

PROJECT APPROACH; A WAY HOW TO TRIGGER CHILDREN EXPOSE AND EXPLORE THEIR SKILLS IN LEARNING A LANGUAGE

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Abstract: *Teaching English for young learners always gets more attention. It is because young learners are very unique. They have many characters which can change rapidly in one time. Sometimes, they display an enthusiasm for learning and a curiosity about the world around them. They also have a need for individual attention and approval from the teacher. They are keen to talk about themselves, and respond well to learning that uses themselves and their own lives as main topics in the classroom. However, they also have a limited attention span. They can easily get bored, losing interest after ten minutes if the activities are not extremely engaging. For overcoming this situation, teachers need to choose an approach that can invite the students to be more active. One of the suitable approaches is project approach (hereafter PA). Katz & Chard (1989) define that a project is an extended study of a topic usually undertaken by a group of children, sometimes by a whole class, and occasionally by an individual child. Applying PA in teaching learning process can be used to maximize the skills in Bloom Taxonomy.*

Key words: Pelajar Muda, Karakter, Perhatian, Pendekatan Proyek.

Abstrak: Mengajar Bahasa Inggris untuk pelajar muda selalu mendapat perhatian lebih. Itu karena pelajar muda sangat unik. Mereka memiliki banyak karakter yang dapat berubah dengan cepat dalam satu waktu. Kadang-kadang, mereka menampilkan antusiasme untuk belajar dan rasa ingin tahu tentang dunia di sekitar mereka. Mereka juga memiliki kebutuhan untuk perhatian dan persetujuan individu dari guru. Mereka ingin berbicara tentang diri mereka sendiri, dan merespon dengan baik terhadap pembelajaran yang menggunakan diri mereka dan kehidupan mereka sendiri sebagai topik utama di kelas. Namun, mereka juga memiliki rentang perhatian yang terbatas. Mereka bisa dengan mudah bosan, kehilangan minat setelah sepuluh menit jika kegiatannya tidak terlalu menarik. Untuk mengatasi situasi ini, guru perlu memilih pendekatan yang dapat mengundang siswa untuk lebih aktif. Salah satu pendekatan yang cocok adalah pendekatan proyek (selanjutnya disebut PA). Katz & Chard (1989) mendefinisikan bahwa sebuah proyek adalah studi yang diperluas dari suatu topik yang biasanya dilakukan oleh sekelompok anak-anak, kadang-kadang oleh seluruh kelas, dan kadang-kadang oleh

seorang anak. Penerapan PA dalam proses belajar mengajar dapat digunakan untuk memaksimalkan keterampilan dalam Taksonomi Bloom.

Kata kunci: *Young learners, characters, attention, project approach*

A. INTRODUCTION

In many societies, teaching children is seen as an extension of mothering rather than as an intellectual enterprise. Teachers at primary level are then often given less training, low status, and lower pay, than their colleagues in the same educational system who teach teenagers or adult. So far, some people think that teaching children is uninteresting activity because of some obstacle which may be faced. Therefore, teaching English for children must be fun and enjoyable. It is because children have very unique characteristics. Their characteristics can change rapidly in one time. Sometimes, they display an enthusiasm for learning and a curiosity about the world around them. They also have a need for individual attention and approval from the teacher. They are keen to talk about themselves, and respond well to learning that uses themselves and their own lives as main topics in the classroom. However, children can easily get bored, losing interest after ten minutes if the activities are not extremely engaging. As a result, there are some teachers who get difficulties in handling them as students. Some teachers said that it is quite difficult when they have to deliver a certain material.

Thus, teachers should design a teaching learning process which offers series of activities involved both mental and physic. Shin (2011) said that children are active learners and thinkers. Children construct knowledge from actively interacting with the physical environment in developmental stages. Bloom Taxonomy which has 6 components (Knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) is considered to have important role in bridging children to reach some skills. Thus, to visualize the implementation of Bloom Taxonomy, this paper will apply Project Approach. Project approach (hereafter PA). Katz & Chard (1989) define that a project is an extended study of a topic usually undertaken by a group of children, sometimes by a whole class, and occasionally by an individual child. They give further definition that the study is an investigation into various aspects of a topic that is of interest to the participating children and judged worthy of their attention by their teachers. This statement has relationship with the characteristic of children

mentioned previously. It can be assumed that for making students both understand and acquire new knowledge, they need to understand, experience, and apply the knowledge in real activities. It is intended to keep the knowledge in long term.

