

TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS: A CASE STUDY AT NURUL QURAN ISLAMIC SCHOOL ACEH BESAR

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to see how English language teaching-learning for young learners was done at Nurul Quran Character Based Islamic School in Aceh Besar. This was a qualitative study in which all data were described in a systematic way based on the research questions. Observation sheets, an interview guide, other documentation, field notes and recordings were used as instruments for this study. The data was analyzed by classification, reduction, display and drawing of conclusions. The subject of this study was an English teacher at Nurul Quran Character Based Islamic School. The findings showed that the teacher made preparations including designing the syllabus and lesson plan and preparing and providing the teaching materials. The activities presented in the classroom were based on what was stated in the lesson plan. The activities were procedural and at the students' level. The teacher had several problems in conducting the teaching such as problems with the curriculum, syllabus design and lesson plans. Then she had problems with students with special needs and with noisy classes, student discipline, catching students' attention and even problems with the size of the class and the size of the classroom. However, the teacher was capable of solving all these problems so that the teaching-learning could run well.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, Young Learners, Case Study.

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INTRODUCTION

The new 2013 Indonesian curriculum has limited the practice of English teaching especially at elementary level. English is considered to be less-important for elementary level and the existence of English as a main subject matter at elementary school is no longer stated in the curriculum. Even, the curriculum does not state clearly the position of English teaching at elementary school as a local content subject. However, the *Nurul Quran* Character Based Islamic School still keeps the policy that English is taught as one of the main subjects starting from the first grade.

The headmaster of *Nurul Quran* Character Based Islamic School argues that there is a positive impact to the teaching of English at elementary level. He mentioned some reasons why the school continues teaching English to primary students. First, English is considered important at elementary school in order to make young learners familiar with English is a global language. Second, the school management wants to develop the school as a bilingual school that teaches English as well as Arabic. Lastly, one of the school visions is to create excellent alumni who will be very competent in languages, especially in English and Arabic. These aims of the school management are strongly supported by the parents who enroll their children at this school.

There is a unique phenomenon at SDIK Nurul Quran that the researcher considered worthy of study. The phenomenon is that English teaching has been given special attention compared with some other elementary schools. First, English is taught from the first to the sixth year at SDIK Nurul Quran while other primary schools have limited the years or even stopped the teaching of English due to the changes in curriculum in 2013. Then, English has been made one of the favorite subjects through fun learning. To encourage the motivation of students, the school has got actively involved in the National Olympiad since it was first established up until today. Lastly, the school has a target for each student to master 200 words of English at each level so that at the end of the school program each student should have mastered 1200 words of English vocabulary.

Because of the above, the researcher wanted to study how English was taught to these young learners, what were the teacher's preparations for teaching English, and what problems did the teachers face at SDIK Nurul Quran elementary school. This study was conducted to answer three basic research questions: (1) How was English taught at *Nurul*

Quran Character Based Islamic School? (2) What preparation did the teacher do before teaching English to the young learners?, and (3) What problems does the teacher have in teaching English to the young students at *Nurul Quran* Character Based Islamic School?.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Young Language Learners

Young learners are children in primary or elementary school. There are various definitions of the age of young learners. McKay (2005) has defined young language learners as those who are learning a foreign or second language in their first six or seven years of formal schooling. In most countries, young learners are children in primary or elementary school between five and eleven years of age. Many young language learners are called bilingual learners since they are learning two or more languages. They might also be called foreign language learners in the case where they are learning a language that is seldom heard outside the classroom. Other young learners may be called second language learners. Second language learners usually come from a group with a minority language where most of their peers have spoken the language since their birth, or they need to learn the second language because that language serves as the formal national language. For example, Indonesian children who speak their mother tongues such as Javanese, Acehnese, and Bataknese learn Bahasa Indonesia as a second language and speak it at school.

Second or Foreign Language Learning at a Young age

It is believed that language is best learnt during the early ages of childhood namely before the age of twelve, and that after the age of twelve, most people face certain constraints in their ability to pick up a new language. Scovel (1988) as cited in Ellis and Brewster (2002) stated that after puberty, the language learners seem incapable of acquiring a native-like accent. Furthermore, Brumfit, Moon, and Tongue (1991) have said that children learn better without having worries and responsibilities like adults as they get support from parents, friends, and teachers in learning. They have higher motivation and personal need to learn the L2 when they are surrounded by people who speak the language. Also, Brumfit et al. (1991) gave some reasons for young children's better ability at language learning. First, young children have a more adaptable brain before puberty and are less self-consciousness

which allows them to learn languages better. Second, young children are better motivated since they have fewer negative attitudes to foreign languages and cultures than adults. In addition, children's language learning is more closely integrated with real communication since during their learning they can learn and respond physically which adult learning does not do. Finally, children can learn languages better as they can spend more time doing it compared with adults, and consequently they can practice the language more.

