.

The children have different characteristics of each other so that the teachers should know their personalities. The children need ways how the teacher can pay attention to them. The ways are running in the class, making noise, fighting to the other friends, and so forth. Directly, the teacher will do some activities or talk to them. Like the teachers, they should listen carefully when the children retell something. It also makes them comfortable. According to Juhana (2014) states that children like which it is related to their life. So, the teacher should think of making a unique activity for the student. Moylett (2014) states that when young children live to their own devices in a stimulating learning environment, most will learn through playing and exploring – but this is not enough. Myrtis & Philomena (2006) states that young learners tend to have short attention spans and much physical energy. Also, children are very much linked to their surroundings and are more interested in physical and tangible.

Thus, in managing the class, the teachers still feel challenging to achieve it. For example, there are six students with different characteristics; the teacher must give a solution on how to manage the class. Managing class is a tricky part of teaching English for young learners or kids. According to Nagler (2015), the most challenging aspect of teaching for many beginning

teachers may be managing students' behavior. The teacher will be successful in the class when the teacher can control the class well so the materials will present well. Effective classroom management involves clear communication of behavioral and academic expectations as well as a classroom environment conducive to learning.

To teaching specific skills in English for the young learner, the teacher should determine the appropriate materials for them. The young learners are easy to understand the materials when they use concrete or real things. For example, the teacher wants to learn about vegetables. The teachers can bring concrete vegetables so they will be interested to learn. Saracho (2012) states that activities should provide some form of education to the children and need-based upon a set of guidelines that underlie educational experiences for young children. Burnard (1998) states that children with emotional and behavioral difficulties characteristically have difficulties with reading and spelling. The teaching of reading and spelling is also a behavioral management process in that choice of the right material and how to present and reward are essential factors. Gautam (2014) states that to teach English to young children effectively, the teacher should have knowledge and skills of how the language should present at a very young age. The figure can be shown below.



**Figure 1.** Learning Process (Reading Time)

The researcher gives the solutions because the techniques are successful in the class. The first is about drilling techniques by using varieties ways such as by using games, movies, songs, and role play. This kind of activity above can help the teacher to make a variety of ways to deliver the materials. The second is an appointment. Before the learning process starts, the teacher and the students can agree with the class. It also makes them responsible and confident from the appointments. The thirds are about other activities (art project, science project, painting picture). The students feel happy and interested when they can do the new activity. The teacher can make excellent communication with students. The young learners are easy to change their mood at the moment. So, the teacher can think of how to make them interested to learn English. The children are easy to be bored when the learning process is monotone.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

We know that English is a foreign language in Indonesia, especially for young learners. Teaching English in a foreign language becomes the challenge to teach young learners. Several problems found in the learning process. So, the parents want to make their children can speak in English that their children need more additional materials in a course.

The development to speak in English it can influence the environment from the children. For example, a child can speak well in English because he or she always speaks in English in a house with the parents, friends, or neighbors. To make them confident, it must build excellent communication.

To solve the challenges for the teachers, the teachers can modify the materials or do the various learning style in the class. It also cannot make the students bored. The additional learning in the class, it can make them interested to learn English. To teach English to kids or young learners is not easy for the teacher. The teachers must be creative to make something interesting for them.

In my opinion, teachers should teach them to develop their psychomotor skills and ability. Thus, the teachers can develop psychomotor skills like tracing letters, tracing objects that the students must use the crayon or color pencils. The teacher can make an art project or science project to make them interested to learn more. The teachers also can use songs and movies in English to develop their thinking from the audio or audio-visual. Thus, the teacher can combine those activities for young learners or kids. An art project can help the teacher to develop the materials too. An art project can be the media in the learning process. After the learning process, the teachers can give rewards like the star, sticker, and so on. So, the teachers should be creative in making materials fun and make them smile.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We wish to express thanks for UNS (Universitas Sebelas Maret), which has allowed us to contribute to the international conference ICLIQE 2019. We dedicate this paper to our colleagues. I have been able to honor my friends, Doni and Icuk, as the partners to make useful paper for others. I want to thank our adviser, Drs., Akmal, M.Hum., M.Sc., Ph.D. We hope our journal is helpful for Drs. Bambang Widi Pratolo, M.Hum., Pd.D. people who want to guide us to make the paper.

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