

CHAPTER 13

Teaching English for Young Learners

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English for Young Learners (TEYL) has developed significantly in the recent decades, along with the increasing of the needs of English mastery in this global era (Pratama, A.D., 2025). In many countries, including Indonesia, English language has been introduced in the primary level, both as a local content subject and as a part of school enrichment program. Exposing English to early childhood can provide a strong foundation for developing children's language in the future, as well as growing positive attitude toward foreign language learning.

In the perspectives of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Young Learners can be viewed as the branch of English learning that is specific and oriented to learners' needs. The uniqueness of EYL is on its focus on the young learners' need: language, cognitive, and affective aspects. This chapter will provide an instructional guideline to teach the course of TEYL for students in higher education.

2. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

2.1 Course Objective and Content

Generally, the course of English for Young Learners aims to equip students with conceptual understanding and pedagogical skills in

designing and implementing English learning that suits to young learners' characteristics. The learning objectives of this course cover the students' ability to identify the characteristics of young learners, explain the principles and approaches of teaching EYL, as well as design relevant, communicative, and meaningful learning objectives, materials, activities, media, and assessment. Hence, students are expected not only to understand the theories of EYL, but also to apply the theories into real learning contexts.

In one semester, it is suggested that the content of EYL course is arranged in stages from the conceptual aspects to applicative aspects. In the beginning, the focus of the course are fundamental topics, such as the basic concepts/definitions of EYL, the urgency of teaching English at the early age, the position of EYL in language teaching and ESP framework. These topics generally requires one to two meetings since it functions as theoretical foundations for next discussions.

The next stage focuses on the discussion on young learners' characteristics (cognitive, affective, social, and linguistic aspects) and the implications on English learning. These topics are ideally discussed on more than one meeting since understanding the young learners' characteristics is essential to determine the teaching methods, activities, and materials.

After that, the course can move to the topic of teaching approaches and methods to teach EYL, such as communicative approach, Total Physical Response (TPR), story-based learning, and play-based learning. These topics are generally allocated for one to two meetings, so the students can understand the basic principles and discuss the examples of implementation.

The next stage focuses on the learning design aspect, covering activities design, materials and media selection, and vocabulary and grammar development strategies for young learners. These topics can be taught in one meeting per topic since the topics are applicable and can be directed to practices.

Next, the focus moves to the young learners' language skills development (listening, speaking, early reading, and early writing), as well as assessment and evaluation in EYL. The allocation of one

meeting for each topic is adequate because the focus of the discussion is integrative.

In the latter semester, the teaching practices are the main component of the course. The students are given the opportunities to teach at the simulation class or at local communities, partner schools, or informal learning centres. The teaching practices can be designed in several meetings, so the students can experience the cycles of preparation, implementation, reflection, and continuous improvement (Hasbi et al., 2025).

In addition, there are several optional topics that can be discovered based on the development of educational issues, such as the technology integration and digital media, inclusive education, bilingual classes, and parents' engagement in students' learning. Overall, the integration of teaching practice emphasizes that TEYL is not positioned solely on the theoretical knowledge, but also professional skills through experiential learning.

2.2 Teaching Method

In the context of TEYL course in university level, the teaching methods do not only focus on how young learners learn English, but specifically on how students as prospective teachers understand, design, and practice the EYL learning pedagogically. Thus, the teaching methods of TEYL in higher education are designed to integrate theoretical knowledge, critical reflection, and relevant practical experience to the real context.

The fundamental approach when teaching the course of TEYL is student-centred learning. This approach positions the students as active learners that develop understanding through discussion, case studies, and pedagogical practice. The lecturers take role as facilitators that guide, give examples, and provide academic feedback (Kosimova, 2023). This approach is relevant with the ESP framework since it places the students' professional needs as prospective EYL teachers as the focus of the learning.

One of the effective methods in TEYL course is case-based learning. Through the case studies of EYL in real classroom context or

learning videos, students can analyse the teaching practices, identify pedagogical problems, and discuss alternative solutions. This method helps students to connect the theories and practices and develop their reflection abilities (Simbolon, 2022).

Besides, task-based learning is relevant in teaching TEYL course in higher education. The learning tasks are designed as professional tasks, such as design the learning objectives, design the thematic lesson plan, develop learning media, or develop assessment instruments. Through those tasks, students are learning by doing and developing their pedagogical competences, which are required in the real classroom context.

The method of microteaching is also an essential component in TEYL. Through microteaching, students practice TEYL in a small scale with their peers or classmates for simulation. This activity provides opportunity for students to apply the EYL approaches and techniques and get feedback from the lecturers and peers/classmates. Microteaching is the bridge between the theoretical knowledge and real teaching practices in classroom (Astuti et al, 2024).

2.3 Activity Types

At the beginning, the dominant activities are focus group discussion, case study, and reading-based discussion. These activities focus on conceptual topics, such as characteristics of young learners, TEYL principles, as well as teaching approaches and methods. Discussion and case study provide students with the opportunity to connect the theories and real EYL classroom context, as well as to develop their critical thinking on teaching practices.

For pedagogical and applicative topics, such as lesson planning, activity design, and teaching materials & media development, the learning activities can employ workshop (Hasbi et al., 2026). In this activity, the students can work individually or in groups to design lesson plan, worksheet, visual media, or language games that suit the characteristics of young learners.

Next, the learning activities can focus on teaching practices. The TEYL course can integrate teaching practice at certain communities or

non-formal learning communities. This activity aims to provide students with the opportunities to implement the knowledge and competences they have learned.