Effect of Aging

Under normal circumstances, a child is introduced to language virtually at the moment of birth. Adults talk to him and to each other in his presence. Children do not require explicit language instruction but they do need exposure to language in order to develop normally. Children who do not receive linguistic input during their formative years do not achieve native-like grammatical competence. Behavioral tests and brain imaging studies have shown that late exposure to language alters the fundamental organization of the brain for language.

The critical Age Hypothesis is part of the biological basis of language and states that the ability to learn a native language develops within a fixed period, from birth to puberty. During this critical period, language acquisition proceeds easily, swiftly, and without external intervention. After this period, the acquisition of grammar is difficult and for some individuals never fully achieved. Children deprived of language during this critical period show atypical patterns of brain lateralization (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2003).

Penfield and Roberts (1959) and Lenneberg's (1967) theories agree that children have a neurological advantage in learning languages, and that puberty correlates with a turning point in that ability. They assert that language acquisition occurs primarily during childhood as the brain loses plasticity after that age. It then becomes more rigid and fixed, and loses much of the ability for re-adaptation and re-organization, rendering language learning more difficult. Penfield and Roberts (1959) claim that children under nine can learn up to three languages: early exposure to different languages activates a reflex in the brain allowing them to switch between languages without confusion or translation into L1. Lenneberg (1967) asserts that if no language is learned by puberty, it cannot be learned in a normal functional sense. He also supports Penfield and Roberts' (1959) proposal of neurological mechanisms responsible for maturational change in language learning abilities. This, Lenneberg

maintains, coincides with brain lateralization and left-hemispherical specialization for language around age thirteen: before that infants' motor and linguistic skills develop simultaneously, but about age thirteen the cerebral hemispheres' functions separate and become set, making language acquisition more difficult (Lenneberg, 1967).

Helping Children Learn a Foreign Language

Children cannot concentrate on one thing for a long period so that lessons must be divided into several sessions that last no longer than 10 minutes. This, Holden (1980) as quoted in Brewster (1992) has explained, is because children are 'bombarded with new experiences and information'. Teachers are supposed to introduce the new language items at a level suitable for children and present and practice the language items in different ways. Wood (1988) as quoted in Brewster (ibid) has stated that younger children are more distractible than adults and consequently it is almost impossible to make the children stay quiet and calm. When teachers ask children to pay attention and concentrate on tasks, they find that those children are unlikely to comply with the command unless teachers create the materials to be learned and remembered in such a way that it makes sense to the children and so that it attracts their attention naturally to learn the element(s) that the teachers wish them to learn.

Cruickshank, Jenkins, and Metcalf (2013) have mentioned that there are several points of view about how children learn best. One is that kids learn best when teachers utilize what is known about learning- how new information is taken in, processed, stored, and retrieved. Teachers should understand the mental processes of learning and put to use what is known about such things as attention, memory, and the ways information can be made more understandable. The second explanation suggests that learning improves when the classroom is more humane and when the school is made to fit the child, treating them with respect, and providing for individual student needs. The third explanation contends that learning is best accomplished when teachers know how to alter the learning environment to encourage learning. Among other things, teachers should present what is to be learned in small chunks, help learners associate what is to be learned with what they already know, provide lots of practice, and rewards young learners when they do things correctly.

Problems Teachers Have in Teaching

It is undeniable that as human beings, teachers are challenged or encounter problems. Fortunately, most problems can be avoided and many can be resolved. The simplest definition of a problem is goal response interference. This happens when people need or want to achieve a goal and they cannot. Cruickshank, et al. (2013) have mentioned that based on studies of classroom-related problems that teachers face there are sixty common problems that fall into five large categories called “areas of concern”. They are affiliation, control, parental relationships and home condition, student success, and time, via:

