

A Best Practice of TEYL through “Text around the Room”

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Abstract

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Teaching English to young learners aged 7-8 in Indonesia is indeed a challenge and somehow could be a daunting task. Young learners are in the phase where they need more exposure to become familiar with the targeted language. Therefore, the teacher needs to provide them with ample exposure and engaging activities to keep them awake in the classroom so that the teaching and learning could be effective. There are many common strategies used by Indonesian English teachers in teaching young learners, such as using songs and games. Therefore, the writer would like to share his practice on implementing strategy called “Text Around the Room” as a means of teaching English for young learners. There are two positive effects that could be underscored during the implementation of this teaching strategy; engagement and collaborative work. This strategy could be an alternative to break down students’ boredom and passiveness and create lively activities.

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1. Introduction

Being proficient in English has become necessity to survive and increase someone’s bargaining power in the 21st century, as the world now becomes more interconnected and globalised. Introducing and developing English to young learners becomes necessity and a crucial in order to keep up with the demands of the modern world. It is not difficult to find reasons why teaching English to young learners is important as it is recently obvious that English has become the global language of communication. It is used in every aspect of our lives whether in business, academia, or everyday life, also it allows people around the globe to communicate with one another (Faridah, 2021; Meisani et al., 2020).

In addition, once students are proficient in English, it opens up a wider opportunity to connect and access educational and career paths, both within their own

country and internationally. However, to be proficient in English someone has to cross a challenging road, especially in learning English in Indonesia since its status of foreign language and little exposure. The fact shows that many Indonesian students have completed their twelve years schooling, but their English proficiency remain unsatisfactory (Boy Jon et al., 2021; Budiharso, 2019; Hessel & Strand, 2023).

Therefore, by learning English at a young age, students are better prepared to participate in the global economy and collaborate with others from around the world. Furthermore, learning English at a young age has been shown to have cognitive benefits (Hijriati, 2023; Nikolov & Djigunović, 2019; Nunan, 2011). Research has found that bilingualism can improve brain function and enhance problem-solving skills (Chang, 2024). By exposing young learners to a second or foreign language like English, educators can help them develop valuable cognitive and linguistic abilities that will benefit them throughout their lives. Moreover, teaching English to young learners can also help bridge the gap between different cultures and foster understanding and empathy among students from diverse backgrounds (Nikolov & Djigunović, 2019; Meisani, 2022). As a result, students gain a deeper understanding of other cultures and perspectives, which can help promote tolerance and appreciation for diversity.

Although teaching English to young learners has numerous benefits, there are some challenges and issues that teachers need to manage well. One of the most common problems and mostly happen in teaching young learners is to keep them interested, involved and motivated during lessons. As it is noted that young learners are attached with their unique characteristics such as energetic, active, shorter attention spans, and they can easily get distracted, therefore it was mandatory for teachers to conduct a fun and engaging teaching (Sehan, 2018). This would be a real challenge for young learners' teachers, they have to come up with creative and interactive methods to keep them involved in the lesson. It is a crucial decision due to the young learners' characteristics to motivate and engage in effective teaching and learning process and attain learning objectives. Keeping them engaged in the classroom is not easy, cooperating interactive and hands on activities, visual aids, games, music, storytelling and play based could grasp their attention and raise their interests so that they could engage in the teaching and learning process (Ikawati, 2017).

Another issue in teaching English for young learners is various English proficiency as well as learning pace (Copland et al., 2014; Rosyada & Apoko, 2023). There are still many Indonesian Elementary students who get difficulty in learning English (Faridah, 2021; Salim & Hanif, 2021). This is a challenge for English teachers to carefully and patiently to explain things clearly. In addition, teachers should also pay attention to the different ways kids learn and adjust their teaching to help every student succeed at their own speed. Besides, classroom management can also be an issue since young learners might show behaviour issues like being undisciplined, disruptive, or not following instructions. Teachers should set clear rules and boundaries to keep order and create a good learning space. To add, the number of the students in a class is typically big, it makes picking a certain teaching technique is a crucial matter (Hijriati, 2023; Kurniati et al., 2021; Laila et al., 2023; Rahayu & Rosa, 2021; Wahyuningsih, 2022).

Therefore, this article highlights the alternative teaching strategy known as "text around the room," which aims to enhance the English language skills of young learners through engaging activities. The approach involves strategically placing various texts on

the walls of the classroom, creating an immersive learning environment where students can interact with written material in a dynamic way.

It seems that this strategy is not commonly used in teaching and learning process. The only source that was found was research conducted by Kasmiri et al. (2023). He used this teaching technique to improve reading comprehension of eleventh graders in one of schools in Pontianak. The results revealed that the implementation of this technique successfully enhanced the students' reading comprehension. In addition, the study highlighted three crucial factors that influenced reading comprehension; (a) the selection of appropriate reading materials, (b) student motivation, and (c) the teacher's approach to engaging with the students.