The aim of this paper is to give information how to treat children in learning through Project Approach. It is intended to help young learners learn English enthusiastically because through this Project Approach learners will get knowledge and skills, upgrade social competence, and develop learners' character and feeling and to support learners and teacher in learning English in several different ways.

Considering the fact above, this paper will discuss the following items: a) Who Children Are, b) The Characteristics of Children, c) How They Learn English as a Foreign Language, d) The Way of Teaching Children, e) Project Approach

B. WHO CHILDREN ARE

Scott and Ytreberg (1994) divided the children into two main groups: the five to seven years olds (level one) and the eight to ten years old (level two). They give more explanation about level one students. The students in this level can talk about what they are doing. They also can tell you about what they have done or heard. Thus, the activities done in teaching learning process should involve both mental and physic aspects. It is because their own understanding comes through hands and eyes and ears. The intension of these activities is to engage students' attention which later can be kept in their memory in quite long time. On the other hand, eight to ten years old students have different characteristics. Level two students are able to work with other and learn from others. They also rely on spoken world as well as the physical world to convey understandable meaning.

C. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN

Many children, perhaps the majority of children in the world, are exposed to more than one language in early childhood. Children who hear more than one language virtually from birth are sometimes referred to as 'simultaneous bilingual', where those who begin to learn a second language later are referred to as 'sequential bilingual'. There is a considerable body of research on the ability of young children to learn more than one language in their earliest years. In this essay, the term "young

learners” means students from the first grade of elementary school (six or seven years old) to the sixth grade of elementary school (eleven or twelve years old). Teaching English at this level needs a lot of attention and efforts as the years at primary school are extremely important in young learners’ intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development (Phillips, 1995, p. 5-6). Intellectually, young learners go through a series of stages, progressively acquiring skills that are thought necessary by the society they live in. While on the physical side, young learners need to develop balance, spatial awareness, and fine control of certain muscle in order to play sport and perform everyday action. Emotionally and socially, these young learners need to develop a series of characteristics to enable them to fit into the society they live in. According to Williams (1994, p. 208) quoted by Setiawati, L. (2002, p.115) there are seven principles that should be considered in carrying out teaching-learning activities. They are interest, challenge, purpose, language use, language input, conceptual appropriateness, and promotion of learning.

Young children, especially those up to the ages of nine or ten, learn differently from older children, adolescents, and adults in the following ways:

- They respond to meaning even if they do not understand individual words.
 - They often learn indirectly rather than directly – that is they take in information from all sides, learning from everything around them rather than only focusing on the precise topic they are being taught.
 - Their understanding comes not just from explanation, but also from what they see and hear and, crucially, have a chance to touch and interact with.
 - They generally display an enthusiasm for learning and a curiosity about the world around them.
 - They have a need for individual attention and approval from the teacher.
 - They are keen to talk about themselves, and respond well to learning that uses themselves and their own lives as main topics in the classroom.
 - They have a limited attention span; unless activities are extremely engaging they can easily get bored, losing interest after ten minutes or so.
- (Harmer, 2001, p. 38)

In the light of these characteristics, it can be concluded that good teachers at this level need to provide a rich diet of learning experiences which encourages their students to get information from a variety of sources. They need to work with their students individually and in groups developing good relationship. They need to plan a range of activities for a given time period, and be flexible enough to move on to next exercise when they see their students getting bored.

D. HOW THEY LEARN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Children learn language through play and purposeful activity, naturally and in an environment that invites risk taking, poses no anxiety, and applauds all effort. And such learning is best served by teachers who always facilitate, guide, and model this process, while being expansive in their gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice. With the focus always on what a child is trying to do, practice activities should be related to his/her actual language needs. It is in the line with Piaget (1970) cited in Shin (2011) that children are active learners and thinkers. Children construct knowledge from actively interacting with the physical environment in developmental stages.

