

DEVELOPING ENGLISH SYLLABUS FOR KINDERGARTEN IN JEMBER

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengembangkan silabus bahasa Inggris untuk Taman Kanak-Kanak (TK) di Jember, Jawa Timur. Prosedur yang diterapkan meliputi survey kebutuhan, pemaparan tujuan, pemilihan tipe silabus, penyusunan proto-syllabus, penyusunan pedagogical syllabus, pelaksanaan try out silabus, evaluasi dan revisi. Informasi yang dibutuhkan dalam survey kebutuhan diperoleh melalui kuesioner dan interview. Karena anak-anak TK masih terlalu muda untuk menjadi informan atau respondents, maka analisa kebutuhan digali dari pendapat ahli dalam bidang English for Young Learners (EYL), dari kurikulum TK, dari guru TK, dari wali anak TK, dan guru bahasa Inggris Sekolah Dasar (SD). Silabus produk penelitian ini meliputi dua puluh topik, lima untuk pengulangan dan lima belas lainnya berisi topic-topik sebagai berikut: angka, warna, binatang, anggota tubuh, makanan dan minuman, keluargaku, sekolah, instruksi sederhana, profesi, perasaan, pakaian, kesehatan, kendaraan, alam dan iklim, serta matahari, bulan dan bintang. Silabus produk penelitian ini menawarkan kegiatan yang sederhana dan menyenangkan untuk anak-anak TK, juga menyajikan prosedur yang jelas untuk kegiatan bahasa Inggris untuk anak-anak TK, ini terkait dengan kenyataan bahwa kebanyakan mereka yang mengajar bahasa Inggris di TK tidak memiliki latar belakang pengetahuan dan ketrampilan berbahasa Inggris yang memadai, khususnya bahasa Inggris untuk anak (EYL).

Kata Kunci: Silabus bahasa Inggris untuk anak, Pengembangan silabus bahasa Inggris, Bahasa Inggris untuk anak/English for Young Learners (EYL)

The government, in its decree No. 060/U/1993, recommends that English can be introduced to the fourth grade students of elementary school (Kasbollah, 2000:2), but it is a recommendation, not a must, of when to start. The government doesn't forbid us to include English as an extra lesson in the curriculum of kindergarten and of the early years of elementary school. Moreover, to start introducing English since preschool education period is not in contradiction to the objectives of national education. Then, we may start introducing English to students of kindergarten if the society demands.

The teaching of English in preschools and elementary schools has become popular in recent

years. Brumfit and Tongue state that the last few years have seen a revival of interest in the teaching of English to young learners (1991:iv). Before these last few years, the concentration of the English language teaching was on adults or secondary level, with relatively little concern for primary level. But today, as English for Young Learners (EYL) is an interesting subject to discuss, there have been many seminars, short course or workshops on EYL. They state that English, as a foreign and an international language, is advantageous to introduce to children.

It is, actually, not clear whether children learn languages better at a young age, but many people believe that they do (Brumfit, 1991:vi). They, who

believe that children are better language learners, insist that the brain can more easily accept new things before puberty than after, and that acquisition of languages is possible without self-consciousness at an early stage. They are also sure that children have fewer negative attitudes to foreign languages and cultures than adults, and that consequently they are better motivated than adults.

It is said that the earlier a child starts to learn a foreign language, the earlier it will be for him to acquire the pronunciation (Wright, 1989:29). Dulay states that children appear to be much more successful than adults in acquiring the phonological system of the new language, many of them eventually attain native-like accent (1982: 94). Moreover childhood is the best period to put basic ability in speaking fluently (Finocchiaro, 1964:25).

Actually, there are still pro and cons about the teaching of English to preschool education and the early years of elementary school students. In fact, however, many TKs provide English as a local content subject, as well as some elementary schools with English in their early years as an extra lesson. Regardless of the pro and cons, one of the problems of the teaching of English in kindergarten is the absence of syllabus.