2. The Implementation

2.1. Classroom Participations in English Language Classrooms

The teaching and learning activities were divided into three stages; pre-while, and post teaching. Each stage served different purposes.

In the pre-teaching stage, which took about 15 minutes, students were told what activity they were going to do on that day and its objectives. The students were seen excited since they were told that it was a game activity. Next, they were given instructions on how to do the activities. They were divided into pairs but since the number was odd, there was one group consisting of three students. The tutor chose the pairs, it was confirmed to make sure they had equal strength of team since they had different proficiency. After they were put in a team, they were given a table to complete. They were told the instruction what and how to play. The students paid attention attentively and one of them repeated the instruction to make sure.

Once everything was clear and the time was set for 20 minutes to complete the table. Once the teacher said to begin, they started to go all over the text and tried to complete the table. This was the while teaching stage. The students seemed to be doing the activity enthusiastically and turned the class in chaos because they had to run here and there from one text to another text. The class was noisy because all of the teams were discussing to fill in the table which made the class alive. While students were completing the table.

The next 25 minutes was for post-teaching stage, in this stage students were asked to submit their work. Then, it was discussed together. The table was drawn on the whiteboard, and the students were encouraged to recall each paragraph. Surprisingly, the students mostly remembered each story of the text well and could answer the questions. After the table on the whiteboard was completed, the tutor asked them to read aloud together. This reading aloud was a means of practicing oral production. The last part the activity was assigning the students to write a sentence based on the table they have discussed it.

The following table describes each stage of the activities with its details and example text or material given;

Table 1. Stages of Teaching Activities

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Text or Material</i>

Pre-Teaching	- Students are told that they were going to play a game. - Tutor pointed out the reading texts on the walls. - Tutor told students the objectives of the activities.																	
While-Teaching	Students were given a table and asked them to find for the answers of these questions: “where will they go on holiday?”, “When will they go? (this should be day and o’clock)” and “how will they go?”	Elsa is ten years old. She is in grade four now. She studies at Ceria primary school but she doesn’t go to school because it is holiday time. She will go to Bandung. She will go there on Monday next week. She will leave for Bandung at 8 o’clock in the morning. She will go by plane. <table><tr><th>Name</th><th>Where will they go?</th><th>When will they go?</th><th>how will they go?</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	Name	Where will they go?	When will they go?	how will they go?												
Name	Where will they go?	When will they go?	how will they go?															
Post-Teaching	- After they have completed the table, discuss with the students - Write the table from the previous activity - Read aloud the table together - Ask each student to read it - Students were asked to transform the information from the table into sentences individually. - The lesson was closed by tutor’s summaries of the today’s activity.	The targeted writing production; Elsa will go to Bandung. She will go on Monday. She will go at 8 o’clock in the morning. She will go by plane.																

The use of the “text around the room” is out of traditional activities in engaging students with the reading passage, commonly teachers usually present the text and give comprehension questions along. Such a practice tends to get students bored, especially young learners since the students, especially young learners, tend to be active learners. Meanwhile “text around the room”, facilitate young learners to engage with the classroom activities through pair discussion and movement. Here, students actively participated in the activities not only just sit down, read and answer the questions.

This technique was categorized successful because of the implementation of student-centred learning, precisely Cooperative Learning (CL), has made the teaching and learning becomes more engaging. In this case, the students worked together in small groups to achieve a common goal; completing the table. This activity fosters a sense of community and collaboration among students, while also developing their social skills,

communication abilities, and critical thinking skills as the CL proven benefits (Abramczyk & Jurkowski, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021).

In the context of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), this method has proven to work well in engaging and motivating students during their language learning (Dendup & Onthanee, 2020; Gillies, 2003). Cooperative learning can be particularly beneficial as it creates a supportive and inclusive environment where young learners feel comfortable taking risks and actively participating in their learning as it could be reflected from the implementation of this teaching technique.

One major advantage of implementing cooperative learning in TEYL that could be seen from the teaching practice is it encouraged students' participation. During the time working with their pairs, they shared their ideas, collaborated with classmates, and learned from one another. Additionally, this teaching practice allows students to develop leadership skills and a sense of responsibility. As well as that, young learners improve their social and communication skills, which are essential for their overall personal growth. Furthermore, cooperative learning fosters a supportive and inclusive environment. As students collaborate, they build relationships, enlarge empathy, and gain an appreciation for the diverse strengths and perspectives of their peers.

