

Paper

Are We Serious about Our Primary English?

A Reflection on Training the Teachers

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Introduction

English Education Study Program of Faculty of Languages and Arts of Yogyakarta State University has been offering some kind of a Pre service Training for teachers of young learners. It is an optional package for the students whose main training has been targeted to teach in secondary schools in our education system, namely SMP/MTs, SMA/MAN and SMK. From 1994 to 2006, the training was included in the curriculum consisting almost 160 sks. However, since 2006 in which the policy to make the students graduate with the minimum sks (144 sks) the package was then excluded from the core curriculum and designed as the certification package together with other optional packages offered such as Business English and Translation Studies.

This program has been going on for about 16 years. In such a long period there have been many experiences which have taught us a lot. The experiences have in them insight, knowledge, problems and solution, new perception etc. They need to be shared with others who are interested in the same subject. By presenting them to wider audience such as the forum of this TEYL conference, we also expect to get input and feedback, therefore we can continue to develop the program since we have been convinced with the good it brings to our students, to the elementary schools, especially the surrounding schools in Yogyakarta. A number of English teachers in Yogyakarta have enjoyed trainings which have been designed based on the program as well. Education offices Yogyakarta which we have often collaborated with have also benefited from this program.

The Belief of the Teaching of English to Children or English for Young Learners

How It All Started

In the curriculum of English Education Department that we used as a basis for developing the package of courses, the rationale for offering optional packages was that our graduates need to

have additional academic qualifications which give them the right to do jobs other than teaching English in the secondary schools. In addition to their training courses from the language skills to the teaching practicum, the students are to choose among the offered packages included in the curriculum. The packages of courses have the following names; English for Children, Business English, Advanced TEFL, Advanced Linguistics, and Translation. Therefore, the name of English for Children came from the curriculum.

Our English Education Department (still IKIP and FPBS then) decided to start offering English for Children. The policy was taken due several reasons, three of which were presented below. First, the government launched a very big step in the education of elementary school system, that they were allowed to give English subject to the children. The second reason was the demand of the society. Due to the government policy on the primary English, many good schools in Yogyakarta were interested in starting their English provision. On behalf of their schools some teachers and parents came to our department for providing them with teachers. It was a very practical consideration. Later on, not only requests of teachers did they come to us for, schools also came for trainings as well. The third reason was also due to the availability of the department's human resources. Most lecturers have English language skills, linguistics, research and literature and most importantly the English language teaching methodology as their main teaching loads. Additional expertise needs additional trainings for the lecturers. Some lecturers got interested in the new expertise of English for Children, so the 16 sks package started.

In the development of the program we started with a belief on the teaching of English to young learners. Although in the beginning of our effort in establishing the program we had very limited literature and resources, as the years went by, there were more experts getting more interested in the subject. Therefore, many books and articles have been written. Among the books, there are those written by Lynne Cameron (2001), David Paul, Jane Brewster who have given us insight, theories and working experiences in teaching English to children. Of course we need to consider our unique Indonesian context which is not similar to that of other countries. Cameron proposes the task-based teaching which guides us on how the teaching of English to children is supposed to be conducted. Her basis for designing the teaching includes Bruner's scaffolding as well as Vygotsky's idea on the importance of interaction in children language learning. The belief that supports us in developing the teaching of English to children comes from Krashen. He proposes his five hypothesis, the most prominent of which is the dichotomy of acquisition and learning. Children acquire language, while adults learn it. To trigger acquisition, comprehensible input should be exposed to the children. Therefore input in the teaching of English to children should be meaningful.

The most comprehensive literature that shapes our belief on the teaching of English to young learners is provided by The Primary English Teacher's Guide written by Jean Brewster and Gail Ellis with Denis Girard. It gives us the whole picture of the teaching of English to children in our education system. Brewster puts her advice to us in the following words " we would like to encourage you to take on a reflective and analytical role so that you may make

informed choices about what will work best in your own context and modify our suggestions as appropriate.” From the suggestion we can formulate some principles which we should keep in mind in developing the program of English for Children. The program has become the whole plan for training our students to be teachers of English to young learners.

