

EFL Teaching Method for Young Learners in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English to young pupils in the digital age requires innovative methods considering their psychological characteristics. The most crucial factors for teaching English to young learners, particularly those between the ages of four and five, are selecting the right teaching strategy and handling techniques for the classroom and choosing instructional materials that complement these strategies. This study has two main goals: first, to identify the English teaching methodology being employed at Beetle Bug Bilingual Kindergarten Semarang; second, to provide an explanation of the method's rationale based on a review of the literature, highlighting both the method's strengths and areas for improvement. This is observation-based research in which all of the results are discussed qualitatively. The study found that the teacher combined Communicative Language Teaching with the Situational Language Teaching method. She employed creative strategies to capture the students' attention during their lessons because they were still learning to write the alphabet. The fact that there was no crying or disruption during the education process indicates that the students exhibited good conditioning.

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1. INTRODUCTION

One significant trend in the evolution of global education is digitalization. Over the past few decades, we as educators have been demanded to know more about various approaches and techniques that have emerged in teaching English as a second or foreign language. Method of teaching is the degree to which theory is used and concerns decisions regarding specific abilities, the content to be taught, and the sequence in which the content will be presented. The approach is an idea and mindset about language and language acquisition. At the same time, technique, which is the degree to which procedures are executed in the classroom, directly supports the application of a method. It must also align with an approach and be consistent with the method. To effectively manage the class and choose the best teaching strategy, English teachers working in the digital age need to be aware of the traits of today's pupils.

There must be theories as our source of practices and fundamental principles to understand many English language teaching approaches and methods. Three different perspectives on language theory and the nature of language acquisition are divided by Richards and Rodgers (2001) based on how these perspectives both explicitly and indirectly impact contemporary approaches and techniques in language education.

The first conventional framework for language theory is the structural view, which views language as a system of interconnected structural parts used to code meaning. The objectives are acquiring proficiency in phonological units, lexical items, grammatical units, and grammatical operations. The Audio Lingual Method, Total Physical Response, and the Silent Way are the approaches that incorporate themselves into this fundamental way of thinking.

The functional view, which sees language as a means of expressing functional meaning, is the second framework of language theory. This approach emphasizes the categories of meaning and function more than the structural and grammatical components when organizing and specifying language education content.

The third perspective on language is known as the interactional view, and it regards language as a means of achieving social interactions and establishing interpersonal relationships. It creates interactive methods of teaching English, including acting, moving, negotiating, and exchanging conversations. An interactional perspective has been designed for several teaching techniques, including task-based language

learning, cooperative language learning, neurolinguistic programming, and content-based instruction. (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Above are three different linguistic views that arise in significantly different ways. A few techniques that could be used to teach English to speakers of other languages are explained by Richards and Rodgers (2001), such as the Lexical Approach, Community Language Learning, Neurolinguistic Programming, Total Physical Response, Situational Language Teaching, Audiolingual Method, Task-Based Language Teaching, Competency-Based Language Teaching, and Cooperative Language Learning. This paper, however, will only cover some methods of instruction that might be used with young pupils or kindergarteners.

1.1. EFL Teaching Practice to Young Learners

In EFL learning practices, young and adult learners are significantly different. Motivation is a key distinction between teaching EFL to adult learners and younger ones. Young children are naturally drawn to learning when their first words are comprehended or when they obtain their favorite toys after taking their initial steps; their happiness is visible (Laborda et al., 2006). This would require teachers to think carefully about instructing pupils in the classroom appropriately and effectively (Gumartifa & Adawiyah, 2023). For kids, learning English shouldn't be an exhausting one. When a child fits this description, the decision-making process begins on whether or not they will like or hate English. The English teacher needs to infuse fun activities into the lesson.

