
Teaching English to Children at MI Tahfidz Nurul Huda Japuralor, Cirebon

UMAR

STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon

aangumar80@gmail.com

umar@stit-buntetpesantren.ac.id

Article Info

Article History:

Received: March 3rd, 2022

Accepted: April 7th, 2022

Published: May 11th, 2022

Keywords:

Teaching English, English for Children, Young Learners, English for Young Learners, An overview

Abstract

Since the implementation of the decentralization policy in education management in 2001, many local governments (PEMDAs) have decided to teach English as a local content (Mulok) at the elementary school level (or even in kindergarten). This local government initiative is problematic because the implementation of this mulok is not accompanied by special efforts to prepare some important aspects such as English teachers to teach in elementary schools and some supporting facilities. This research was conducted within 2 months (from January - February 2022). They were an English teacher at MI Tahfidz Nurul Huda Japuralor and some students of MI Tahfidz Nurul Huda Japuralor. The subjects were selected using Purposive Sampling techniques. This article discusses an overview of teaching English to children in MI Tahfidz Nurul Huda Japuralor, teachers' perception toward teaching English to Young Learners, and Parents' persepectives on learning English.

Umar

aangumar80@gmail.com; umar@stit-buntetpesantren.ac.id

p-ISSN xxxx-xxxx

e-ISSN xxxx-xxxx

INTRODUCTION

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Tahfidz Nurul Huda Japura Lor, Pangenan, Cirebon is a formal educational institution at the elementary level under the auspices of the Nurul Huda Foundation, Japura Lor, Pangenan, Cirebon. MI Tahfidz Nurul Huda is intended for students who have a strong interest and determination to memorize the Qur'an and study Islam and science at

the same time. As a National Standard School (SSN) the MI Tahfidz has included English lessons at class 4. Students from grade grade IV receive English lessons as local content (mulok).

This is because international communication requires English as an international language, so that in education in Indonesia, the ability to speak English is one of the skills that

must be mastered by students from the early ages.

The era of globalization requires us to master English both orally and in writing. These demands make parents compete to send their children to schools with international or national standards plus where the medium of language used as the medium of instruction is English.

English has become a very important communication medium in the world because of its position as an international language as well as the language of technology. With the increasingly globalized world and increasingly rapid technological advances, it is undeniable that mastery of the English language is one of the keys to get better job opportunities or success. Based on this, Indonesia as a part of the world community is aware of the importance of mastering the English language. Therefore, the teaching of English has long been applied in the world of Indonesian education.

English has long been an inseparable part of the education system in Indonesia which was initially only given to higher education levels, but over time the need and popularity of English has increased which resulted in the curriculum for teaching English to change. With the aim of improving the ability and mastery of English for students, the government finally began to introduce English lessons at a lower level of education, namely at the primary school or even kindergarten.

It was this awareness that finally made the government issue a policy

through the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Depdikbud RI) No. 0487/1992, Chapter VIII which states that SD can add subjects to its curriculum. This policy ultimately underlies the inclusion of English subjects as part of local content in elementary schools. (Nisa, 2020, p. 192).

Many languages around the world have similarities, for example in syntax (syntax), grammar (grammar), even vocabulary (vocabulary) where they have the same origin, such as Dutch and German, Indonesian and Malaysian, or French and Spanish. However, English and Indonesian are very different, where each language has German and Austronesian roots. With so many differences, it is a challenge for native Indonesian speakers to learn the more complex intricacies of English. (*Perbedaan utama antara bahasa Inggris dan bahasa Indonesia | British Council Indonesia Foundation*, n.d.).

The connecting tool between one human and another in interacting is with a language. Language is a communication tool that can be used to convey desires, intentions, thoughts from one individual to another. Communication will be easier or smoother if the language used between the speaker and the speech partner has many similarities or can be said in the same language or one type of language.

The difference in the area where we live turns out to give rise to a different (diverse) language. Mountains, rice fields, rivers, forests are some examples of geographical factors that drive this difference. For example, region A and

region B are bordered by a large river, it is rare for interactions between the two communities to occur, language variations can occur when the languages of the two regions are studied.

There arises a science that studies language not only in its internal scope (linguistics), but also in relation to its external scope (sociolinguistics), namely individuals as members of a society. In sociolinguistic studies, language variations are studied. Variations that are based on or attributed to speakers, linked to region, linked to time, etc. Language scholars (linguists) differ in classifying languages based on the focus of their discussion. There are those who classify language based on politics and based on its acquisition (Chaer and Leonie). These two topics will be briefly described in this paper.

The types of language based on acquisition are mother tongue (first language), second language and foreign language. Meanwhile, the type of language based on political attitudes that will be described is the national language.

