

Innovative Design for Pre-Service English for Young Learners (EYL) Teachers Education With Indonesian Setting

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Abstract. Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) has been an endless issue in Indonesia because of the changes in its status for more than two decades, and teacher is as one of the affected components. The evidence that the inadequate quality of English for Young Learners (EYL) teachers increase gradually because of the insufficient knowledge and skills that they obtain from their education has become a concern. In accordance, a new paradigm of English as International Language (EIL) that English will be spoken by more non-native speakers of English as an additional language requires the need of preparing the EYL teachers to meet the different needs of Young Learners (YLS) today. Also, EYL teachers should be equipped with contemporary EYL methodology that suits any recent status of EYL in education as well as any requirements of the curriculum. This article explores the design of pre-service EYL teachers education.

Keywords: design, TEYL, innovations, English, primary levels

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) requires teachers' potential in choosing motivating classroom activities and appropriate materials [1]. They should find updated information about the students' current interests to bring into class activities [2] because young learners need learning environment similar to first language acquisition, a lot of meaningful exposure and practice as they do not learn language through explicit grammar [3]. Accordingly, specific trainings to EYL teachers should be conducted with good care as inadequate pre-service education is one of the attributes of poor classroom practice in Indonesia [4]. To contribute the government of Indonesia in preparing qualified EYL teachers, English Language Education Department (ELED) of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FTTE) at University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM) that has been offering EYL as one of the elective courses since

2010 and consistently revise the design for preparing EYL

teachers with a systematic program by considering the quality in term of design and delivery.

Harmer mentions that EYL teachers have to understand how their students think and operate, provide learning activities based on the students' interest, be proficient in English language skills – using simple and understandable language as well as pronounce the words precisely [2]. Moreover, they need to be aware of the TEYL objectives mentioned by Shin [3] that the EYL program should encourage interaction, provide engaging activity, and build positive attitude toward English learning. Furthermore, it is suggested that the schools of education should offer relevant TEYL-related courses, containing sophisticated knowledge and practice of designing EYL syllabus and materials, teaching methodology, assessment, and technology-enhanced TEYL, so the teacher candidates are aware of technological pedagogical content knowledge and skills of TEYL [5]. Wu argues that teacher education has to include the knowledge of being autonomous, independent, critical to the integration of EIL into their teaching [6].

Based on the research conducted by Zein [4], the English Departments need to revise their curriculum by including the unit under the umbrella of EYL, because most of the participants argued that the EYL background was limited, and concentration, as well as specification on EYL, were urgent. The two credit-hours was not enough and should be added to be more than two-credit hours. Therefore, to respond current situation, the EYL course at UMM has already revised the designs of TEYL. This research intends to investigate the designs of TEYL conducted by pre-service teachers at ELED UMM.

METHOD

This study applied qualitative research. To collect the data, the authors used document or content analysis. The documents were explored from the curriculum of ELED. To discover the novelty and the up-to-date result, the documents are compared to books and the articles published in reputable journals during last 10 years.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

The designs of teaching English for young learners are presented into two sections, they are; EYL 1: theoretical Basis of TEYL and EYL 2: Teaching Practicum (Two Credits).

EYL 1: Theoretical Basis of TEYL (Four Credits)

To react the issue of the inappropriate pre-service training program in TEYL [3]-[5], ELED puts efforts in providing adequate knowledge of TEYL so that the pre-service EYL teachers will get ready to get along with young learners in any different situations and curriculum applied [5]. The materials of EYL 1 course offered to the sixth semester pre-service EYL teachers who have already taken all English skills, Teaching Pedagogy (particularly for secondary levels) and Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) courses.

During the first session of the EYL course, the pre-service EYL teachers are introduced to the basic knowledge of EYL, languages used (including how to teach each language skill to YLs, classroom management, innovations in EYL, assessment, and content syllabus and lesson planning. All of the theories last for 32 meetings within a semester.

Basic Knowledge of TEYL

Teaching basic knowledge of EYL should be set before the others. Understanding the characteristics of young learners and EYL teachers like those are proposed by experts [2], [3], [7], that aim at introducing the pre-service teachers to the nature of TEYL. Additionally, pre-service EYL teachers should proportionally be aware of the classroom management has met the characteristics of young learners. The ability of managing the class should be nurtured in EYL course because students' participation, greater learning satisfaction and students' behavior should be considered in teaching. The EYL teachers should be ready for activities such as grouping and seating, regulating classroom routines, timing activities, setting up and sequencing tasks, giving instructions, providing feedback and monitoring the learners [8].