As educators, it is our responsibility to provide a motivating learning environment. Activities in the classroom can be extrinsically motivating if kids want to please important people (parents, instructors, etc.) by doing well on tests, for example, or intrinsically motivated if they want to avoid being punished for misbehaving (Laborda et al., 2006). A teacher has many possibilities when selecting a teaching technique for young pupils. What we teach, how to set up the classroom efficiently, and how to support students in developing their skills must be carefully considered. Teachers can effectively handle their students by being aware of the teaching approach used in the class. It may also influence teachers to choose resources that best suit how their pupils learn the topic.

This essay will begin by discussing the Situational Language Teaching (SLT) idea developed by Richard and Rodgers (2001), which is classified as a form of British "structuralism.". SLT aims to provide practical mastery of the four foundational language skills addressed through structure. Grammar and pronunciation accuracy are essential, and mistakes should be avoided in all circumstances (p. 41). SLT always teaches structures inside sentences, and terminology is selected based on how well it facilitates the instruction of sentence patterns (p. 42). Pronunciation, revision (to prepare new work if necessary), introduction of new structure or vocabulary, oral practice (drilling), and reading new material on the new structure or written exercise would then make up the four sections of the SLT lesson.

There are nine steps in the process of learning processes through the use of situational language teaching, according to Davies et al. (1975) in Luqyana et al. (2023). (1) Practice listening. The teacher should draw the pupils' attention and have them repeat a pattern or phrases they learned. (2) Choral Imitation. In this section, teachers can assign homework by instructing students to form two to three groups and repeat the lesson numerous times. This will make it easier for teachers to assess their students' comprehension. (3) Personal imitation. To evaluate students' pronunciation, the teacher may invite a few of them to stand in front of the class and repeat a word or pattern he has provided as an example. (4) Separation. To replace them in context, the teacher should first go over approaches 1-3 again with the class and isolate any sounds, words, or patterns that are difficult for them to understand. (5) Setting up a new model. Following the teacher's content presentation, the teacher may ask the class to pose and respond to specific questions with related patterns to gather the data needed to present the new pattern model. (6) Reactivation. To help students learn, teachers can employ mimes, cue words, gestures, and additional tools. Additionally, to foster more creativity and engagement in the class, the instructor may invite questions, assertions, or further examples of patterns in this part. And determine how much they comprehend the course materials. (7) Substitution Drilling. The teacher may utilize cue words in this section, such as words, photos, figures, names, etc., to prompt pupils to combine new patterns of example. (8) Use previously taught, comparable patterns until most of the class has gotten familiar with asking and responding to new questions based on these patterns. (9) Correction. The final step is correction, where students and teachers collaborate to identify and fix problems. If a student makes a mistake and the teacher lets another student fix it, the teacher may carefully correct it by shaking his head, repeating the fault, etc.

The Audiolingual Method is the name given to the second technique. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), American linguists first put forth this approach in the 1950s; these scholars' viewpoints became known as structural linguists. Novianty and Irawaty (2021) build on Larsen's (2000, p. 45–50) descriptions of a few standard or common methods related to the Audio-lingual Method. The following are listed in this order: (1) dialogue memorization. Students use role-playing and mimicking to commit an opening dialogue to memory. (2) Extension drill with a backward build-up. The teacher divides a statement into multiple parts, and the pupils repeat each portion, beginning at the end and "expanding" backward through the sentence, adding the parts in the

correct order. (3) Repetition Drill. Students repeat the teacher's model as quickly and accurately as possible. (4) Chain Drill. Students ask and answer each other individually in a circular chain around the classroom. (5) Single-slot Substitution Drill. The teacher states a line from the dialogue and then uses a word or phrase as a "cue" that students when repeating the line, must substitute into the sentence in the correct place. (6) Multiple-slot Substitution Drill. It is the same as the single slot drill, except that multiple cues can be substituted into the line. (7) Transformation Drill. The teacher provides a sentence that must be turned into something else, for example, a question turned into a statement, an active sentence turned into a negative statement, etc. (8) Question and Answer Drill. Students should answer or ask questions very quickly. (9) Use Minimal Pairs. Analysis: the teacher selects a pair of identical words except for a single sound that typically poses difficulty for the learners-students to pronounce and differentiate the two words. (10) Complete the Dialogue. Selected words are erased from a line in the dialogue, and students must find and insert them. (11) Grammar Games. Various games are designed to practice a grammar point in context, using lots of repetition.