English is considered as the foreign language in Indonesia. As the mother tongue is the equivalent of the English term *native language*, which is a linguistic system that is first naturally learned from the mother or family by the child. For example, the native language of the people living on the slopes of Mount Merapi is Javanese and the mother tongue of the natives on the shores of Lake Batur is Balinese.

It has been mentioned above that other languages that are not their mother

tongue are learned by children, so that other language is called a second language. This second language can be the national language, the official language of the country, the official regional language, or also a foreign language (not the native language of the indigenous people). For example, a child living in Yogyakarta learns Javanese as the first language taught by his parents, then when he enters school, the child is taught Indonesian at school, so in this case Indonesian can be said as the child's second language.

Young children do not come to the language classroom empty-handed. They bring with them with an already well-established set of instincts, skills, and characteristics which will help them learn another language. We need to identify those and make the most of them. For example, children: are already very good at interpreting meaning without necessarily understanding the individual words; already have great skill in using limited language creatively; frequently learn indirectly rather than directly; take great pleasure in finding and creating fun in what they do; have a ready imagination; above all take great delight in talking. (Laidlaw, 1995, p. 3).

There are some pillar requirements for effective teaching English to Young Learners. *Pillar 1*: Accomplished English teachers should know who children are; *Pillar 2*: Accomplished English teachers should know how children learn; *Pillar 3*: Accomplished English teachers should know how children learn a language; *Pillar 4*: Accomplished English teachers

should know how children learn English a Foreign Language (Musthafa, 2010, pp. 120–123).

METHOD

This research was conducted within 2 months (from January - February 2022). There were 2 people chosen as the subjects of this study. They were: an English teacher at MI Tahfidz Nurul Huda Japuralor and some parents of MI Tahfidz Nurul Huda students Japuralor. The subjects were selected using Purposive Sampling techniques. Purposive Sampling is a technique of determining the sample with certain considerations. The reason for selecting the two samples is because of the accessible factor; the access was easier, the atmosphere was more conducive, therefore the researchers could obtain more comprehensive data (Sugiyono, 2013).

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, 2013).

Furthermore, the data used in this study were primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from respondents (English teacher, students

and a staff) by using observations, 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.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

English Teaching and Learning at MI Tahfidz Nurul Huda Japuralor – Pangenan – Cirebon

In Indonesia, interest in teaching English to young learners has been steadily growing in recent years. Many parents believe that by studying English from early stage, their children will get a better future. They believe that by introducing English to their children as early as possible, it will bring their children to have a better carrier (Pransiska, 2016, p. 250).

In Cirebon, West Java, some MI and SD put English in their curriculum although in early childhood education new curriculum, for example the 2013 curriculum, do not included English as their attention, but every MI and SD has its own authority to expand their curriculum. Some kindergarten such as SDIT Al-Irsyad Lemahabang, MI Tahfidz Nurul Huda Japuralor, MI Nidhomiyah Japurakidul and many more.

English is a big business. The ability to speak English is important for one's competitiveness. By having good English skills, good competitiveness, which is useful for our country too. But that doesn't mean we have to forget Indonesian, which has become our national language (Maduwu, 2016).

There are some importance of teaching English to young learners such as the earlier the onset of foreign language learning, the greater the chances for language proficiency. The learners have great opportunity to have native-like pronunciation; improving overall school performance and superior problem-solving skills; Development of lifelong ability to communicate with more people; Better understanding of other cultures.(Prayatni, 2019, p. 106).

Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) is a way to introduce English as a foreign language to young students. While children may not have an understanding of why it is important to learn a second language, there are many reasons that answer the question, “Why teach English to young learners?” For instance, creating a fun and positive learning environment can equip kids with a strong foundation for success in more advanced courses later in their academic careers.(“Why Teach English to Young Learners,” n.d.)

One of the most important aspects of teaching English to young learners is creating an enjoyable and creative learning atmosphere. To most children, learning English is just another activity in their average day. Though it will take time for them to understand the future impact of what they are learning, the basic skills that these kids learn will prepare them for more advanced language courses.

Pransiska gave an opinion and quoted by Cahyati that young learners are like sponges, they grasp everything we

say and how we say it. There has been a growing awareness acknowledging that teaching English to young learners is not as simple as we once thought. It is not a matter of teaching a list of simple vocabulary. It needs optimal condition and requirements that would enable young learners to further their learning, and eventually the aim of TEYL would be achieved. Some requirements that need to be consider are the curriculum, teacher competency, media and method used (Pransiska, 2016) (Cahyati et al., 2019, p. 110).

The observation revealed that English teacher should:

1. Have good qualification in teaching English. It considers that to create qualified students starts from qualified teachers. There are still many English teachers who just teach young learners by translating English vocabularies into Bahasa Indonesia, or vice versa, rather than using English to communicate it in the classroom.
2. Have a good class management. Teachers as the main actors in carrying out the learning process in the classroom so far still lack the skills in managing the classroom. Most of them are more concerned with aspects of the content of the lesson to be conveyed. As a result, due to lack of classroom management skills, the class becomes out of control so that the subject matter to be delivered is not effective (Ardiansyah, 2019, p. 95).