In accordance, the preceded explanation should be linked to young learners learning styles and multiple intelligences. Encompassing learning styles and multiple intelligences into instruction can help students explore their learning styles in accomplishing their tasks [3]. By gaining knowledge on this matter, the pre-service EYL teachers can create an interesting and dynamic EYL learning environment. Faidah, Fauziati, & Suparno add that multiple intelligences can help teachers identify the young learners learning styles by their dominant intelligences [9].

Languages in TEYL

Different approaches should be utilized in teaching young learners listening, speaking, reading, and writing [3], [7], [10]. Therefore, Shin and Crandall suggest that first language (L1) can be used by the teachers if the task directions are beyond the expertise of the young learners [3]. They found that the majority of EYL teachers around the world whose native language is not English still use L1 in their teaching. Translations to L1 cannot be avoided, particularly for beginners, while exposure to the use of English is introduced in classroom languages such as greetings, farewell, simple instruction. In addition, Butler & Zeng also recognize that young learners easily use L1 than foreign language to complete their tasks [11]. That is the reason why Mahboob and Lin suggest the use of L1 in teaching the second language (L2) – English – for ideational functions, textual functions, and interpersonal functions, which bridge the communication in class to gain the effective learning [12].

The pre-service EYL teachers are train how to naturally use L1 to clarify their explanation or to attract the YLs attention to involve in the activities. The pre-service EYL teachers are trained to use proper dictions both L1 and L2 which might be accepted by young learners. Not only using the existing English songs and rhymes, for instance, the pre-service teachers should be able to make their own songs and rhymes, simplify stories for storytelling and role-play or drama. As young learners need a lot of exposures [3], simple conversation while working on crafts or spending free times before and after class should be well-managed by the pre-service EYL teachers. Moreover, as the role model for young learners in using English language, the EYL teachers' way how to use classroom language in teaching should be sharpened. Classroom language such as greeting, farewell, and simple instructions in class should be in English, while the use of L1 should be considered to give more understandable information and decrease shyness of using L2 among those who share the same L1 in the class [13].

Classroom Management

Western classroom methods like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) are suggested for teaching primary school students [14] because of primary school English education focuses on communicative language skills. However, to deal with the different situation in Indonesia, Zein [15] suggests manage the EYL class by considering comfortable learning environment that teachers can navigate a locally appropriate and culturally sensitive classroom to build a learning atmosphere that is relaxed, compassionate, active, assertive, active and facilitating. About the number of students in common classrooms in Indonesia, it is suggested

that the EYL teachers pay attention to classroom and seating arrangement.

In understanding this concept, the pre-service EYL teachers are introduced to some possibilities in using all "school" facilities at the university. The common classrooms can be used for any purposes of teaching, the others like gazebo, garden, university lake, classroom corridor, sports centre, can be used based on the weekly topic. Further, about the seating arrangement, the pre-service teachers are introduced with different settings. Seating arrangement which is different from the common one in Indonesian classrooms is demonstrated. Setting the YLs sitting on the floor based on their sticker, sitting in a group for activities, and sitting outdoors, are the pre-service EYL teachers' choice when they have teaching practicum. What is important for pre-service EYL teachers dealing with classroom management is the way how to instruct the YLs to take their positions in the classroom before or after the transition.

Innovations

Innovations cover all changes on topic content, teaching/learning points, pedagogical approaches, design procedures and medium of delivery [16]. Meanwhile, Nunan claims that TEYL is a standout innovation in ELT because of the involvement of different, yet unique characteristics of each young learner [17]. The age is one important factor for YLs in acquiring the second language [18]. Therefore, including innovations in teaching YLs is challenging. The topic should be selected intellectually and familiar to the YLs. In EYL, English language proficiency in not primary objective in teaching but it is designed to provide YLs experience in using the L2 by using activities and teaching media. Bringing the YLs favourite breakfast and wearing pyjamas to class can attract innovative activities in introducing the topic like *Morning Activities*. Making cakes in a pot can stimulate YLs imagination about how to plant a flower for *Gardening* topic. Integrating the theme or topic for teaching EYL is suggested that YLs can learn how to use the language contextually [2], [3].

When young learners like to learn from audiovisual media, the pre-service teachers should be able to provide them with appropriate teaching aids and multimedia. Vungthong, Djonov, & Torr [9] remark that images from multimedia computer technology can construct the meaning to support language learning. Utilizing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can support the success of learning if it is in accordance with the learners characteristics and objectives of the learning process [17]. Understanding the functions of technology in language learning that provide teaching resources and enhanced learning experience [20] should be internalized to the pre-service EYL teachers' belief because technology

cannot change the teacher's role. Technology can be used for material development and for medium for delivery. Familiarizing the pre-service EYL teachers with this issue benefits them with creative materials, teaching aids, and media to support EYL class of the digital natives.