Audiolingualism was also associated with the rise of behavioral psychology, a well-known American psychological school (p. 56). Haymaker (2002) and Novianty and Irawaty (2021) said that psychology and linguistics are the sources of audio-lingual theory. It combines behaviorist psychology, aural and oral processes, contrastive analysis, and structural linguistics theory. The psychological foundation lays out the fundamental methodological procedures that support the idea that learning a foreign language is essentially a process of forming mechanical habits, in which answering correctly is far more critical than making mistakes. Richards and Rodgers (2001) emphasize that the language skills taught by the Audiolingual Method are in the order of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Then, the language skills are considered more effective if presented in the target language as spoken form before they are seen in written form. Aural-oral training is needed to provide the foundation for developing other language skills. The analogy is emphasized by behavioral psychology as a more effective method of teaching language acquisition than analysis (p. 57). Aural discrimination based on sound patterns is being taught by listening. The language may be taught verbally at first; early on, learners are usually not introduced to written representations. When reading and writing are introduced to students, they are trained to read and write what they have already learned to communicate orally. Strictly structural methods are employed when teaching new language skills to minimize errors in speaking and writing. More difficult reading and writing assignments could be added at the advanced level (p. 59). Just as in Situational Language Teaching, the Audiolingual Method is essentially teacher-centered. In the audio-visual method, tape recorders and audiovisual technology frequently play key roles. Drills and practice patterns are unique components of audiolingual learning.

The third method is Communicative Language Teaching. This method starts from a theory of language as communication. By applying CLT, Richards and Rodgers (2001) describe language as the expression of meaning whose primary function is facilitating interaction and communication. They also state that language's primary units depend on grammatical and structural features and categories of communicative and functional meaning, as demonstrated by discourse (p. 161). One might approach the communication abilities of reading, writing, speaking, and listening from a communicative approach. Teachers must use the procedural syllabus, which lists tasks to be completed in class and offers difficulty levels for functions of the same kind when designing the syllabus from a communicative perspective. To implement this strategy as student-centered learning, teachers must also acknowledge that "functional communication activities" and "social interaction activities" are the two main activities in the classroom (p. 166).

To keep things in order in the classroom, the CLT techniques listed below might be practiced, which are based on CLT characters and recognition: (1) there is one brief dialogue or multiple mini-dialogues; (2) Every utterance is practiced verbally; (3) the questions and answers concentrate on the dialogue or subject; (4) the questions and answers ask about the students' personal experiences related to the dialogue or issue; (5) A fundamental communicative expression or structure from the discourse is examined, serving as an example of its function and assisting students in learning about and making generalizations about it; activities for oral recognition and production (6); dialogue or mini-dialogue copying (7); written assignment sampling (8); oral assessment of learning (9);

The three teaching methods above are the theoretical framework for analyzing observation data. The researcher conducted the observation at Beetle Bug Bilingual Kindergarten. This school is located at Jalan Taman Udan Riris III, in the Tlogosari Residence of Semarang City. Beetle Bug is naturally a bilingual school, where Bahasa Indonesia and English are used as daily language in the school environment, both inside and outside the classroom. Hence, the researcher chose this school as an observation object to discover the method used inside the school when the teacher delivers English material to students.

The most important factors when teaching English to young learners, particularly those between the ages of four and five, are the proper teaching methodology, classroom management techniques, and the content of the lessons, which must complement the methods and techniques. This paper addresses two primary questions from the observation: "What is the English teaching methodology at Beetle Bug Bilingual Kindergarten Semarang?" and "What are the good aspects and areas the teacher needs to improve?"