Some teachers tend to just sit down without going around the class in almost all the learning time. This must be avoided.

3. Teachers should push the students speak in EFL by using classroom language or at least speak in their second language so that the students do not find difficulties in trying speaking English. Most of the students speak Javanese as their mother tongue which influence the way they speak English as a foreign language and it is as an external factor in independent variable that can change one language to the other language and it makes some obstacles when someone learns the other languages

Besides, the concept of Students' mother tongue interference can be viewed as a transfer that affects learning both negatively and positively. It means that there is possibility for the learners to produce some mistakes or errors in learning a second language especially English. This idea is supported that there is high probability of cross-linguistic influence in second language acquisition and this influence may produce some errors which are caused by negative transfer. Furthermore, mispronunciation and grammatical errors are the most common types of interference between the mother tongue and the target language. In so doing, the language interference in pronunciation means as a result, Interference refers to the problem that students present in oral speech activities in aspects related to the correct

pronunciation of English sounds (Subandowo, 2017, p. 206).

Regarding to this, English teachers in MI Tahfidz Nurul Huda should maximize classroom interactions in order to achieve better results in teaching and learning English. When the teachers are about to teach, they should greet students regularly. According to the observation, teachers sometimes did not greet the students when the class is started or ended.

In fact, greating and other routine activities give a warming up and help students to be more familiar with English. Teachers also should make more efforts in teaching English. Based on the observation, not all of the teachers had a good proficiency in teaching English and had teachers training background. Regarding the teacher's lack of competence, it is wise for the school to provide opportunities for the teachers to improve their teaching competences such as providing them in service teachers training so that it will improve the EFL education at MI Nurul Huda Japuralor to be better.

Teachers Perception Toward Teaching English to Young Learners

The literature on teaching English to young learners has identified a number of pressing challenges. One is that English is often introduced as a compulsory subject at primary school without due consideration of who will teach it. In some countries a severe shortage of trained primary school teachers of English is reported. Teachers

may therefore find themselves teaching English either without adequate training in teaching young learners in general or in teaching English to young learners in particular. The situation is especially acute in poor or rural areas (Copland et al., 2014, p. 2).

English is being introduced to ever more and ever younger children and in many countries around the world English is now compulsory in primary education (Nikolov, 2009a; Pinter, 2006). However, curricula and practices are often being developed in an ad hoc way because there is little appropriate research to inform fundamental policy decisions (Garton et al., n.d., p. 3).

Moreover, knowledge and understanding of teaching practices in the field of young learners is, at best, sketchy. There are a number of books that bring together worthwhile studies of small research projects, often led by local university researchers

The widespread introduction of English in primary schools has been described by Johnstone (2009:33) as ‘possibly the world’s biggest policy development in education’. Even in countries such as Poland, Hungary and Croatia, where a choice of foreign languages is offered at primary level, English is overwhelmingly the first choice (Garton et al., n.d., p. 4).

As Garton et al. quoted on the same page, there are a number of reasons for this trend:

1. The widespread assumption that earlier language learning is better (Nunan, 2003); (Hu, 2007).

2. The response to the ever-increasing demand for English as a result of economic globalisation (Enever et al., 2009); (Gimenez, 2009); (Hu, 2007). Such a demand leads to pressure on governments from international economic forces to ensure there is an English-speaking workforce.
3. The pressure from parents in the national context who want their children to benefit socially and economically from learning English (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004); (Enever et al., 2009); (Gimenez, 2009).

Parents’ Perspectives on Learning English

Parents have high hopes for their children so that they can develop and master English. Parents are people who are elders, which include mothers and fathers who are the main examples and interpretations of society, the world and life for their children (Frindam, 2010).

English is a universal language that is used by almost all nations in the world. Many countries require English to be one of the compulsory subjects taught in schools, especially to children who will become the nation's successors. The provision of English learning to children is carried out not directly, but gradually. Learning English is done in many ways, such as in the form of songs, games, pictures, and so on so that children don't feel bored with English lessons.

The view of the majority of parents about mastering English is very positive. According to them, it is very necessary to

master a foreign language, especially English for children, because currently English is an international language that the majority of countries in the world use and learn as a tool to communicate. They also believe that giving English lessons can make children find jobs easily in the future. In line with the views of parents, according to teachers learning English for children is appropriate because children are in their golden age so that children are able to understand lessons more easily than adults.

CONCLUSION

English Teachers should have good qualification in teaching English - It considers that to create qualified students starts from qualified teachers; have a good class management – teachers should know when they need to sit down or go around the class to make sure that the students know well what to do; and push the students to practice English in the classroom by using classroom language.