1. The introduction of English to the children of elementary schools is a big step. Therefore it should be done with care. It is still a fact that English is often regarded as “momok” (something scary) to some students of highschool. If we are careless, we may bring the “momok” earlier. This will obviously be a disadvantage to their further learning of English

2. Our perception on what children are should be clear. Not like the our Faculty of Education which has had a long history of experiences in dealing with children or young learners, the English Education Department has focused the attention on junior highschool students, adolescents and adults. Children of 5 to 12 were beyond our knowledge. We have learned though that children are children, they are not adults in the miniature. They have their own aspiration and needs in learning. They have developed their own ways of learning language. As the subject of a teaching and learning process, all aspects of them should be the basis of the instructional design of their language learning.

3. The teaching of English to children that is developed starts from the basis that children are not adults at all. Therefore, all of their aspects should be different from those of the adult teaching and leaning. The aims, goals and objectives, the materials, the methods and techniques as well as the evaluation should meet to the children’s needs and characteristics.

4. The teaching and learning of English that we have developed is the one that is appropriate for all Indonesian children, whether they come from Sabang or Merauke, whether they come from the country or the city. Indonesia is such a huge country especially seen from the educational perspectives. The quality gap emerges from school to school, city to city, province to province even from island to island. Therefore it is our duty to train teachers who can teach English to children to various types of learners groups.

A. Developing English for Children Through Courses in the Curriculum

The package of EFC courses has four subjects as formulated in the curriculum of English Education Department 1986. The 16 sks package is presented in the following grid of syllabus followed by the course descriptions and the standard operating procedures.

Name of Courses	Course Description	Standard Operating Procedures
<p>Children Language Acquisition (Kode: SET 401, T = 4, P = -, L = -)</p>	<p>Children Language Acquisition (CLA) is the first course offered in the English for Children package. The unit covers theoretical aspects on how children acquire language proposed by different experts. This course provides students with knowledge on how to view children learning language so as to arouse their awareness on the scientific understanding on the topic. Such an understanding is necessary to design language programs for children in the whole English for children package. The issues include the biological aspect of language acquisition, stages in children language development, the acquisition of each language aspect among children, motherese or baby talk. The most dominant discussion is on how Indonesian children might learn English. Activities cover lectures, students' children English in the formal setting like Elementary schools,</p> <p>69. Program Development of English for Children (Kode: SET403, T= 2, P=2, L=-)</p> <p>This course provides students with theories and knowledge of designing English program for children. They learn and practice how to design English language</p>	<p>Students learn about the theories of children learning language through observation, reading literature on Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, Brown, Krashen, Cameron, Scott, Ellis and Brewster, Paul etc and writing papers on them, presenting and discussing the theories in class.</p>

	<p>programs for children based some theories which include needs survey, need analysis, formulating objectives, etc. the course consists of lectures, class and home assignments, and mini projects. The assessment covers students' participation in class and workshops, assignments and the mini project</p>	
<p>Children Language Teaching Methodology (Kode: SET 402, T = 2, P = 2, L = -)</p>	<p>The course covers some theoretical and practical aspects in the teaching of language to children among which are setting the objectives, designing learning tasks and activities, choosing appropriate materials and learning resources, preparing assessment and managing classes. Students are provided with theories, practical knowledge and structured experiences in the English instruction for children Activities include lectures, presentations, mini projects, peer teaching or microteaching and workshops. The assessment is through students' performances in each of the activities.</p>	<p>Students design teaching and learning of English for young learners and practice the plans focusing on appropriate materials, techniques, media, learning tasks and activities and evaluation in a very limited context such as in peer teaching</p>
<p>EFC Program Development69. Program Development of English for Children (Kode: SET403, T= 2, P=2, L=-)</p>	<p>This course provides students with theories and knowledge of designing English program for children. They learn and practice how to design English language programs for children based some theories which include needs survey, need analysis, formulating objectives, etc. the course consists of lectures, class and home assignments, and mini projects. The assessment covers students' participation in class and workshops, assignments and the mini project</p> <p>t</p>	<p>1. Observing the existing program 2. Designing an English program through several steps</p> <p>The students learn how to design an English program for children involving both aspects on academic and management</p>

