



A Comparative Study on Challenges in Teaching Kindergarten Students and Elementary School Students

Laily Rochmawati Listiyani (Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia)

Melikheor J. R. Blau (Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia)

Luis R. Martins (Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia)

Ferdinandus R. Seran (Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia)

Christiana Suryaningki (TK Indriasana Cepet Pakem, Indonesia)

Siska (SD Kanisius Condong Catur, Indonesia)

Correspondence Author Email: laily.listiyani@ustjogja.ac.id

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Abstract

Teaching English to young learners in kindergarten and elementary school is a very challenging experience that requires creativity, passion, and dedication to education. There are several challenges in teaching English to young learners in the classroom. This study aims to explore the comparison of challenges in teaching English between kindergarten students and elementary school students. The study compares all aspects that can cause the teaching process to become very challenging between kindergarten school and elementary school. Data was collected through observation in two different schools and interviews with teachers at both schools. The findings indicate all aspects that can provoke the learning process to be very challenging both for kindergarten students and elementary school students.

Introduction

Teaching young students English may be both tough and rewarding. Children demand specialized attention and techniques due to their particular learning needs and talents. According to Myrtis and Philomena (2006), have short attention spans and a lot of physical activity. We will examine some of the major difficulties teachers encounter when instructing young students in English such as short attention span, language acquisition, phonics and pronunciation, learning style, and knowledge and cultural experience.

The short attention span of young learners is one of the main obstacles in teaching English. Children find it challenging to concentrate on a single task for an extended amount of time since they are inherently curious and busy. This may make it difficult for them to pay attention in class, which can hinder their language-learning process.

Language development is still in its early phases for young learners. It's possible that their proficiency in their original tongue, much less English, is still lacking. This can be rather difficult for them because they can find it difficult to understand and speak English well.

Teaching pronunciation and phonics to young learners of English presents another issue. The phonetic systems of their home languages and English can diverge greatly. It might be difficult for young students to pronounce English sounds correctly and combine them to form words.

Every youngster has a different preferred method of learning. While some kids learn best visually or kinesthetically, others learn best auditorily. It can be difficult for teachers to accommodate different learning styles, particularly in a classroom context.

Young students might not have had as much exposure to English as they do to vocabulary and culture. This may make it more difficult for them to comprehend and speak English well. All the difficulties make the teaching process have its own challenges. Teachers should diagnose these difficulties and by that, they would know how to handle the class. Therefore, this study is going to compare the difficulties and challenges in teaching English to kindergarten and elementary school students.

Method

This study used a descriptive-qualitative method to investigate the teaching practices at kindergarten and elementary school classrooms. Creswell (2014) defines qualitative researchers as those who collect data for themselves by analyzing documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. Qualitative researchers, according to Rossman and Rallis (2012), learn to Plan ahead of time for the time it will take to acquire access. As a result, the procedure of negotiating admittance can be as follows: following observations and interviews, themselves are instructive about the persons or setting. The data for the study was collected through class observations and interviews. The participants in the study were students in class B for kindergarten and students in grade two for elementary school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The researchers observed children during the class while the interviews were conducted with the teachers.

Results and Discussion

Challenges in Teaching English to Kindergarten School

The challenges in kindergarten school during the teaching moment are:

The arrangement of the class

It is difficult to run the class orderly. The student could not stay calm in the class. They always annoy each other as Carless (2004) stated that noise generated during speaking activities can be troublesome when the local preference is for quiet and orderly classrooms. Therefore, the teacher has to remind them or even separate them several times.

Pronouncing new words and short-time focus in the classroom

Students find it difficult to pronounce words such as grandfather and sister in English properly and correctly. They need time to understand and guidance for pronouncing the new words. It should be repeated several times. As well as, if the class already run for several minutes, they tend to invite the teacher to talk about other things when explaining material.

The students with special needs

There are children with special needs who cannot be rejected and are difficult to control. Sometimes they will stand up or run inside the classroom. It starts to interrupt the course of

class and disturb others. According to Nagler (2015), the most challenging aspect of teaching for many beginning teachers may be managing students' behavior.

