

# The Use of Letterland Strategies in Teaching English Vocabulary to Young Learners

Julianti <sup>1,\*</sup>, Rahmad Husein <sup>2</sup>, Anni Holila Pulungan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Postgraduate School of English Applied Linguistics, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author. Email: julianti2990@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

This research discussed about the use of Letterland strategies in teaching English vocabulary to young learners. Descriptive qualitative design was applied in this research and the data gathered from the sentences of four teachers in Nursery class at a Singapore Pre-School, Medan. Observation and interview were the techniques of collecting data. Then, the techniques in analyzing the data were condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Based on the data analysis, it was found that the sounds trick strategy (64.49%), the character names trick (33.68%), the action trick (1.57%), and the capital letter trick (0.26%) were four of the Letterland strategies used by the teachers. From the findings, it was concluded that Letterland strategies were good for young learners in learning English vocabulary because it provided some fun activities that contained of multi-sensory based learning which they were able to see, hear, do, and touch it.

**Keywords:** English Vocabulary, Letterland Strategies, Young Learners

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization impact has made everyone should understand English as their International language. In Indonesia, English is a foreign language where adults, teenagers, or young learners learn it. The most important thing to learn a language is by learning vocabulary. People will know better about the meaning of the language if they master the vocabulary [1].

Vocabulary is a main component of language proficiency and it provides much of the basis for how well young learners can speak, listen, read, and write. In conveying and sharing opinion by oral and written, vocabulary plays a great impact for students [2].

However, young learners are different from adult learners. Teaching English to young learners is challenging. Teacher must have a strategy to teach young learners in making them enjoy learning English in the classroom [3]. They love something attractive, fun and imaginative [4]. The term of ‘young learner’ is increasingly employed to cover children studying English from as early as 3 years old all the way up until the age of 13–14 [5].

Furthermore, visual and audiovisual are appropriate way to introduce English vocabulary to young learners [1]. Letterland has some strategies that are useful in

introducing English vocabulary to young learners by providing some fun visual and audiovisual activities [6].

The following description was the preliminary data taken during the teaching learning process from the teacher and students by using the Letterland strategies:

- Teacher : Okay...Find the shape “l..”, Lucy Lamp Light.
- Student 1 : There (Student saw the character of letter ‘l’).
- Teacher : Alright. Is she Lucy Lamp Light?
- Student 2 : Yes.
- Teacher : Listen, she wants to say something. (from the video: I am Lucy Lamp Light). What did she say? (the teacher repeated the name one more time by playing the video, so the students could listen again, from the video: I am Lucy Lamp Light).
- Students : I am Lucy Lamp Light.
- Teacher : I am Lucy Lamp Light. Lucy Lamp Light has so many friends. Listen to the sound. (from the video: Lion...rrrrghhhh).

Student 3 : I am so scary lion.

Teacher : Lion, so lion the voice of lion start with letter l...

(Source: Teacher and students from Nursery class during teaching learning process)

The data showed that when the teacher asked the students to find where is the shape letter 'l'. Student said, "There" by pointing to the character of letter 'l'. From this situation, it was easy for them to find the letter 'l' by remembering the character itself. They could find it correctly. Then, the teacher asked again, "Is she Lucy Lamp Light?". The students were able to answer, "Yes". At the time, the teacher was applying the Letterland strategy called character names trick. The character name of letter 'l' is Lucy Lamp Light. Next, the teacher played the video again by clicking one of the picture and asked them to listen to the sound (from the video: Lion...rrrrghhhh). Then, one student said, "I am so scary lion". The student was scary because the lion roared. The students could see and listen nicely because of the audiovisual material used by the teacher to attract the students' attention and make them interact at the time. Then, teacher explained, "Lion, so lion the voice of lion start with letter l...". The students were listening to the teacher.

From the preliminary data above, it can be concluded that the teacher taught the vocabulary 'lion' by using the character names trick strategy in Letterland. From the teaching learning process, the young learners were happy when they watched the Letterland video and the teacher also introduced the vocabulary nicely by using the strategy.

However, Letterland is still new in Indonesia that is why many teachers do not know how to use it. So, the researcher really wanted to help them in enriching their knowledge about how to use Letterland strategies in teaching English vocabulary to young learners and it hoped they can apply it in their school.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURES**

### ***2.1. The Concept of Letterland***

In teaching English vocabulary to young learners, teachers need an appropriate strategy to make them feel fun during the teaching and learning process. As it is known that young learners are easy to get bore and difficult to sit when they study because they like to move and their mood is not stable every other minute. So, teachers need a strategy that can help them to discover the problem.

Letterland has some strategies that will make young learners will feel happy when studying English vocabulary. Letterland concept of an invisible, secret place called Letterland, located somewhere in the

written word and inhabited by fictional animals and people, created by the British educator, Lyn Wendon in 70s. Letterland uses pictograms (alphabet-shaped picture-characters) for each English sound and for sounds represented by a combination of alphabet letters [7].

Furthermore, Letterland is an appropriate strategy in teaching EYL. Letterland is a place where all the letters live together. The friendly letter people and animals who live there are called the 'Letterlanders' [8]. The basic mission of Letterland is to ensure that young learners have fun in learning English. It can be used for young learners for 3 to 8 years old where the emphasis is on having fun, thus young learner may absorb learning naturally. It provides a secure learning environment where young learners can happily develop cognitive, language and literacy skills.