They learn through their own individual actions and exploration. This is backed up by Vygotsky (1962) in Shin (2011) that children learn through social interaction. Children construct knowledge through other people, through interaction with adults. Adults/teachers work actively with children in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Those theories are also supported by Cameron (2001). It is stated that the adult's role is very important in a child's learning process. Like Vygotsky, Bruner focused on the importance of language in a child's cognitive development. He shows how the adult uses "scaffolding" to guide a child's language learning through finely-tuned talk.

According to Phillips (1995, p.7) the young learners learn a foreign language, and therefore the way to teach it, obviously depends on their development stages. By following the students' developmental stages, teachers will get a great advantage as to prepare appropriate activities for the appropriate level of young learners.

The following figure shows the developmental characteristics of young

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learners (ages 5 – 10) according to Rhodes, Curtain, and Has as quoted by Shrum (1994, p.113).

Age	Physical	Cognitive	Social
5/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large and small motor skills developing. • Very active • Short attention span. • Fatigue easily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need concrete objects as base for experience • Still learning bulk of the language. • Limited by “Centration” • Can classify along one dimension • Think in terms of associating words with meanings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • egocentric • uninhibited • friendly • need structure • need praise • see self as physical traits • interact with peers more as friends • enjoy fantasy play
7/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refining large and small motor skills • longer attention span • on task longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater ability to reason • interest in how and why relationships • reading and writing • language may be ahead of concepts • can construct a series (small to big) • can classify hierarchically • still need concrete experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more separate sense of self • more reflective • go by rules • stronger friendships
9/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • skill well developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading and writing well established • can classify along more than one dimension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased autonomy • sensitive to differences • friendships are

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can think logically • can “conserve” • analyze work critically • still need concrete experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> important and peer-oriented (same sex) • judgmental
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Besides young learners’ developmental stages, there are some common characteristics of them that should be taken care of in planning and designing the teaching program. According to Scott (1994, p. 2-3), the characteristics that may be shared by all young learners are that:

1. They use language skills before they are aware of them. Therefore, acquisition of languages is possible without self-consciousness at an early age (Brumfit, 1994, p. vii).
2. They consider physical worlds as dominant at all times. Therefore, the teaching learning activities should be referred most to the physical movements and activities such as the presentation of real objects, pictures, actions, gesture, and all facial expressions. As a result, young learners’ language learning is more closely integrated with real communication because it depends more on the immediate physical environment (Brumfit, 1994, p. vii).
3. They have a very short attention and concentration span. Scott (1994, p. 5) insists that variety in the classroom is a must – variety of activity, variety of pace, variety of organization and variety of voice.
4. They love to play, and learn best when they are enjoying themselves. As a result, selecting an interesting activity is an important thing to do (Ur, 1996, p. 288).
5. They are enthusiastic and positive about learning. Because of this, young learners are better motivated than adults (Brumfit, 1994, p. vii)

Another point should get attention from teacher related to teaching for young learner is Multiple Intelligences (MI). Sólmundardóttir (2008) stated that it is very important for students’ self-esteem that they find their strengths and that they know how to use them. It can be interpreted that by recognizing and using the strengths in appropriate way, students can build and upgrade their self confidence. She gives more statements that it is therefore important for teachers to know how to work with

the different intelligences and be able to use various teaching methods. The activities have to be appealing and suitable for the students and it is good to work with different intelligences together in order to get the students to develop the intelligences that they are weaker in. Understanding the numerous ways that children acquire knowledge enables teachers to use a variety of strategies to reach children with different types of intelligence. To know further dealing with MI, it can be seen in the following table:

Multiple Intelligences and Their Applications to the Language Classroom

Intelligence	Excels at	Language Application
Linguistic	Reading, writing, telling stories, playing word games, etc.	Almost everything we do in class!
Logical-Mathematical	Experimenting, questioning, figuring out logical puzzles, calculating, etc.	
Spatial	Designing, drawing, visualizing, doodling, etc.	Illustrating a Gouin series; creating a picture of an object by writing the word for the object over and over
Bodily-Kinesthetic	Dancing, running, jumping, activities adding motions to songs and chants	Total Physical Response (TPR), building, touching, gesturing, etc.
Musical	Singing, whistling, humming, creating melodies for favorite rhymes	Using songs and rhythmic chants, tapping feet and hands, listening, etc.
Interpersonal	Leading, organizing, relating, manipulating, mediating, partying, etc.	Small group and partner work
Intrapersonal	Setting goals, meditating, dreaming, planning, being quiet	Journaling, portfolio building
Naturalist	Understanding, categorizing, explaining things in the world of nature	Photography, field trips, classifying

Sources: Adapted from Gardner (1983, 1993, 1999) and Armstrong (1993, 1994).