- (1) *Affiliation*. Affiliation is defined as the teacher’s need to establish and maintain good relationships with others in the school. This includes relationships with students, fellow teachers, staff, and administrators. Affiliation problems also come from an inability to interact effectively.
- (2) *Control*, which are due the teachers’ need to have students behave well or appropriately. Sometimes, teachers might be mistaken when defining the term *appropriately*. They mean students should be reasonably quiet, orderly, courteous, and honest and they could show respect for others and for property.
- (3) *Parental Relationships and Home Conditions*. Teachers recognize the important role of parents and that the conditions in students’ homes impact school success. Many teachers who have participated in various surveys say that it is difficult to have good relationships with parents and to find out about and have a positive effect on home conditions.
- (4) *Student Success*. Student success is defined as the need teachers have to help learners achieve both academically and socially. Unfortunately, many teachers struggle with student success. Teacher – reported student success problems include those related to insufficient student interest, working with students who have special needs, and a teacher’s own instructional shortcomings.
- (5) *Time*. Lack of time represents a serious problem for teachers. According to surveys, teachers often do not have sufficient time to prepare for classes, complete the planned work, and diagnose and evaluate learning. Furthermore, constraints on time have increased because of large classes, the number of classes teachers are required to teach, increased emphasis on testing, and the assignment of non-instructional tasks such as bus, lunchroom, and playground monitoring. Finally, they tell that they don’t have enough time to do

personal tasks because of the amount of work they must take home. Lack of time then seems to be a major concern.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study is descriptive-qualitative. By conducting this qualitative research, the researcher has tried to present the existing natural setting of the teaching of English to young learners at *Nurul Quran* Character Based Islamic School. The researcher got directly involved and spent time making observations in the classroom. Besides observations, the researcher also collected data through interviews, taking field notes and making recordings. The data were collected in the form of words rather than in numbers. The researcher did not give any treatment to the subjects. This research was conducted in a natural setting and the researcher was only concerned with the existing social context i.e. how English is taught to young learners (YL) at *Nurul Quran* Character Based Islamic School. In conducting this qualitative research, the researcher has not just described the phenomena but also interpreted the conditions there.

This study was conducted at *Nurul Quran* Character Based Islamic School which was established in 2013 in Aceh Besar. At present, the school has 400 students with 27 teachers and 10 staff. The school has one principles room, two teacher rooms, one administration room, one science laboratory, one computer laboratory room, one library and 20 classrooms. The researcher observed just one teacher because there is only one English teacher at the school. The researcher selected one class from each grade.

The main sources of qualitative research are words and acts. The data collected in the course of this study was in the form of field notes, interview transcripts, official documents, pictures, and other materials. The main sources of data for this study were the English teacher, and the school principal. The data was collected through observations, interviews and documentation. Observations were conducted twice in each class, which meant 12 observations altogether. Interviews were conducted with both the teacher and the principal. Documents related to the teaching of English namely the curriculum, the syllabi and the lesson plans and lastly photographs were also collected.

The instruments used in this study were the observation sheets, the interview guide, the documentation, records and field notes. The observation sheet was designed to be used for collection of data from the

processes such as the teaching-learning activities, the uses of media, the teacher's performance, the class management, the teacher-student and student-student interactions, and the problems faced by the teacher.

The researcher made recordings during the interview sessions so that she could concentrate and better listen to the responses and could do so repeatedly; also interviews flow better when there are no distractions. Moreover, since the recordings could be replayed many times, it helped the researcher to better describe the results of the interviews.

Documentation is the process of getting a set of documents such as syllabi and lesson plans, textbooks, teaching materials, lists of students, students' worksheets, photographs, etc. Documentation helps both the researcher and readers to clearly see the phenomena existing.

After returning from each observation, interview, or other research session, the researcher described in writing what had happened. The researcher made a description of the people met, the objects, places, events, activities, and conversation held. These are field notes: the written account of what the researcher heard, saw, experienced, and thought in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data obtained for a qualitative study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

DATA ANALYSIS

The data in this study was qualitative. The data was obtained through classroom observations, interviews with the teacher and the school principal, documentation, recordings and taking of field notes. According to Moleong (2005), analysis of data depends on three processes that are related to each other; describing, clarifying, and connecting. Then, the data was analyzed through the process of data reduction which includes the process of reducing data, displaying data, and drawing conclusions. This is according to Miles and Huberman (1994) who have said that "data analysis is a procedure in which data collection, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions takes place interactively". Moreover, Bogdan and Biklen (1982) have suggested that data analysis is the process of systematically searching through and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other material in order to understand and present them to others.

The data analysis in this study used narrative-qualitative techniques and no statistical analysis was required. Qualitative data are described in a qualitative narrative and no statistical analysis was needed. The data analysis in a qualitative study can be done as the data is being collected,

little by little, slowly and steadily. So, the researcher does not need to wait until all the data is complete to start the analysis (Sukmadinata, 2007).