2.4 Materials and Media

Learning materials in the TEYL course can be presented in various formats, such as academic reading texts (textbook, journal articles, and book chapter), examples of teaching aids (lesson plan, syllabus, and worksheet), and examples of authentic learning materials for young learners, such as picture story books, language games, and visual-based activities. The learning media can be printed or digital. Printed media, such as story books, flashcards, posters, and realia, are used to help students understand the characteristics of media that are suitable for young learners' cognitive and affective development (Kodriyah et al., 2018). While, digital media, such as learning videos, animations, educative applications, and online learning platform, are utilized to introduce the students to the relevant teaching practice in 21st century learning context and young learners' need in digital era (Hasbi, 2023).

The selection of materials and media can be determined by several pedagogical considerations. First, students need to understand that EYL must use concrete, interesting, and contextual media. Second, the variety of materials and media cause students to develop their creativity and flexibility in designing learning activities, which is the most essential skills for future teachers (Sukarno, 2008).

Thus, the students do not only learn the examples of materials and media, but they are also encouraged to design and modify the materials and media to suit to the learning objectives, class contexts, and resources availability.

2.5 Vocabulary and Grammar Building

The focus of the vocabulary in the TEYL course include pedagogic and classroom vocabularies (classroom language). Pedagogic vocabularies are vocabularies that are related to TEYL, such as instructional verbs, classroom routines, classroom management expressions, and terms used in lesson planning and evaluation. While

classroom language includes the expressions used by teachers to interact with young learners, such as giving instructions, motivation, praising, correcting mistakes, and managing the activity transition (Widyahening, 2018).

Besides vocabularies used for teachers, this course also targets the mastery of common thematic vocabularies for young learners, such as topic of family, school, animals, food, daily activities, and surrounding environment. The mastery of these types of vocabularies is so essential that students can understand the complexity level of language for young learners as well as select and simplify the vocabularies to suit to the learning objectives and young learners' learning development.

For grammar, the focus is not directed to complex structures, but to functional grammar that commonly appears in class interactions and learning materials. The structures focus on simple instructions, basic questions, simple present tense, imperative sentences, simple modals, as well as sentence structure used in story, songs, and language games. This approach helps students understand how grammar used communicatively and contextually for teaching young learners.

The teaching practice activities are essential in developing students' vocabularies and grammar. Through the teaching practice, students can use their English language authentically in classroom contexts, strengthening their mastery of classroom language and functional grammar structures.

2.6 Targeted Language Skills

Among the four language skills, listening and speaking skills are the priority of TEYL course. This priority is because oral interaction is the most dominant form of communication in EYL. Students need to understand oral language used in young learners' learning materials, such as songs, stories, and audio instruction, as well as to produce clear and simple oral language based on the level of young learners' development (Wibowo, 2017).

Improving students' listening skills can be done through repetitive exposure on authentic and relevant oral input in the context of TEYL, such as learning videos, story recording, songs, and teaching practices

examples. Students do not only listen to materials passively, but also analyse language use, intonation, instruction clarity, and communication strategies used by teachers. This approach helps students to develop their sensitivity on effective oral language.

The speaking skill can be improved through microteaching activities, classroom simulation, and teaching practice. In this activity, students use English directly as a language of instruction, including giving instruction, managing classroom, and interacting with young learners (Utami et al., 2020). Guided feedback from lecturers and peers are essential to help students improving their fluency and pronunciation.

While, reading and writing skills are still developed, but the focus is quite different. The reading skill focuses on the understanding of reading materials (Islamiah et al., 2017), such as TEYL literatures, teaching guidelines, and examples of teaching aids. The writing skill is developed in the context of academic and professional contexts, such as writing lesson plan, learning reflection, teaching practice report, and developing learning materials.

2.7 Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment for the TEYL course combines both formative and summative assessment (Brown, 2004). Formative assessment can be conducted several times in the form of small tasks and classroom activities, such as case studies, reading-based discussions, lesson planning, learning materials and media design, as well as microteaching performance. This form of assessment provides lecturers with the opportunity to evaluate students' conceptual understanding, lesson planning, and readiness before doing their teaching practice.

Summative assessment in TEYL course is teaching practice that is supplemented by supporting documents, such as lesson plan, learning media, and reflective report. The teaching practice can be implemented in classroom simulation, partner schools, or nonformal learning communities. Besides, summative assessments can include portfolio recording the learning process and result of the students in one semester.

3. FURTHER DISCUSSION

One of the debatable issues in TEYL in the higher education is the integration of theories and teaching practices. Overly theoretical approach can produce graduates who understand the concept of TEYL but is not ready to face the complexity of real classroom contexts. On the other hand, overemphasis on the practices without adequate theoretical foundation can cause not reflective teaching practices. Thus, the integration of theories, practices, and reflection is crucial to ensure that students are not only able to teach but also understand the pedagogical reasons behind each instructional decision (Cameron, 2001; Richards, 2017).

Further discussion can highlight the challenges of teaching practices in the context of institutions, which have limited access to partner schools or learning communities. Though, the teaching practices are considered ideal, its implementations are not always easy and need strong institutional supports. In this context, microteaching and class simulation can be a meaningful practice pedagogically. In the future, the development of TEYL is recommended to consider the use of digital technology, portfolio-based reflection, and inclusive approach as a response on the change of young learners' needs and educational context. Thus, TEYL course as one of the branches of ESP is not only relevant academically, but also adaptive to the dynamic of professional practices in the field (Ellis, 2012; Nation & Macalister, 2010).

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