It is expected by having known students' characteristics and the way they learn, a teacher can easily prepare, design, and choose appropriate materials. Thus,

the teacher will treat students in an appropriate way because every single steps of teaching has been well planned and designed.

E. THE WAY OF TEACHING CHILDREN

Referring to the characteristics of children, teacher needs to pay attention in teaching them. Shin (2007) proposed ten helpful ideas for teaching English to young learners. 1) Supplement activities with visuals, realia, and movement. Young learners tend to have short attention spans and a lot of physical energy. In addition, children are very much linked to their surroundings and are more interested in the physical and the tangible. As Scott and Ytreberg (1990) in Shin (2007) describes, “Their own understanding comes through hands and eyes and ears. The physical world is dominant at all times.” This can be done by using brightly colored visuals, toys, puppets or objects, creating a visuals and realia bank, and using Total Physical Response (TPR). 2) Involve students in making visuals and realia. Having children involved in creating the visuals that are related to the lesson helps engage students in the learning process by introducing them to the context as well as to relevant vocabulary items. Students are more likely to feel interested and invested in the lesson and will probably take better care of the materials. In order to involve students in teaching learning process, teacher can guide and order students to draw different characters for a story or to make puppets, masks, play-do sculptures. It also can be done by collaborating with the art teacher to make the visuals for supporting the activities. 3) Move from activity to activity. Young learners have short attention spans. For ages 5–7, keep activities around 5 and 10 minutes long. For ages 8–10, keep activities 10 to 15 minutes long. Thus, it is recommended for teacher to combine some activities in order to create an interesting teaching. For example: by applying quiet/noisy exercises, individual/ pair work/ group work/ whole class activities, or teacher-pupil/ pupil-pupil activities. 4) Teach in themes. A thematic unit, a series of lessons on the same topic or subject, can create broader contexts in which to teach language, recycle language from lesson to lesson, and allow students to focus more on content and communication than on language structure. Those themes are transportation, family, environment, profession, etc. 5) Use stories and contexts familiar to students. Use of stories and contexts in home country or culture

can help YLs connect English with their background knowledge, which is limited because of their young age and inexperience. Stories and contexts are also very useful for students to engage the contents in order to be kept in long term. As a result, students, in another occasion, can recall the words and use them in real communication. 6) Establish classroom routines in English. YLs function well within a structured environment and enjoy repetition of certain routines and activities. Having basic routines in the classroom can help to manage young learners. It can be assumed that by providing classroom routines in English, it can be used to maintain the language got in the previous activities. Three of classroom routines include clapping short rhythms for students to repeat, starting the lesson with song or chant, and adding classroom language to the routines as well. 7) Use L1 as a resource when necessary. Teaching English for young learners in a country where English is not spoken needs a bilingual teacher. The teacher should have or possess L1 and L2. It means that if the students do not understand to a certain word, teacher can explain by switching or using L1. 8) Bring in helpers from the community. 9) Collaborate with other teachers in your school. This way is quite wise to make collaborative teaching. It is necessary for a teacher to share knowledge each other in order to get new experience in handling students. 10) Communicate with other TEYL professionals. Sometimes, a TEYL teacher gets deadlock in treating students. It is very understandable because students have many characteristics. However, it is not wise if the teacher complains toward the students' behavior. To overcome this condition, the teacher should consult and communicate with TEYL professionals. It is intended to minimize problem in teaching learning process.

To explore and expose the characteristics possessed by children, it is better to introduce Project Approach for children. This approach can be used to trigger children more challenging both mentally and physically.

F. PROJECT APPROACH

1. Definition of Project Approach

Chard explains that projects are defined as open ended studies of everyday topics which are worthy of being included in an educational program. Projects emerge from the questions children raise and develop according to their particular

interests. He gives further explanation that rather than offering immediate answers to the questions children ask, teachers provide experiences through which children can discover the answers themselves through inquiry at field sites and interviewing experts. These statements can be interpreted that teaching learning is done based on the experiences which are applied. Study through this way is done in order to get deeper understanding to a certain topic conducted by children and teachers. In this process, children may some questions based on the activities they do. Related to the students' questions, teachers do not answer immediately, but they will give chances to experience some events. Through these events, the students will get the answers.

