

Effective strategies for teaching English to elementary school students: Establishing a solid foundation for communication

Ahmad Baghir Hasan Pratama ^{a,1*}, Nur Fatimah ^{b,2}

^{a, b} Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

¹ ahmad2011004058@webmail.uad.ac.id; ² nur.fatimah@pbi.uad.ac.id

*corresponding author

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received 1 May 2024

Revised 30 July 2024

Accepted 31 July 2024

Keywords

Problems

Strategies

Teaching English

Young Learners

ABSTRACT

Since elementary school, learners are required to comprehend and use English. Teaching English to elementary school students is challenging, and teachers must constantly provide engaging media for the classroom. Therefore, teachers need to apply certain strategies to teach English to young learners. The objective of this article is to identify the challenges and effective strategies employed by teachers in the teaching of English at SD Muhammadiyah Karangakajen. This article employs descriptive qualitative method, utilizing direct observation techniques within the classroom setting. These observations were conducted through the use of a direct teaching system. Additionally, interviews with the English teacher outside of scheduled study hours were conducted to provide further insight. The vocabulary component represents the most significant challenge in English language education at the elementary level, as many learners are initially exposed to the language as a second or even third language. The frequent use of the learners' native languages and the Indonesian language in their daily lives, coupled with their lack of exposure to English-specific vocabulary, impedes their ability to effectively memorize and pronounce unfamiliar words. Drilling and providing some vocabulary before the lesson starts, and playing language games are the strategies employed by the English teacher in SD Muhammadiyah Karangakajen.

This is an open access article under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



How to Cite: Pratama, A. B. H., & Fatimah, N. (2024). Effective strategies for teaching English to elementary school students: Establishing a solid foundation for communication. *International Undergraduate Conference on English Education*, 3(1), 237-241.

1. Introduction

English education at the elementary school level is crucial in forming a strong foundation for communication skills (Shobikah, 2017). In today's era of globalization, English is no longer considered an additional skill, but rather an essential necessity. Therefore, it is important for teachers to develop effective teaching methods to ensure that elementary school students learn English well.

Teaching English to elementary school students requires an effective and strategies to optimize the learning process (Rasuli & Makhdoomzada, 2023). As the importance of English language skills increases in this era of globalization, teachers need to implement relevant and effective strategies to help students acquire good language skills early on. The capacity to communicate in English is of paramount importance in the English teaching to students of elementary school age, particularly at SD Muhammadiyah Karangakajen. During this developmental period, children establish a robust foundation in language that will prove instrumental in their future growth and development.

Consequently, teachers must prioritize the cultivation of effective communication skills when teaching English to young learners.

Strategies and approaches that emphasize the cultivation of students' communication abilities should be explored (Holidazia & Rodliyah, 2020). Teachers can create a learning environment that supports and stimulates students to actively participate in various communicative situations by understanding the importance of communication in language learning. A multitude of pedagogical techniques and methodologies can be employed in English language teaching at the elementary school level at SD Muhammadiyah Karangajen (Anisma et al., 2023). By attending to the developmental characteristics of children at that age and employing techniques that align with their needs, teachers can establish a supportive learning environment and lay a robust foundation in English language acquisition. By enhancing the quality of the learning environment and pedagogical approaches at SD Muhammadiyah Karangajen, the institution is able to cultivate robust English communication abilities in its students.

Teacher should explore effective strategies for building good communication in learning, such as using educational games, songs, picture stories, and group-based activities (Susfenti, 2021). These strategies have been proven successful in helping elementary school students understand and master English better. Additionally, the text emphasizes the importance of students' active involvement in learning and the role of educational technology in supporting the process of teaching English in elementary schools. By implementing these strategies, the effectiveness of learning can be enhanced.

The objective of this study is to furnish teachers with a framework of practical guidance for the development of English language teaching programs that prioritize the cultivation of communication skills at the elementary level and foster in students a sense of autonomy and assurance in utilizing the language as a medium of instruction. By implementing these strategies effectively, teachers can facilitate a dynamic and productive learning environment for students, laying the foundation for mastery of the English language at an early age.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method. Descriptive qualitative research entails the use of narrative writing as a methodology through which a particular phenomenon can be described (Thabroni, 2022). Qualitative descriptive research is a frequently utilized methodology in English communication research among students. The researchers engage in direct observation of the phenomenon under study. The research was conducted through an examination of the phenomenon in the field. Once the information has been gathered, the researchers' objective is to achieve a comprehensive grasp of the phenomenon under investigation through the utilization of observation, and interviews.

This descriptive qualitative research method is designed to produce qualitative data that aims to describe and understand phenomena in a specific context without testing hypotheses or explaining causal relationships directly (Barroga & Matanguihan, 2022). This method allows the researchers to gain a detailed understanding of the circumstances surrounding students' English communication at SD Muhammadiyah Karangajen. The findings of this study can provide guidance and recommendations to students, teachers, and educational institutions with the objective of enhancing English language learning.