So far, for kindergarten, there isn't any standardized English syllabus and material yet, and according to the previous studies, the English teachers of kindergartens did not develop any syllabus for their teaching. The government, of course, doesn't produce any English syllabus for kindergarten, because it is recommended by the government that English may be introduced in the forth year of elementary school. Whereas, without a syllabus, the instruction will have no guide, and it may lead to unsuccessful instruction, because, according to Widdowson (1984), a syllabus is viewed as providing for control of the learning process.

Actually, teachers, in this case, have a relatively free hand in designing the syllabuses on which their teaching programs are based, but, they are likely to be consumers of other people's syllabuses. This is known from the results of the previous studies on the teaching of English in TK. Their conclusions state that there is no syllabus in their teaching program. It seems that the teachers feel that people

with specific expertise should carry out syllabus development. Yalden (1983:17), in this case, states that teachers of English as a second language are on the whole more used to thinking about methodology than about syllabus design. Among the various aspects of second or foreign language teaching, one of the most ignored has been the content of the teaching, what is generally referred to as curriculum or syllabus design (Krashen, 1987: 1).

This research is conducted as a realization of the responsibility to solve the problem. It tries to fill the absence of English syllabus for kindergarten with this developmental research.

The Specification of the Product

The English syllabus that will be developed in this research is for a process-oriented teaching, because it focuses on the learning experiences themselves. There is no assessment on the students' achievement in English at the end of the course. The assessment is conducted together with the process of teaching and learning.

The Significance of the Study

The lack of English syllabus in the teaching of English in kindergarten is a problem that is important to solve. The success of the teaching is determined by many components, and syllabus is one of the important components that serves as a guide and determines the success of the teaching. To reach the ideal condition in the teaching of English in kindergarten, an English syllabus for kindergarten must be developed. The product of this study is expected to give contribution to the teaching of English in kindergarten.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study has some limitations that determine the scope of the study. Firstly, this study is addressed just to regular kindergarten, not special one such as TK International whose language of instruction is English. Secondly, the needs analysis is not concluded from the survey to the preschoolers directly, but from the experts' ideas on the characteristics of young learners, especially children aged between 4 and 6, the experts' ideas on children's language development, the curriculum of TK (in this

case GBPKB-TK), the teachers of TK, and the parents of the pupils of TK.

The method of the study

The procedure employed in this developmental study were doing needs survey, describing purposes, selecting syllabus types, producing proto-syllabus, producing pedagogical syllabus, trying out the developed syllabus in the classroom procedure, evaluating and revising. The information needed in needs survey was gathered through questionnaires and interview.

Since the preschoolers are too young to be informants or respondents, the needs analysis were gained from the experts' ideas on the characteristics of young learners and their language development, the curriculum of TK, the teachers of TK, the parents of the preschoolers, and the English teachers of elementary school.

The Results of the Needs Survey and the Description of purpose

The result of the data analysis showed that English as an international language is necessary to be introduced to preschoolers, but it should be introduced orally and abstract concepts should be avoided. The objective of the inclusion of English in kindergarten's program was to introduce English to preschoolers. Most of the preschoolers mixed bahasa Indonesia with their local language at home. The topics loved most by the preschoolers were: names of animals, colours, and things around. The techniques loved most by the preschoolers were singing, mentioning names of object using pictures as media, and demonstration. Most of the preschoolers were very enthusiastic in having English activities. The length of the preschoolers' concentration is about fifteen minutes. English was given regularly once a week and if there was a chance they also tried to include English in their daily activities.

Selecting Syllabus Type

In their very young age (4-6 years) and very first phase to know English, it is found that they want to be able to mention names of animals, colours, and things around. It means that they want to build their vocabulary first. Whereas, the setting was that

the language of instruction in their preschool was bahasa Indonesia, and the language they spoke in their daily life was also, mostly, bahasa Indonesia, only some mixed with Javanese or Madurese. In short, their environment was not English speaking society. This means that the preschoolers' process of acquisition or learning of English is not easy, because children learn or acquire language best through their environment by using the language as a tool of communication with their environment.