The interference is the indication of dominant transmigration from the other cultures. Mother tongue or second language, Javanese for example, as the language which caused phonic interference and this interference causes changing English pronunciation in their intonation and articulation. Another factor is frequency of speaking Javanese as students' daily activities.

Based on the observation, not all of the teachers had a good proficiency in teaching English and had teachers training background. Regarding the

teacher's lack of competence, it is wise for the school to provide opportunities for the teachers to improve their teaching competences such as providing them in service teachers training so that it will improve the EFL education at MI Nurul Huda Japuralor to be better.

REFERENCES

- Ardiansyah, A. (2019). EMPAT ATURAN MANAJEMEN KELAS UNTUK PERILAKU GURU EFEKTIF DI MADRASAH. *Vicratina: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 3(2), 88–96. <http://www.riset.unisma.ac.id/index.php/fai/article/view/1712>
- Brock-Utne, B., & Holmarsdottir, H. B. (2004). Language policies and practices in Tanzania and South Africa: Problems and challenges. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 24(1), 67–83.
- Cahyati, S. S., Parmawati, A., & Atmawidjaja, N. S. (2019). OPTIMIZING ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS TO YOUNG LEARNERS (A CASE STUDY IN CIMAHU). *Journal Of Educational Experts (JEE)*, 2(2), 107–114. <https://doi.org/10.30740/jee.v2i2p107-114>
- Copland, F., Garton, S., & Burns, A. (2014). Challenges in Teaching English to Young Learners: Global Perspectives and Local Realities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 48(4), 738–762. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.148>
- Enever, J., Moon, J., & Raman, U. (2009). *Young learner English language policy and implementation: International perspectives*. Garnet Publishing.
- Frindam, M. (2010). *Buku Ajar Keperawatan Keluarga: Riset, Teori, dan Praktek Edisi ke 5*. Jakarta EGC.
- Garton, S., Copland, F., & Burns, A. (n.d.). *Investigating Global Practices in Teaching English to Young Learners*. 29.

- Gimenez, T. (2009). English at primary school level in Brazil: Challenges and perspectives. *Young Learner English Language Policy and Implementation: International Perspectives*. Garnet Publishing Ltd. Retrieved from [Www.garneteducation.com](http://www.garneteducation.com).
- Hu, Y. (2007). China's foreign language policy on primary English education: What's behind it? *Language Policy*, 6(3), 359–376.
- Laidlaw, C. (1995). Teaching English in the Primary Classroom by Susan Halliwell. *ELT JOURNAL*, 49(4), 355–355.
- Maduwu, B. (2016). Pentingnya pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah. *Warta Dharmawangsa*, 50.
- Musthafa, B. (2010). *Teaching English to Young Learners in Indonesia: Essential Requirements*. 2, 6.
- Nisa, I. F. (2020). *Kebijakan dan Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris untuk SD di Indonesia*. (No. 1). 1(1), Article 1. <https://jurnal.ustjogja.ac.id/index.php/semmas2020/article/view/7510>
- Nunan, D. (2003). The impact of English as a global language on educational policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific Region. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(4), 589–613.
- PANDANGAN ORANG TUA SERTA GURU TERHADAP PEMBERIAN PEMBELAJARAN BAHASA INGGRIS PADA ANAK / RUANG KATA: Journal of Language and Literature Studies.** (2022). <http://jurnal.umnu.ac.id/index.php/jrk/article/view/331>
- Perbedaan utama antara bahasa Inggris dan bahasa Indonesia | British Council Indonesia Foundation.* (n.d.). Retrieved February 28, 2022, from <https://www.britishcouncilfoundation.id/english/articles/language-main-differences>
- Pransiska, R. (2016). Requirements of teaching english for young Learners: An overview in padang, west Sumatera. *Proceedings of ISELT FBS Universitas Negeri Padang*, 4(2), 250–255.
- Prayatni, I. (2019). Teaching English For Young Learners. *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan*, 4(2), 106–110. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jipp.v4i2.90>
- Subandowo, D. (2017). THE LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE IN ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY FOR EFL LEARNERS. *Proceedings of ISELT FBS Universitas Negeri Padang*, 5(0), 205–210. <http://ejournal.unp.ac.id/index.php/selection/article/view/8005>
- Sugiyono, D. (2013). *Metode penelitian pendidikan pendekatan kuantitatif, kualitatif dan R&D*.
- Why teach English to young learners. (n.d.). *Online TEFL Certification and Job Offers Worldwide*. Retrieved February 28, 2022, from <https://www.tefl-online.com/tefl-jobs/online-tefl-articles/why-teach-english-young-learners/>
- Teaching English to Children at MI Tahfidz Nurul Huda Japuralor, Cirebon