### ***2.2. The Letterland Strategies***

There are nine strategies that teacher can use when applying Letterland [8]. They are the sounds trick, the capital letter trick, the character names trick, the action trick, the alliteration trick, the rollercoaster trick, the slow-speak trick, the rhyming words trick, and the syllable trick.

In teaching learning process of the Letterland, the teachers can choose what strategies that they are going to use. It can be said that they can select which strategies that suitable for them to teach the young learners.

Moreover, the teachers should be creative in teaching and close to their students, so they will know how their students are. Finally, the teacher can apply the proper strategies in order to make them improve in the study.

### ***2.3. The Procedures of Letterland Strategies***

In the Letterland strategies, there are some procedures in teaching young learners which are described as follows:

1. Watching Letterland ABC video based on the letter that they will learn at the day in order to activate young learners' mind about the Letterland. (Teachers conduct the strategies of Letterland while watching the video).
2. Going back to classroom to do other activities. (If watching in a classroom means just stay in it).
3. Giving instruction and explaining about what the students are going to do. (Teachers apply the strategies of Letterland during the teaching learning process).
4. Doing workbook, worksheet, or other activities based on the lesson plan.

5. Reviewing the lesson that has been learnt. (Applying the strategies of Letterland during the reviewing time).

**2.4. Vocabulary**

Learning vocabulary for young learners will make them can communicate well in English as their foreign language. They can understand and express themselves. Vocabulary is very important to be learned by the young learners to master a language.

Vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the words we teach in the foreign language [9]. Vocabulary is core component of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Moreover, the teacher has an important role in helping young learners to improve their vocabulary. So, they should be able to choose the right teaching strategy for them in teaching English vocabulary which finally they can master the English vocabulary well and in a fun learning way.

**3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative research explores a topic to learn about the problem and to address the research to obtain that information [10]. It provides detailed understanding of a central phenomenon and the data will be described and interpreted to get the larger meaning of the findings. So,

this research applied descriptive qualitative research design to explore more detail information about how to use Letterland strategies in teaching English vocabulary to young learners.

The data of this research were the sentences from teachers during the teaching learning process while using the Letterland strategies. Then, the source of the data were 4 teachers (2 teachers from Nursery 1 that consists of students aged 3 years old, and 2 teachers from Nursery 2 that consists of students aged 4 years old) at a Singapore Pre-School in Medan.

The data were collected by using observation and interview technique while video recording and field notes used to avoid miss information that needed for the research. Data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification were the techniques of data analysis [11-12]. Furthermore, to make the trustworthiness of this research, it applied audit trail that provides a mechanism by which others can determine about how the decisions were made and the uniqueness of the situation [13].

**4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

After analyzing the data and classifying them based on the strategies of Letterland that collected from four teachers, it found the result as in the following Table 1.

**Table 1.** The Letterland Strategies from Teacher MC, MD, MA, and MM

Num.	Strategies	Percentages (%)			
		Nursery 1		Nursery 2	
		MC	MD	MA	MM
1.	The sounds trick	47.06	29.03	80.64	76.43
2.	The capital letter trick	0	0	0	0.71
3.	The character names trick	49.58	67.74	18.28	22.86
4.	The action trick	3.36	3.23	1.08	0
5.	The alliteration trick	0	0	0	0
6.	The rollercoaster trick	0	0	0	0
7.	The slow-speak trick	0	0	0	0
8.	The rhyming words trick	0	0	0	0
9.	The syllable trick	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

\*Freese (2003:143)

From the Table 1 above, Nursery 1 and Nursery 2 teachers used some strategies in teaching Letterland to young learners. They were the sounds trick, the capital letter trick, the character names trick, and the action trick.

Then, from Nursery 1, MC got the higher percentage in using the sounds trick that was 47.06 %, followed by MD 29.03 %. It meant that MD used the strategy was

less than MC. In the other side, MD got the higher percentage rather than MC in using the character names trick. It was 67.74 % , followed by MC that was 49.58%. MD used more the character names trick strategy in teaching the English vocabulary by using Letterland to her students. Next, for the action trick strategy, MC got 3.36 % and MD got 3.23 %. MC was the higher percentage rather than MD in using the action trick strategy.

In Nursery 2, MA got the higher percentage in using the sounds trick (80.64 %) rather than MM (76.43 %). MA used many sounds trick strategy in teaching young learners. MM was the only that used the capital letter trick in teaching and she got the higher percentage in using the character names trick (22.86 %) rather than MA (18.28 %). Then, MA was the only one that used the action trick in Nursery 2 level (1.08 %) and MM was nothing. MA used the action trick strategy in teaching young learners by describing the action like how the movement in doing the action trick strategy.

Moreover, Table 1 showed that from the nine strategies, it found only four strategies used by all the teachers while they were teaching to their students aged three and four years old. They were the sounds trick, the capital letter trick, the character names trick, and the action trick. For the the alliteration trick, the rollercoaster trick, the slow-speak trick, the rhyming words trick, and the syllable trick weren't be found because actually the teachers would use the strategies for the higher level such as Kindergarten that students aged five to six years old. It was because they considered about their students' level of comprehension.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the result, it found only four Letterland strategies used by all teachers while they were teaching English vocabulary to their students. They were the sounds trick (64.49%), the character names trick (33.68%), the action trick (1.57%), and the capital letter trick (0.26%). It meant that the sounds trick strategy was dominant used by all the teachers.

Furthermore, it concluded that Letterland strategies were good in teaching English vocabulary to young learners. It provided some fun activities that contained of multi-sensory based learning which the students were able to see, hear, do, and touch it. Then, most of the students were happy in learning by using the Letterland strategies.

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