<p>Practicum of English for Children (Kode: SET 404, T = -, P = 2, L = 2)</p>	<p>This four sks course has the full name Practicum of English for children which belongs to the 16 sks package, together with CLA, CLTM and Program Development. This course requires the students to have the experience of teaching children English in the formal setting like Elementary schools, kindergartens, TPA or playgroups. The teaching must reflect the philosophy, the methodology, the approaches and the techniques previously presented, studied, discussed, and developed and formulated in the three other courses. The aim of the course is to provide the students with the real and practical teaching experiences in which they learn how to deal with children's It gives opportunity to have a full involvement in the formal education of children to develop the education of children through the introduction of English language. The basis of assessment is the participation on the pre-practicum activities (workshop and lectures), lesson plans, teaching performance, and written reports which are presented in the end of the semester in a closing workshop.</p>	<p>Students go to the institutions for young learners as elementary schools, kindergarten, play groups etc for doing their teaching practicum. Students are to design and implement the good teaching practice of English to children under the guidance of teachers or the lecturers</p>

B. Developing English for Children Through Research

Research on EFC has been conducted both by lecturers and students. The lecturers have done several research studies on the following

1. In 1995 we did research in the schools readiness to offer English to the children in the municipality of Yogyakarta
2. In 1997 we did research on teachers' perception in the implementation of Elementary English in the same area.
3. In 2001 we did research and development on the techniques of teaching English in the elementary schools
4. In 2007 we investigated our annual program "English for Holidays" in the form of program evaluation.

Research studies done by the students

They are mostly for their final projects. The studies vary from surveys, action research, experiments, research and development. Topics covered include the implementations of new techniques in teaching. Most action research studies are related to the use of songs, stories and games in the teaching which is based on the school based curriculum in the elementary schools. The settings of the research show us how varied the condition of each school is. Elementary schools present us endless teaching problems worth investigating. Problems in classroom management have also attracted our students for their final projects.

C. Developing English for Children through Community Services

1. The Faculty of Languages and Arts provides some funding for each Study Program to do some community services in which lecturers provide in service training to teachers who teach English to the schools. The trainings provide teachers with basic theories, techniques, materials, assessment as well as various learning resources which should be used in the teaching of children like songs, stories, games and projects. The techniques of the trainings are mostly learning by doing. The trainings can take 8 – 45 hours. Some can be mentioned here.

- From 1995 to 1999 in collaboration with the Yogyakarta municipality of education office supported by the UNY Center for Research (Lembaga penelitian)
- In 2003 Our EFC team conducted a training for kindergarten teachers in Kalasan District supported by the university.
- In 2004 our EFC team provided training on the media making for kindergarten teachers in the Kalasan District
- In 2005 to 2009, our EFC team provided trainings for the English teachers of the schools in the Yogyakarta municipality of education office.

- The team is often invited to provide trainings to other teachers in some other places. For example when the schools in Kulon Progo decided to change their local content subject from farming to English based on the consideration that the schools had no human resources who could teach farming since the teachers were all from the city, therefore they were no better in farming than their students.

2. The department annually conducts a program known English for Holidays. It is a program which gives the students opportunities to experience the teaching of English to children which is not set in the classroom. The holiday nuances are maintained so that the children feel that they are not learning but enjoying their holidays through several activities. The students are divided into two teams, the first is the management team the members of which are students from the student organization. They are responsible for the management of the program, from recruiting participants to preparing a closing performance ceremony in which the participants perform what they learn to the wider audience. This program makes students, EFC students, lecturers as committee work together hand in hand to serve the community through the teaching of English to children.

The Reflection

The effort to provide the pre service training for teachers of young learners to some extent has been successful in that we have produced teachers for young learners. They have become the teachers of foreign languages to children who are skilled professionals who can combine their knowledge, skills, and sensitivities of teachers of children with those of a teacher of a teacher of language and the balance of two (Brewster 2002)

The feeling of success, however, has not stayed for long. From some years of observation, it has been found out that our best EFC graduates who have been trained in the program and have adequate knowledge both in theories and practices only have practiced teaching English to children as their temporary jobs. After doing their teaching practicum they were hired by the schools to teach, some even stayed for long after they graduated. Only very few of the graduates have teaching careers in elementary schools, which do not represent adequately the contribution of the program to the teaching of English in Indonesia in general.

It has to be admitted that the program does not contribute to the teaching of English in elementary schools except the program which is developed through the community service and the research. The government is not yet ready to think about the primary English through appropriate teacher recruitment. English teaching in the elementary school will always be done mostly by those who have no background training on teaching English to children.

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