Thus, first, the data was collected through observations, interviews and documentation. At this stage the data was raw data such as field notes, interview transcripts and recordings, and documents such as syllabi, lesson plans, photographs, etc. Second, after all the data had been collected, it was then classified by making short notes and coding. Then, all the classified and coded data was presented descriptively so that conclusions from the whole data can be made easily. Finally, all the data was reviewed to ensure that the data reduction and data display were done in order to present a credible report. Last, the researcher drew conclusions and gave some comments together with suggestions.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Reviewing the Teacher's Preparation before Teaching English *Designing Syllabus and Lesson Plan*

The class observations and interviews with the teacher and the headmaster revealed that SDIK Nurul Quran combined two curricula in the teaching-learning process, namely the national curriculum (2013 curriculum and KTSP) and an Islamic character based curriculum. Especially for teaching English, the syllabus and lesson plan design as well as the teaching materials were based on both the KTSP and the Islamic character based curriculum. The lesson plans were designed for each class meeting for each semester and the complete syllabus and lesson plan were submitted to the headmaster in advance for approval.

Preparing Teaching Materials

The teacher adopted teaching materials from the KTSP curriculum. Teaching material sources were text books via: *Active English: A Fun and Easy English Book* for grades 1 to 3, and *Basic English Skills: English Activities for Elementary School* for grades 4 to 6. All the materials in these two books did not need any screening since they were all fitted to the students' needs and their culture, and the learning was fun and easy. These text books were provided by the school for all the students.

Preparing Teaching Media

The English teacher also provided other media such as scrabble, flash cards, and vocabulary cards. Additionally, the principal revealed that to support the teaching-learning of English, the school has provided media such as educative CDs, In-focus, and a sound system that can also be used for teaching-learning all other subjects.

How English Was Taught

Opening: Getting the class ready

At the beginning of the class session, the teacher greeted the students, asking how they felt that day and checked the attendance of the students. Then the teacher prepared the students to study: first she made the class quiet and had all the students sit in their correct order. When the class was noisy, the teacher made the class quiet by telling a short story that contained good advice, or singing *quiet claps* together, and sometime she lowered the volume of her voice. The teacher was once observed to start the class by body warm up exercises. This physical activity was also able to make the students quiet and to attract their attention. Teacher reviewed the last meeting lesson by checking their mastery of the vocabulary from the last meeting. She said “*Well students, last meeting we learned about the topic “my house”. Does anyone remember the meaning of knife? Teapot? Glass?*”, and the students were observed to respond enthusiastically.

While-Teaching Activities

After 10 minutes, the teacher then introduced the lesson of the day. The teacher began by writing the title on the middle of the board followed by the new vocabulary or sentences. When she had finishing writing on the board, she asked the students to copy her notes into their note books. The students then copied her notes and when each one had finished she rose up her hand up and brought her notes to the teacher, to be checked. Then, she further explained the lesson, giving the right pronunciation for each new word of vocabulary, and checked the students’ mastery of the new vocabulary. She used English several times when giving instructions as well as when explaining the lesson, but then she also restated what she had said in L1.

The teacher then asked her students to open their text books and to do exercises from a certain page. Students started working on their tasks and the teacher helped at the front. Teacher reminded her students to work carefully to avoid making mistakes. When each student had

finished, each one put up her hand up and brought her work to the teacher who then checked it and gave it a score. While checking each student's work, the teacher was observed to call students to the front if they had made any mistakes in their exercise books and to show them how to correct the mistake(s). After giving each book a score the teacher gave the books back to the students.

Teacher and Student Interactions

Teacher cooperatively interacted with students and students gave a good feedback as a response to their teacher. For instance, when she asked students questions about the lesson, the students responded enthusiastically, even though some were less interested. Teacher was interacting with individual student as he/she needed personal explanation and teacher did the same to groups of students as well. Students freely came to the front at teacher's desk as they needed any help, when they asked questions, or when they were collecting their work books. Teacher made a good eye contact and spoke clearly both when giving instruction and when explaining the lesson. Teacher also smiled, appreciated, gave praise, and sometime gave applause to students when they responded correctly or when they finished their work early. The teacher said: "Good job! Amazing! Very good!"

The classes are teacher-centered from grade 1 to 3 and student-centered from grade 4 to 6. In grade 1 to 3, all the activities depend on the teacher who is the focus of the class. She chose the topic and monitored and corrected the students' work; she answered all the questions from the students. Students worked alone and the classroom was supposed to be quiet. In these classes, there was only one way interaction; teacher-student or student-teacher interaction. While in grade 4 to 6, where the mastery of English was better, the focuses were both teacher and students. Students worked in pairs, groups or alone depending on the type of activity. Students answered each other's questions, using the teacher as a source of information. Students checked each other's work and the classroom was rather noisy but busy. These classes enabled two-way interactions; teacher-student, student-teacher and student-student interactions.