The variety of characters and appropriate learning media

The characteristics of the students in kindergarten school are varied such as very silent, calm, active in class, hieratic, friendly, excited, and collaborative. Teaching media used in this class should be real and creative in order to catch their attention such as flashcards, songs, games, and drawing pictures and all are related to the teaching topic that the teacher has prepared.

The implementation of the curriculum Merdeka

The teaching procedure starts with prayer, greeting, presence list, motivation, recalling the previous topic, apperception, main topic explanation, class activity such as drawing, game, finding the object around, song, conclusion, mention next meeting topic, closing prayer, and goodbye. It is quite challenging to apply it in kindergarten since at an early age, they have short time attention in the classroom and a big desire for playing.

Challenges in Teaching English to Elementary School

The challenges found during the practicum in elementary school are varied. They are:

The arrangement of the class

The arrangement of the class was a bit tough because some of the students were very extroverted and active children. Not only that but one thing that was being realized was the atmosphere when the practicum was held. The teaching practicum started at around 11:45. At the time, the children already felt tired because of some subjects that they had just learned, which is why it was a bit tough to arrange the class.

The character of the students

The character of the students at the elementary school where I teach was unique. I say so because some of them were very attentive and focused on the subject that they were going to have and others always asked permission to go out just to wash their hands and walk around the class.

The teaching media

The media used during the teaching practicum were flashcards and songs. Sometimes they follow the class well but sometimes they cannot follow the class well. It depends on the media. If the flashcard or the song is interesting for them, they will follow it well. In other cases, as well, if the material being taught is new for them, they might be like or might be unlike the material too. The less they do not like the material, the less they focus on the teaching process.

The teaching practicum procedure

The teaching process started by greeting the students (good afternoon), asking about their condition, introducing the material that would be learned, and asking them to sit in a good manner before starting the teaching. How we actuated the teaching practicum. By understanding the situations of the students, they already knew some rudiments of English, so it was easy to run the practicum. We started the class together, showing them the picture, pronouncing the words two or three times, not only concentrating on one student but also trying to come near to each student inside the classroom, repeating the words and enunciating the words together with them and the meaning.

Conclusion

The challenges in teaching English to young learners are varied. It can be occurred in the classroom of both kindergarten and elementary school students. It could be occurred in all levels of education as well. The challenges could be provoked by many aspects such as the arrangements of the class that can be influenced by many aspects, the variation of characteristics of children, and many more.

The challenges that appear in kindergarten are almost the same as the challenges in elementary school students. One aspect that makes it different is the existence of students with special needs who should get special treatment. Challenges will always exist in the teaching process in the classroom either in the level of kindergarten or in the level of elementary school. All the challenges should be diagnosed by teachers or educators in order to be able to handle the class.

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Authors Information	
<p>Laily Rochmawati Listiyani Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia Jl. Batikan UH III/ 1043 Yogyakarta, Indonesia E-mail: laily.listiyani@ustjogja.ac.id</p> <p><i>She is a lecturer at Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia</i></p>	<p>Melikheoar Januar Rolys Blau Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia Jl. Batikan UH III/ 1043 Yogyakarta, Indonesia Contact: E-mail Address: rolysblau@gmail.com</p> <p><i>English Education student who is hard-working, passionate, fully dedicated, and creative. He has a big interest in reading books and teaching young learners.</i></p>
<p>Luis Ramos Martins Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia Jl. Batikan UH III/ 1043 Yogyakarta, Indonesia Contact: E-mail Address: schpluisramos@gmail.com</p> <p><i>English Education student who has big discipline and desire to learn and teach English. He has big interest in reading books.</i></p>	<p>Ferdinandus Regenigin Seran Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia Jl. Batikan UH III/ 1043 Yogyakarta, Indonesia Contact: E-mail Address: ReySeranSeran@gmail.com</p> <p><i>A highly motivated student who has a big passion for enhancing English skills. He has a big interest in being a teacher for kindergarten students.</i></p>
<p>Christiana Suryaningki TK Indriasana Cepet Pakem, Indonesia</p> <p><i>She is the teacher at TK Indriasana Cepet Pakem, Indonesia</i></p>	<p>Siska SD Kanisius Condong Catur, Indonesia</p> <p><i>She is the teacher at SD Kanisius Condong Catur, Indonesia.</i></p>