Two data collection techniques employed in this research were observation of classroom teaching practices and interviews with the English language teacher (Yusri, 2020). The two data collection techniques are interrelated to ensure the acquisition of robust information during the data search process. Direct observations were conducted during teaching, and interviews were conducted with the English teacher to supplement information about issues identified during observations in the classroom. The objective of observation is to obtain information about the condition and situation of the object under study. The researchers conducted direct and meticulous observations in the classroom, employing direct teaching strategies and integrating game and quiz strategies. To supplement the observational data, interviews with the teacher were conducted to gain further insight into the English language skills of the students, with the aim of enhancing their communication abilities.

In the analysis process, the researchers employed the Miles and Huberman model (Trinaldi et al., 2022), a qualitative model that encompasses the following stages: 1) Data reduction, whereby the researchers select the most pertinent data, summarize it, and identify the key themes and patterns within the data set. 2) Presentation of data, which involves presenting the data in a clear and concise manner, with explanations, category relationships, and graphs. This is done to facilitate the understanding of the data set. 3) Conclusion: It is adjusted to align with the research focus and findings.

3. Findings and Discussion

The researchers conducted interviews and classroom observations and teaching to gain insight into the challenges and strategies employed by the English teacher at SD Muhammadiyah Karangajen.

3.1. Findings

- a. Vocabulary memorization is a significant challenge faced by the English teacher at SD Muhammadiyah Karangajen.

[...] "Children often have difficulty in memorizing new words because they sound funny and do not match the letters written down, especially when memorizing new vocabulary they forget the previous vocabulary learned. [...]"

During the interview, the teacher indicated that the students had difficulty in memorizing new words in English. The students were more accustomed to using the local language or Indonesian language, which made them less inclined to engage in the process of memorizing new vocabulary. During the teaching process, the researchers observed that difficulties in memorizing vocabulary often arose, leading to disputes in the classroom. This was because some students possessed a deeper understanding of the vocabulary, while others lacked the necessary knowledge, which created an unfavorable learning environment. In addition, the newly acquired words were frequently forgotten during the subsequent meeting or during the examination prior to the conclusion of the class. Therefore, the teacher provided vocabulary to remind the students to the vocabulary learned.

- b. Complex vocabulary pronunciation

During the teaching process, the teacher pronounced certain vocabulary to learn as the learning material. The students encountered spelling difficulties that did not align with the existing orthography.

[...] "The writing and pronunciation are so different, not as easy as in Indonesian" [...]"

The students expressed that the writing and pronunciation of English were significantly more challenging than in Indonesian. They felt reluctant to learn English because of the difficulty in spelling and pronouncing words correctly. The pronunciation of English was perceived as a source of humor due to the differences in pronunciation when compared to Indonesian. Drilling activity by the teacher guided the students to repeat how the words should be pronounced correctly. This really helps in using the language for communication.

- c. Less Conducive Classroom Situation

The teacher at SD Muhammadiyah stated that students frequently engaged in joking and were not adequately prepared to accept learning, particularly in the context of English language teaching. This is due to the perception that English as the language that is not utilized in everyday communication.

[...] "Students are accustomed to joking with their classmates or when learning is conducted after a break. This often results in students continuing to consume food and postpones the learning process until they have finished their meal." [...]"

The researchers have also identified a similar situation during their observations of the classroom environment, as evidenced by the interview conducted with the English teacher. Some of the factors that contribute to an unfavorable classroom environment include a tendency to engage in playful interactions and a lack of focus on academic tasks due to the age of elementary students. These students are still developing the ability to concentrate and may prioritize play over learning. The teacher directed the class to learn while playing games. She

incorporated games and quiz as the strategy in facilitating and involving the students in the process in learning English.

3.2. Discussion

One challenge is the students' limited vocabulary, which impedes their communication abilities. To surmount this challenge, it is necessary to implement efficacious strategies to enable learning to happen. It is of paramount importance to enhance the communication abilities of students who are deficient in the English vocabulary. One of the primary challenges that students encounter when learning English is a limited vocabulary (Oktavia et al., 2022). This can significantly impede their capacity to comprehend and effectively utilize the language. Vocabulary is important to comprehend written texts, express themselves orally or in writing, and communicate fluently in English.

A restricted vocabulary can impede students' language development and lead to frustration or disinterest in learning. It is important to address these factors in order to ensure that students possess the requisite language skills to effectively express their thoughts. A number of factors can contribute to a lack of vocabulary, including limited exposure to English in everyday environments, a lack of motivation to learn, or ineffective teaching methods for introducing and reinforcing new vocabulary (Getie, 2020). Teachers should adopt effective strategies to help students overcome a lack of vocabulary. These strategies include the use of relevant and engaging contexts, games, technology in learning, and structured and repetitive exercises. Furthermore, it is vital to provide students with the necessary support and feedback (Galloway & Ruegg, 2020). It is of the utmost importance that teachers provide students with the necessary support and constructive feedback to facilitate the improvement of their vocabulary. Teachers should provide encouragement, guidance, and feedback that assist students in correcting errors and reinforcing their comprehension of the vocabulary they have learned.

