

## MASTERING TEACHING ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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**Abstract:** *Teaching language to old learners differs from teaching language to young learners. Young learners have certain characteristics that are different from old learners that influence their foreign language acquisition. Teaching a foreign language is easy if we understand the rules well. The rules are to understand the characteristics of our students, to master some suitable methods and to choose suitable material. Young learners have certain characteristics that set them apart from older learners. In relation to certain characteristics, the teacher must understand to differentiate the method he uses to teach the young learners English as a foreign language. In order to strengthen the teaching, the teacher must have a good command of the material.*

**Key words:** *Young learners, characteristics, suitable methods, suitable material.*

### INTRODUCTION

Language has some skills to understand; listening skill, speaking skill, reading skill, and writing skill. Those skills have their own characteristics to be understood and to be mastered. Mastering all those skills needs some certain method too, but we can learn them as step by step. Every language teacher should understand well related to the skills when they are teaching language. It influences teaching the language. As a teacher should understand well which skill the students should learn first, how to teach each skill, and what the characters of the language learners. When the teacher understand those well, it will be easy to recognize the learners, to choose the suitable method, and to find the suitable materials. Teaching foreign language is different from teaching first language, even though some of the orders are same. Before we teach second language, of course we have to understand the first language then before we learn foreign language we have to understand the second language. Even sometimes we do not understand each of them well, but it should be better if we understand well. Those can help the learners easier to acquire the second language or foreign language. It is because the first language can be used as a tool to explain and study second language and also foreign language. When the language learners learn the language they must find some difficult word or phrases, they can understand the meaning from their own language explanation or definition. Sometimes, different language has different definition and term, out of the context.

Related to teaching language, because language has some skills, teaching language also has some certain method to teach. And teaching language need much practice too to master the language. If the learners learn the theory of linguistics, they do not need to much practice the language, for example they do not need much to practice speaking and writing in a context. They just learn the theory of linguistics. Moreover, if the learners learn the language to teach it into Young Learners, they have to try to practice it actively, well, and fluently. It is because young learners are active learners need to be taught actively too. And usually the young learners emphasize on language practice. They need the language to be practiced and used. Most of them use the language orally. In Indonesia, now English is out of curriculum for elementary school, even though at the previous period about 2010s Indonesian curriculum placed English Language inside. In Indonesia since 1994, elementary school have been taught English as a local content subject. According to Kunjana Rahardi, a master of socio-Linguistic Gajah Mada University (UGM), teaching English in early age will impact bad effect for the children related to the national language (Indonesia). Mastering mother language and national language will influence second or foreign language acquisition (voaindonesia, 2012).

Whereas, some schools places the English into extra classes or additional classes, some schools do not leave English as a compulsory subject, but in some countries English is a compulsory subject in the early primary grades (Niclove, 2009; pinter 2006). Moreover, Shin and Crandall (2011) showed that for recently years, about 50 countries in the world placed English Language as a compulsory subject at the third grade.

### **YOUNG LEARNERS**

Young learners are different from old learners of course. They are unique; they have smart brain which is fresh, clean, and fast. Most of them are attractive. Who is young learner? There are some opinions related to them. The British Philosopher, John Stuart Mill started to learn Greek at three years old, but it was not generally children. Some of them said that young learners are children whose age less than 12 years old. According to Scooth and Lisbeth, young learners are they who have age under 11 years old. For the teacher who concern in teaching English to young learners they have to understand the characteristics of young learners in order understanding the students' needs, knowing the suitable method to teaching young learners.

According to Scooth and Lisbeth (1992) in Handoyo, there are some characteristics of young learners: □

- Children age 8-10 are mature enough □
- They have particular point of view □
- They can describe the difference between fact and fiction □
- They are curious of asking questions □
- They believe of what is said and the “real” word to express and comprehend meaning/message
- They have distinct option about what they like and what they dislike □

- They are open to what happens in the classroom and begin asking the teacher decision □
- They can cooperate with other people and learn from another.

#### Teaching English for Young Learners

In a pedagogical context, foreign language teaching to children differs from mother tongue teaching, but possibly from their acquisition and learning of a foreign language, and even they learn faster than after puberty (McLaughlin, 1978). On the other hand, Long (1990) found that children are less able to absorb or acquire foreign languages. There are two types of classes in our country, formal school and informal school. Wherever the location of the young learner class is, it is young learners learning a foreign language. The teacher should understand and master teaching young learners.

Some of the above has been explained in relation to the importance and choices of learning English as a foreign language. As we know, lately some parents prefer their children to be proficient in English. They hope that learning English early can help children acquire a foreign language. Also in some schools English does not become a major but only a local content subject. But neither the parents nor the teacher make a page out of it. As an English teacher, their only duty is to educate and educate the students in English, that is what they should do.

English is one of the foreign languages. Basically, children have their own language in which they spend time. Children are competent users of their language. They have their own symbols, abstract, generalize and systematize based on the syntax of their language used. It occurs in the general language development of children. If the foreign language can then come to them, they cannot be understood exactly. This is because there is almost the same difference between learning the first language for the children from an early age and learning a foreign language for the children or students who have the first language. Lisbeth explained that no one has found the universal pattern of language learning that everyone agrees with. But a lot depends on people's native language, social, emotional factors and the background of the children.

An English teacher for young learners should have a good command of English itself, the methods and models of teaching English, especially to young learners. An English teacher must also be able to be a creative teacher, he can make and use many things that become requirements for teaching young learners who are suited to it. For additions as a teacher should teach using hearing so the teacher can make a connection between what the teacher is feeling and what he is trying to achieve with the children. If the teacher can feel what the students are feeling or connect their feeling to learn, the teacher will be easy to teach and the students will be easy to understand what the teacher has provided. If the teacher only what he is supposed to teach and convey the material is not enough, it can be less useful.

#### Songs in teaching English for Young learners

Song is some words and rhyme which is delivered in rhythm and beautiful tone. The teacher uses song to teach to make students interested in learning English, if they are interested in, they will be easy to learn and enjoy the class. Song is created to be enjoyed and not only be enjoyed but also to propose teaching and learning process. Teacher can use song to teach vocabularies, phrases, sentences rule, or others. So the teacher can decide the suitable song for the teaching and learning needs and purposes. So the children can enjoy the song while learning some materials, sometimes they do not realize that they are learning during singing a song. There are some characteristic of songs for children: □

- The notes of the song should be the easy to follow □
- There are many repetitions, usually to memorize some vocabularies or phrases
- Interesting, happy, fast and attractive □
- The song is usually short
- The content of the song is related to the materials

The teacher hopes through the song, the children can sing a song out of the class too, and then they can memorize the materials happily and joyfully. These are some orders in teaching English for young Learners using song:

- Listening a song and repeating The teacher just plays the song then asks the students to repeat after the song is played. The repetition can be done by the whole class then randomly.

- Listening and filling blank space of song. The teacher gives the students a piece of paper containing some missing word of the song, and then the teacher asks the students to fill the missing word based on the song.

- Listening a song and retelling the song

#### Conclusion

Teaching English for young Learners is interesting activities. Before teaching young learners, teacher should know the characteristics of young learners and the student's needs. Then the teacher can divide the method, the model or technic of teaching young learners. Teaching Young Learners should be interesting, happy, and attractive. The teacher can use colorful picture, song, and game. Those should be suitable for the children. Then every teacher of young learners must be creative and always cheerful, because he/she face children. Every kinds of media, method, and technic can be improved by the teacher as creative as possible.

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