The lexically-based syllabus, therefore, is the appropriate one that is devoted to vocabulary building for the preschoolers in Jember with their setting. None of the six types of language teaching syllabus; structural syllabus, notional/functional syllabus, situational syllabus, skill-based syllabus, task-based syllabus, and content-based syllabus, is appropriate for the preschoolers in Jember, because all those types include abstract concept. Content-based syllabus, even though it needs less grammar, requires qualified teachers who are able to teach the content using English as the language of instruction.

Writing the Proto-Syllabus

This stage clarifies the list of topics and the descriptions needed to guide the content of pedagogical syllabus based on the results of the need analysis in the previous chapter. The following is the proto-syllabus:

Writing the Pedagogical English Syllabus

The pedagogical syllabus is developed for kindergarten, especially, all TK ABA in Jember. Since most of the teachers of TK ABA do not have special background knowledge of English, especially English for Young Learners (EYL), the proposed syllabus is completed with the teaching techniques clearly beside the description of contents, the purpose of the course, and the information about some guide or warning to the teachers.

In one academic year, TK has two semesters, so the syllabus is divided into two parts, English syllabus for semester I and for semester II. As most of the teachers did not have enough background knowledge of English (only one teacher had English knowledge background), the syllabus was written in bahasa Indonesia to be easily understood. See the

The Topics and the Descriptions

Unit	Topics	Descriptions
1	2	3
1	Numbers	One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine ten
2	Colours	Red, yellow, green, blue, white, black, brown, orange, purple
3	Animals	cat, rabbit, elephant, lion, wolf, mouse, chicken, butterfly, duck, monkey, bird, tortoise, bear, tiger, crocodile
4	my body	Head, shoulders, knees, toes, eyes, ears, mouth, nose, cheek, hand
6	my family	Mother, father, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather
7	School	Window, door, floor, desk, blackboard, book, bag, pencil, flag, teacher, student
8	Simple instructions	Stand up, sit down, open/close the door, take the book, jump, wave your hand
9	Job/Profession	Teacher, doctor, policeman, soldier, driver, navigator, farmer
10	Feelings	Happy, sad, afraid, crying
11	Dress	Shirt, skirt, trousers, hat, shoes, socks
12	Health	Heavy, thin, clean, healthy, sick, hospital
13	Transportation	Car, motorcycle, bicycle, pedicab, train, bus, plane, ship
14	Nature and Climate	Air, mount, fire, hot, ice, cold, tree, forest, cloud, rain
15	sun, moon, and star	Sun, moon, star

syllabus in the appendixes.

Try-out of the Materials in Classroom Procedure

The materials were developed in the form of lesson plans. The try out was conducted after the training for the teachers was done. The try out was done from September 2002 to May 2003 in TK ABA I, II, III, and IV Jember. The preschoolers were classified into group A (first year) and B (second year). Group A consisted of those with the age of about 4-5 years and group B was those with the age of more or less 5-6 years.

After the try out, the teachers, not the

preschoolers, were required to fill questionnaires concerning the effectiveness of the developed syllabus. The points in the questionnaires include;

- a. the suitability of the material related to objectives,
- b. the preschoolers' interest in the materials,
- c. the understanding of the practice exercises, and
- d. the understanding of the learning needs in the materials.

Analysis of the try-out

For semester one the units tried out in the classroom procedure were unit 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 (as the representation of unit 1, 2, 3 and 4). This is due

to the limited time, on July 2002 and early August 2002 the syllabus was in the process of being developed, then on August and early September the training for the teachers was being conducted. For semester two, unit 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 were tried out (as the representation of unit 18, 19 and 20). So the try out was conducted from the third week of September 2002 till the end of May 2003.