The issue at hand concerns classes that are not conducive to learning and effective strategies to address this problem. Inadequate classroom environments can impede the learning process, particularly at the elementary school level, where students often exhibit lower levels of concentration and higher levels of energy. Teachers can, however, create a more engaging and invigorating learning environment by employing games and quizzes in a creative manner (Irwansyah & Izzati, 2021). This can assist in overcoming challenges in less conducive classrooms and in overcoming students' lack of concentration. In addition, it allows students to move around, interact with their peers, and actively engage in learning, which can help to maintain their level of focus. Games and quizzes can enhance the learning experience by increasing student engagement and reducing boredom. They can enhance collaboration and involvement among students, thereby promoting greater engagement in learning. Furthermore, games and quizzes can be employed as efficacious learning tools and as a means of conducting formative assessments. This activity allows teachers to assess students' comprehension of the lesson material and identify areas that require further attention. Games and quizzes are adaptable and can be modified to align with diverse topics and levels of difficulty, rendering them suitable for a spectrum of learning environments and students with varying abilities.

4. Conclusion

The research has identified several effective strategies to teach English to young learner to facilitate a conducive learning environment. It is also to ensure that students are ready to receive learning. Other strategies to encourage active participation in the learning process are by providing words needed, drilling, and using language games and quiz in teaching English to elementary school students.

A conducive learning environment is a fundamental prerequisite for effective learning. Well-designed games can provide students with the opportunity to expand their English vocabulary and enhance their speaking abilities, which is essential for developing a robust foundation for enhanced communication skills in the future. Quizzes and games permit students to reiterate and reinforce their comprehension of vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure in an interactive manner. These activities facilitate the internalization of language concepts in a more efficacious manner than traditional teaching methods.

The researchers recommend that the incorporation of games and quizzes in English language teaching for elementary school students represents an effective strategy for the improvement of communication skills. A plethora of games can be employed to enhance pedagogical techniques and engage students. Furthermore, the quizzes and games must be straightforward and comprehensible for

elementary school students to ensure that they do not hinder the learning process. By employing a variety of creative and innovative pedagogical techniques, teachers can develop engaging learning experiences that facilitate comprehensive language development in students.

In conclusion, the incorporation of quizzes and games in English language learning has been demonstrated to be an effective strategy for enhancing student motivation, comprehension, and engagement. This strategy has the potential to make English language teaching more dynamic, interactive, and enjoyable, which could ultimately lead to improved learning outcomes.

REFERENCES

- Anisma, T., Prayoga, J., & Rahmah, S. A. (2023). Media pembelajaran interaktif menggunakan bahasa Inggris untuk anak usia dini berbasis Macromedia Flash 8. *Djtechno: Jurnal Teknologi Informasi*, 4(1), 103-114. <https://doi.org/10.46576/djtechno.v4i1.3272>
- Barroga, E., & Matanguihan, G. J. (2022). A practical guide to writing quantitative and qualitative research questions and hypotheses in scholarly articles. *Journal of Korean Medical Science*, 37(16). <https://doi.org/10.3346/jkms.2022.37.e121>
- Galloway, N., & Ruegg, R. (2020). The provision of student support on English Medium Instruction programmes in Japan and China. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 45, 100846. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2020.100846>
- Getie, A. S. (2020). Factors affecting the attitudes of students towards learning English as a foreign language. *Cogent Education*, 7(1), 1738184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2020.1738184>
- Holidazia, R., & Rodliyah, R. S. (2020). Strategi siswa dalam pembelajaran kosa kata bahasa Inggris. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan*, 20(1), 111-120. <https://doi.org/10.17509/jpp.v20i1.24562>
- Irwansyah, R., & Izzati, M. (2021). Implementing Quizizz as game based learning and assessment in the English classroom. *TEFLA Journal (Teaching English as Foreign Language and Applied Linguistic Journal)*, 3(1), 13–18.
- Oktavia, D., Mukminin, A., Marzulina, L., Harto, K., Erlina, D., & Holandyah, M. (2022). Challenges and strategies used by English teachers in teaching English language skills to young learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 12(2), 382–387. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1202.22>
- Rasuli, M. H., & Makhdoomzada, F. M. (2023). Investigating the effective strategies for teaching pronunciation. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation*, 4(4). <https://doi.org/10.54660/ijmrge.2023.4.4.286-291>
- Shobikah, N. (2017). The importance of English language in facing Asean Economic Community (AEC). *At-Turats*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.24260/at-turats.v11i1.873>
- Susfenti, N. E. M. (2021). Pembelajaran bahasa Inggris untuk anak usia dini. *Jurnal Studi Gender dan Anak*, 8(01). <https://doi.org/10.32678/jsnga.v8i01.5858>
- Thabroni, G. (2022). *Metode penelitian deskriptif kualitatif (Konsep & contoh)*. Serupa.Id. <https://serupa.id/metode-penelitian-deskriptif-kualitatif-konsepcontoh/>
- Trinaldi, A., Bambang, S. E. M., Afriani, M., Rahma, F. A., & Rustam, R. (2022). Analisis kebutuhan penggunaan bahan ajar berbasis teknologi infomasi. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 6(6), 9304–9314. <https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v6i6.4037>
- Yusri, A. Z. dan D. (2020). Metode penelitian deskriptif kuantitatif. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.36312/e-saintika.v2i2.23>