2. The Structure of the Project Approach

In implementing this project, there are some phases which should be applied. Chard (2013) divides the process of Project Approach into three steps. Phase 1, the teacher builds interest in the topic through encouraging the children to share relevant personal stories of experience. As the children represent their current understanding of the topic; the river, cars, or dogs, for example, the teacher assesses the children's vocabulary, their individual interests, misconceptions or gaps in current knowledge, and helps them formulate questions which they can investigate. As the inquiry begins in earnest, Phase 2, teachers enable the children go on field visits, interview adults who are experts, such as waiters, farmers, or nurses, for example, according to the topic of study. Children also look at books, internet sites, videos, and so on. As they learn more about the topic they use many forms of representation to illustrate what they have learned and to share new knowledge with their classmates. In Phase 3, the teacher guides the conclusion of the study and helps the children review their achievements. The children share their work with parents, another class, or members of the local community who have helped them in the process of the investigation. This final phase of the work includes the assessment by teachers of what the children have learned through the project.

3. The Advantage and Disadvantages of Project Approach

There are some advantages can be gained from this project. First, PA can increase reading, language, and mathematics skills. Second, PA can promote positive social and emotional development. Third, PA can increase child's interest in school

work. The last, PA can increase parental interest in child's education. Other advantages that can be gained are proposed by Illinois Learning Center (2013). This institution said that PA can affect some points. PA can motivate children to want to learn by incorporating rich and meaningful tasks. PA challenges children to identify and solve problems. PA can also produce positive social and emotional development. The last one is something which is quite important in the process of children's learning. It can encourage parental involvement. On the other hand, there are also some disadvantages of PA. Applying of PA is time consuming and expensive. It is because when Applying PA, teachers should have good preparation included the expert who will be involved, tools, and some others. Sometimes, PA does not always meet the content and curriculum standards as set by the center or the state.

4. How to Start Applying Project Approach

Getting explained in the previous part, it seems interesting to Apply PA in the real teaching learning process. It is because the students can learn from what they ask as their curiosity. In the process of Applying PA, there are three main phases which each step consists of some points.

Phase 1 is getting started. In this phase, there are four steps which should be done by both teacher and students. First, children choose what to investigate, with some guidance from the teacher. Second, the children discuss what they already know about the topic. The teacher helps children record their ideas. Third, with help from the teacher, the children list questions that they want to answer during their study. The last, children talk about what answers they might find to their questions. The teacher lists their predictions.

Phase 2 is collecting the information of the topic. The steps of this phase can be seen in the following items. First, the teacher helps the children plan trips to places where they can do fieldwork and helps them find people to interview who can answer their questions. Second, with adult help, the children use books and computers to find information. Third, during class meetings, children report what they find in their fieldwork. The teacher encourages them to ask questions and make comments about each other's findings. Fourth, the children might make drawings, take pictures, write words and labels, create graphs of things they measured and

counted, and construct models. As they learn more, they can revise what they have made. In doing this phase, there is a tight relationship between teacher and children. It aims to get information of the topic accurately. Thus, children can carry out this phase well.

Phase 3 is concluding the result. This is the last step in carrying out the PA. It has four steps in getting the result. First, children discuss the evidence they have found that helps them answer their questions. The teacher helps them compare what they have learned with what they knew before the project began. Second, children decide how to show what they did and what they found out to parents and peers who were not there. Third, children create displays to share the story of the project with others. Displays might include their drawings, notes, stories, taped conversations, photographs, models, graphs, and videotapes. Children can also act out what they have learned. The last, children might invite parents and other guests to a presentation about their project. The teacher can help the young investigators decide how to tell the story of what they did and what they found out.

F. CONCLUSION

After getting information about children and their style in learning, it is a good time for teachers to involve some other methods or approaches to give a good chance for children in maximizing their learning. Bloom Taxonomy and Project Approach are good couples in triggering students' potential. Through Project Approach, children can learn how to evaluate, synthesize, analyze, apply, comprehend, and get knowledge the process of learning.

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