Content Syllabus and Lesson Plan

Some syllabus and lesson plan models are introduced to the pre-service EYL teachers in order that they are able to develop syllabus and lesson plan based on any curriculum or settings. The existing lesson plans developed by the EYL teachers at primary schools are also displayed to invite the pre-service teachers' comments. This session could attract the pre-service teachers' creativity to design innovative EYL activities.

Considering the basic knowledge about TEYL and the language use, the Lesson Plan can be developed based on the existing content syllabus in the primary levels, as the basis of deciding topics. Thematic teaching or theme-based teaching is demanding on teachers both in preparation and in implementation as wide range of knowledge is needed along with resources so that the students actively learn all planned activities during a period of time. Shin argues that a related variety of activities allow the students to focus on content and communication than on the structure of language [21]. Therefore, the pre-service EYL teachers have to plan the activities carefully to get attention and participation of all YLs.

Assessment

In spite of the recent curriculum does not state the standards of assessing young learners, a common assessment like classroom-based assessment and portfolio are introduced and practised in class based on the given situation. The pre-service EYL teachers should have a sophisticated knowledge of assessing young learners as mentioned by Cameron [10] that age, language learning content, teaching methods, aims of the program, and learning theories are important to consider in young learners assessment practices.

Interactive worksheets that the pre-service EYL teachers can use in their teaching practicum are prepared with the lecturer's supervision. The worksheets facilitate YLs not only as paper-pencil based assessment but also activities that activate their multiple intelligences. Process Assessment is suggested instead of formative and summative assessments. Moreover, the pre-service EYL teachers are also trained to develop rubrics and use them based on the objectives of the learning.

EYL 2: Teaching Practicum (Two Credits)

Teaching practicum gives the pre-service EYL teachers to get real experience in TEYL. What makes it different is that the teaching practicum is

conducted at the university by inviting primary school students to have EYL class on Sundays for ten meetings with an extra for an art performance. This "school" is managed by considering characteristics of ideal EYL classrooms. They should handle all activities ranging from recruiting primary school students to conducting art performance by the end of the program. With rationales of preparing the pre-service teachers ability to set their own EYL program, deal with parents, promote the program and maintain its branding. The situation brings the pre-service teachers to the reality that they will face after they graduate.

Some sessions that the pre-service teachers get through are:

1. Series of workshop for "school" preparation and all-related needs
2. consist of ten meetings of each grade (one to six). It covers activities like teaching and learning process as well as assessing the students learning. A meeting is handled by one pre-service teacher with some help from one or more co-teachers. A newsletter is published every week as a program report to parents. Every grade is supervised by a lecturer of EYL or the volunteer (commonly EYL course alumni or primary school teacher).
3. Art performance. By performing the students' ability in English like singing, role-playing and many more, the parents can witness their children learning upshot after ten-meeting series.

The Implications

Innovation or creativity in TEYL is central to bring young generations to the new EIL pedagogy. It is vital for the pre-service EYL teachers to know that the YLs will not study English as a language but they learn how to use the language based on contexts. Linguistically, providing young learners practical use of English is more important than teaching them grammar or different language skills in isolation.

Furthermore, the pre-service EYL teachers should be prepared carefully in order to set their best practice in TEYL by considering both language and children holistic development. They should pay attention to YLs' ages so that the nurturing process in L2 learning can be achieved. This is related to the critical theory hypothesis of language acquisition that for high-level of mastery in a foreign language, the process should take place before puberty [13], [18]. Pedagogically, the ability in planning the EYL activities should be based on the basic characteristics of the YLs and make them possible to do in class.

Likewise, providing professional EYL lecturer as teacher educator with ample of experience in TEYL is critical as suggested by Zein that pre-service EYL teachers need real inspiration in the field [4]. The government should be aware of this

condition that near future there will be a professional certification for the lecturer of EYL.

CONCLUSION

Prospective teachers of EYL should get attention for their important roles in facilitating the YLs English language learning. Updates of researches in the fields help the ELED like at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang, to review the materials for teaching pre-service EYL teachers in preparing themselves for their authentic classes. Therefore, innovations should be introduced to the pre-service EYL teachers to promote feasible language learning activities based on the YLs characteristics. Subsequently, contemporary methodology in ELT, particularly in EYL can be upgraded and as the prospective teachers of EYL, pre-service EYL teachers can practice them before their actual teaching.

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