2. METHODS

This qualitative research focuses on the classroom teaching strategies and challenges for young learners. This study observed how young learners study English, particularly on the aspects of teaching methods that teachers applied to create an EFL learning environment. A one-day observation study is utilized to examine and explore teachers' teaching strategies to support this research. The researcher was allowed to observe only one class daily as the data source for analysis. The researcher observed techniques and challenges in a TK B class with seven children actively interacting with one teacher. The participant is a homeroom teacher at Beetle Bug Bilingual Kindergarten in Semarang, Indonesia, a city in the Central Java province. She also teaches English. The three attributes of the three types of teaching methods, put into a table, serve as the research instrument for this study. The theoretical framework outlined in the previous section serves as the foundation for discussing and explaining the data findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

The Beetle Bug Bilingual Kindergarten served as the location of the observation method for this investigation. The researcher received authorization from the school to conduct observations on a single day, Wednesday, October 16, 2019, from 10.30 to 11.30. Level B lessons with seven students and one teacher are permitted to be watched. Miss Uti is the class instructor's name. During the observation, Miss Uti's theme or topic was Healthy Food and Unhealthy Food. The following table contains the researcher's report based on the observation results.

Table 1.
Identity of Observation

Date of observation	Wednesday, October 16 th , 2019
Time of observation	10.30 am – 11.30 am
Class level	TK B includes seven students (girls)
Teacher name	Miss Uti

Table 2.
Recorded Learning Activities

1	Teacher	Greeted and sang the opening song
2	Students	Responded and followed the teacher to sing the opening song
3	Teacher	Explained today's topic about healthy food and unhealthy food Showed pictures of some kinds of healthy food and unhealthy food Asked students to mention the names of images on the paper shown (only some pictures, not all of them)
4	Students	Mentioned each name of food shown by their teacher
5	Teacher	Asked students to see how to cut the pictures one by one with scissors Instructed students to take their scissors Distributed the paper to each student and also the plastic plate to put the pictures which have been cut
6	Students	Took the scissors, sat on their chair, and then started to cut each picture
7	Teacher	Warned students to be careful when cutting pictures Instructed students to put the images that have been cut on the plastic plate
8	Students	Carefully cut the pictures one by one, assisted by the teacher
9	Teacher	(after all students have finished the cutting process) Instructing students to sit down and make a circle in front of the teacher Asked students to listen carefully to the names of the healthy food and unhealthy foods mentioned by the teacher Instructed students to similarly repeat the name of the food that has been mentioned one by one by the teacher
10	Students	Sat down and repeated the name of each healthy food and unhealthy food loudly
11	Teacher	Showed an HVS paper with two columns written there, consisting of healthy food and unhealthy food. Showed students how to stamp pieces of pictures one by one on the HVS paper in the right column Asked students to do the same thing while delivering the blank papers

		Instructed students to take their glue and sit back on their chair
12	Students	Took their glue and sat back on their chair Stamped pieces of pictures from their plastic plate onto the blank HVS paper
13	Teacher	Assisted students one by one to stamp pictures in the right column Asked students to collect the finished work paper
14	Students	Smoothly stamped all pieces of pictures one by one (done around 10 minutes)
15	Teacher	Assisted students one by one to stamp pictures in the right column Asked students to collect the finished work paper
16	Students	Submitted finished paper and replaced all of the tools in the right place
17	Teachers	Allowed students to drink and play around outside the classroom for around 5 minutes
18	Students	Finished all work and tidied up their stationery Went out of the classroom around 5 minutes
19	Teacher	(After 5 minutes) Called student's names one by one to go back to the classroom
20	Students	Went back to the classroom and sat down (made a circle) in front of the teacher
21	Teacher	Warmed up to conditioning students for closing Reviewed all of the lessons and asked students to mention together the names of healthy food and unhealthy food
22	Students	Mentioned some names of healthy food and unhealthy food stamped on the paper
23	Teacher	Suggested that students not to eat unhealthy food and to eat more healthy food Emphasizing the advantages of healthy food and the risks of unhealthy food
24	Students	Paid attention to the teacher
25	Teacher	Closed the activity
26	Students	Sang the closing song and prayed together
27	Teacher	Said Goodbye
28	Students	Shake hands to the teacher and walked out orderly