Furthermore, this teaching technique energized the classroom. All of the students involved in completing the task, the class became a little bit chaotic, but the class becomes alive. Their active participation in the activities led to increase interest, attentiveness, and enthusiasm. The lively interactions between students and the material fostered a vibrant learning atmosphere. Consequently, this teaching strategy significantly boosted students' levels of engagement and promoted effective collaborative work amongst them. According to Archambault et al. (2009), there are three indicators that could be seen if the engagement is high; 1) students' attention, (2) students' attachment, and (3) the students' ability and willingness to do the activities or task given.

Engagement is essential for effective teaching and learning. When students are actively involved and interested in a subject, they are more likely to understand and remember what they learn (Mercer, 2019). Therefore, teachers should always look for ways to enhance this engagement in the classroom. teachers have to put in an effort to get the students into the process of teaching and learning so that they are bound to the classroom activities.

Moreover, engagement benefits not just individual students but also the entire classroom. It encourages collaboration, broadens perspectives, and sharpens critical thinking skills (Dao, 2020; Ginting, 2021; Hiver et al., 2021). To emphasize, engagement is a key driver of academic growth and success. It ignites curiosity, encourages meaningful interactions, and empowers students to take charge of their learning. By focusing on engagement in teaching and learning strategies, teachers can create a more effective and enriching educational experience.

In this case, the teacher also played a pivotal role in this successful lesson by actively acting as a facilitator, guiding and supporting the students throughout the activity. Teacher could monitor the students while they are doing the activities, offer a help when necessary, and give an encouragement. Even tough, it is based on student-centred, it doesn't mean that teachers do nothing and let the students work alone in completing the task. Teachers become an important element, especially with young learners. The teacher

fostered a student-centered learning environment by encouraging collaboration and offering personalized support.

Not only the selection of teaching method or teachers' support but also the selection of material is another element which make the students involved and engaged in the lesson. The students could do the activities well because they are familiar with the words and topic. Teachers can enhance student engagement and understanding by selecting reading materials that match their proficiency levels. When students encounter vocabulary and topic, they are comfortable with, they tend to grasp the material more deeply and remember it better. This familiarity boosts their confidence and enthusiasm for learning, allowing them to participate more actively in class activities. Besides, when students recognize the content, they can connect what they're learning with their prior knowledge, which improves their comprehension and critical thinking skills.

The teaching and learning as depicted here not only focused on reading but extended to encompass other skills, other essential skills such as reading aloud to hone better speaking skill and guided writing exercises were taught as well as a means to cater a students' development. This integrated teaching practice was aimed at bolstering the students' language proficiency and make sure a more well-rounded learning experience. As it was said by Kalsum et al. (2023) that the teaching and learning of English should be involved reading, speaking, listening, and writing on their activities. Provided that, this teaching technique is comprehensive and provides young learners with a firm foundation across various skill sets necessary for their skill development. The ideal teaching and learning activities, teachers and students should involve reading,

As identified by Nikolov & Curtain (2000) in their study, there are some key characteristics that define an effective young learners' program. These characteristics encompass various aspects that contribute significantly to the success and engagement of young learners. Firstly, a focus on meaning ensures that educational activities are not just about rote learning but also about understanding concepts and applying knowledge. Secondly, integrated language instruction entails a holistic approach to teaching language skills, recognizing the interconnectedness of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Next, the incorporation of fun activities into the curriculum serves to engage young learners and make the learning process enjoyable and memorable.

Moreover, setting children up for success involves creating an environment that nurtures their confidence and motivates them to strive for excellence. In addition, encouraging learner autonomy empowers young students to take ownership of their learning journey and develop critical thinking skills. Realistic objective setting and assessment ensure that educational goals are achievable, and feedback is provided to support continuous improvement. Lastly, providing continuity between primary and secondary education bridges the gap for students transitioning between different levels of schooling, offering a seamless learning experience.

However, the implementation of this teaching technique requires the teacher to intensify the classroom management. This current discovery stresses on the necessity for teachers to meticulously arrange the learning environment, especially the space in the classroom because they inadvertently collided with one another while trying to complete the task. Providing some more space for students will help them move freely so that they

could interact effectively. Consequently, the physical setup of the classroom would enhance a conducive environment where students can comfortable move around, collaborate effectively and engage with the lesson more deeply.

5. Conclusion

This “text around the room” as a means of teaching technique in teaching young learners is implemented well in this study because it applies student-centered approach. This teaching technique helps teachers to effectively captivate students’ attention and facilitate a deeper understanding of the language. Additionally, the use of “text around the room” promotes collaborative learning as students navigate the classroom to explore different texts and participate in group exercises. This interactive and student-centered approach not only strengthens language skills but also cultivates a positive and stimulating learning atmosphere. To conclude, there are two effects of implementing this teaching technique, which are increasing students’ engagement and fostering collaborative work. As a result, the classroom becomes lively and far from boredom and passivity. However, this teaching technique requires well classroom management.

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