All of the 4 teachers stated that the materials were suitable with the objectives. The materials were in line with the objectives mentioned in the syllabus. All of the objectives of each unit refer to the main objectives, namely, to introduce English to preschoolers.

Related to the preschoolers' interest in the materials, the teachers stated that most (about 95%) of the preschoolers of both groups, A and B, were interested in the materials. This was observed from the preschoolers' enthusiasm toward the English lesson. They seemed to be curious and happy when the teacher introduced them some new vocabularies that they hadn't known yet.

Concerning the understanding of the practice exercises, all of the four teachers stated that the preschoolers enjoyed the practice exercises, moreover the preschoolers were enthusiastic with them.

In the case of the understanding of the learning needs in the material, all of the four teachers mentioned that the material was appropriate for the preschoolers, because all of the contents were those that the preschoolers had known well in their first language.

One thing the teachers agreed was that for group A, English was given only a little, not more than a half of the whole materials, and the songs were just those which were very simple, such as; 'that is the window', 'animal song', 'one and one', and 'an apple'. Thus in group B the preschoolers would get some new materials and some reinforcement of those that had been given in group A.

Evaluation and Revision

The proposed syllabus needs to be evaluated, especially by those who have tried out the syllabus and by experts in syllabus design. The teachers of TK ABA I, II, III, and IV in Jember, however, did not give much criticism for the evaluation. They

stated that the syllabus could not be applied fully in group A, but it was not a matter, because they always repeated the material of group A in group B to ensure that the material were still in the preschoolers' mind.

CONCLUSION

Finally, after the whole process of the syllabus development is finished, the intended English syllabus for kindergarten in Jember has successfully been produced with the specification and notes of strength as follows:

The English syllabus for kindergarten includes some points. The most important ones are the purpose of the inclusion of English in kindergarten's program, the topics, the activities and media, and the allotted time. The brief description of the points is as follows:

1. The purpose is to introduce English to preschoolers. There are twenty topics included in the syllabus, five are reviews and the other fifteen are: numbers, colours, animals, my body, food and drink, my family, school, simple instruction, profession, feeling, cloth, health, transportation, nature and climate, and sun, moon, and star. Each review comes after every three topics. The descriptions about the activities and media are intended to guide the teachers in planning the activities of introducing English to preschoolers. The activities are spreads in thirty-four meetings. Five meetings for reviews and the others are for other topics.
2. Some strengths of the syllabus are: it offers activities that are simple and fun for preschoolers such as colouring, singing, moving their bodies, and competing. It also presents clear procedure of the English activities for kindergarten, this is related to the fact that most of the English teachers of kindergarten do not have any background knowledge of English, especially English for Young Learners (EYL).

SUGGESTIONS

The suggestions are addressed to the users of the syllabus, in this case the English teachers of kindergarten and the next researchers of similar fo-

cus.

To the English teachers of kindergarten, it is informed that firstly, the syllabus is developed for regular kindergarten whose language of instruction is bahasa Indonesia, not international one that uses English as the language of instruction. Secondly, the preschoolers in the setting of non-English speaking environment need to build their vocabulary first. That's why the syllabus is lexically-based. Thirdly, the preschoolers' learning of English should be limited in oral English, without written form, because they are still learning to read and write in their first language, bahasa Indonesia. It is known that system of reading and writing between English and bahasa Indonesia is very different. Finally, the English syllabus does not intend to limit teacher's creativity, it serves as a guide. So, when teachers face a certain condition that is not appropriate with something offered by the syllabus, they may create their own planning that suits the condition.

To the next researchers of similar focus, it is suggested that they pay more attention to media development, this is due to the lack of media in most regular kindergartens. To buy media is not cheap, especially electronic one. Even, puppets are also expensive for most of kindergartens, moreover, the characters of the available puppets (sold in stores) are often not appropriate with their need.

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