3.2. Discussion

Based on the above table, the researcher found some activities suitable for Situational and Communicative Language Teaching. Listening practice and imitation in activities 6, 9, and 10 are categorized as Situational Language Teaching. The teacher also applied oral examples, oral practice, and oral repetitions as the primary characteristics of the CLT, as discussed by Richards and Rodgers (2001) in their book *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Repetition is a kind of various drills in the SLT method. Repetition is when students repeat an utterance aloud as soon as they hear it (p. 60). This is proved in the activity three (3) and four (4), nine (9) and ten (10), 21 and 22. All of them are oral repetitions because the teacher asked students to repeat the name of each picture.

The most acceptable reason the teacher used the combination of CLT and SLT methods was that the English feature learned at that time was vocabulary. The teacher wanted the students to master the language of healthy food and unhealthy food. Vocabulary mastery by children aged 4-5 can only be learned through repetition of utterances to make them remember or memorize the names of foods.

Table 3.

Data Analysis

List of Teaching Approach Characteristics	Check List
Situational Language Teaching	
Listening practice	
Choral Imitation	√
Individual imitation	√
Separation	√
Setting up a new model	
Reactivation	
Substitution drilling	
Q&A drilling	√
Correction	

List of Teaching Approach Characteristics	Check List
Communicative Language Teaching	
Short dialogue	√
Orally practiced utterance	√
Q&A based on topic or dialogue	√
Q&A about students' experience	
Oral recognition and production dialogue or mini-logo copying	√
assignment sampling	√
oral assessment of learning	
Audio Lingual Method	
Dialogue Memorization	
Backward Build-up (Expansion Drill)	
Repetition Drill	√
Chain Drill	
Single-slot Substitution Drill	
Multiple-slot Substitution drill	
Transformation Drill	
Question and Answer Drill.	
Use Minimal Pairs	
Complete the Dialogue	
Grammar Games	

The teacher opened and closed the learning activities by using interesting songs for class conditioning and to attract students' attention. There was no written assignment or drilling because they couldn't write and read yet. Language skills they can master that are suitable for their age development are speaking and listening, and the teacher focuses on those skills. There are some activities (21, 3, 9, 10) in which teachers ask students to listen carefully to some pictures' names and then ask the students to repeat the words similar to what the teacher said. The instructions were delivered in English, and the students could understand them since they could do what their teacher asked. The researcher did not find any troubles disrupting the class activity flow.

Furthermore, the teacher combined the SLT method with the CLT by using creative activities as affirmation. Activities like cutting and stamping the colored pictures effectively attract students' attention and encourage them to be favorably engaged in the learning process. The students were cheerfully active from the beginning until the end of the lesson. By combining SLT and creative activities, the teacher successfully handled students in the classroom; in the review session, most of them remembered the names of healthy foods and unhealthy foods, and they could categorize the foods, whether as healthy or unhealthy. By the end of the lesson, the still enthusiastic students came into view. They were very excited when the teacher asked them to mention the names of each food.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The teacher of Beetle Bug Bilingual Kindergarten level B successfully engaged with students when she taught about healthy and unhealthy food on Wednesday, 16th October 2019. She combined the Situational Language Teaching Method and Communicative Language Teaching. She applied creative activities to attract students' attention during the learning process since the students couldn't write the alphabet yet. Because there was no disruption or crying during the teaching process, the students demonstrated excellent conditioning. They all did great work following the teacher's instructions and finishing the learning process without serious issues or cranky kids.

The researcher suggests that the teacher improve her ability to pronounce words in English. For the institution, the researcher recommends an English training program for the teachers to enhance their four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). The institution might work with the English

department of Unnes or other English Education institutions to conduct the training. The most reasonable premise of educating a teacher is that a great teacher will set forth great students.

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