Teaching Methodology and Technique

The teacher said that the teaching methods that she often used were STAD, CTL, and Cooperative Learning. Most of the time, she encouraged students to work in groups or in pairs. Working in groups,

she said, enabled students to help each other. Moreover, students with low competency could benefit a lot from working with others.

The teacher also taught English through Simon Says. This way encourages student learning by using activities. For instance, when the teacher says “Simon says touch your eyes “, all the students have to respond by touching their eyes. This physical response will make their memorization stronger.

Repetitive drills or rehearsals are also used to help build students’ memorization of vocabulary. The teacher says the words out loud then the students must follow. For example, if the teacher says: “Follow after me! Pineapple! Jackfruit! Pear!” etc., then the students must follow and repeat those words out loud together. This helps the students to recognize the correct pronunciation and remember the words better.

Some games were played in the class such as Guessing, Puzzles, and Scrabble. Games like puzzles and scrabble were done in study books while guessing games were played orally with the teacher as a director. Thus the teacher said: “Who am I? I have a big body. I bring a lot of people too many places such as to school, to market, to the station, and many more places. I have many seats inside”. Then the students have to try to find the answer and the answer was a bus.

Closing

After marking the work done by the students, the teacher reviewed the lesson. She asked the students whether or not they understood the lesson and how well they had comprehended the lesson. Then the teacher told the students the topic for the lesson next week and asked them to have a look at it at home. Then the teacher asked the students to put their books into their bags, thanked them for the great work they had done that day, invited them to pray together before closing the class, and finally she closed the class by saying “*See you next week. Assalamu’alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh*”.

Reviewing Problems Faced by Teacher

Problem with Curriculum, Syllabus Design, and Lesson Plan

At Nurul Quran Character Based Islamic School, English syllabus and lesson plan were oriented on the combination of KTSP and Islamic character curriculum. The teacher admitted that this combination, gave her problems about how and where to put the character points in the lesson plans, as demanded by the Islamic character curriculum. This, she

said, was due to the absence of a standard form of lesson plan from the school.

Problem with Students with Special Needs

The researcher also found that the teacher had problems with two autistic students, one in class 1 and one in class 3. These two students had learning problems such as difficulty in concentrating on study and writing, difficulty to focus, to understand the lessons and to finish their tasks. They sometimes made noises by hitting their work table, crying out, screaming, and disturbing their school friends. The teachers tried to handle and help these students but it cost a lot of time and as a result the teachers could not focus on the other students. The other students were disturbed by this phenomenon.

Eventually the English teachers worked with the class teachers to seek a solution and it was decided that each of those students needed a partner teacher-student. The parents were then told that their children needed help from a partner teacher and it was their responsibility to find these partners. These partner teachers then sat beside each of these students, personally helping them to understand the lesson, and to do their work. Each of them accompanied their student from the beginning until the end of the school each day. It was observed that these partner teachers gave a great contribution to help the teacher handle these students and to keep these two students busy working on their tasks so that they did not make trouble anymore.

Problem with Noisy Classes and Student Discipline

In almost all the classes, the teachers had problems with noisy classes and lack of discipline. Especially in the beginner classes, the students chatted, walked around, played, sang, laughed, came to friends' seats and disturbed their friends. Realizing this, the teacher would get up and calm the class down. She would raise her voice and then lower her voice and then ask them to quiet down, to sit back in their seats, and to behave well. The researcher observed that the class started to get noisy when some of the students had finished their work early so that they became bored waiting for the teacher to check the work of their friends, and that some students were not doing their work at all. So, there was a mixture of diligent and of lazy students with nothing to do.

Once, one boy spat on the student sitting in front of him, then started hitting and kicking that student. Seeing this unbearable situation, the teacher shortly stopped the fight but the student did not stop. So the

teacher called the class teacher and sent the offending student out of the class. So this student continued learning English outside, the classroom accompanied by the class teacher.

In grades 4, 5 and 6, some students regularly wandered in and out of the class. This perhaps happened because their classes began after midday so that these students already felt tired and bored. To overcome this, the teacher usually used group activities. She put her students into small groups and each group was given a task to discuss a question. This made the students interested and challenged.

Problems with Catching the Attention of Students

The teacher also had problems with catching the attention of the students. While the teacher was explaining the lesson, some of the students did not pay attention. They chatted and laughed, spoke loudly, sat in the wrong order and even did not do their tasks. Knowing this, the teacher called them by their names asking them to stop chatting, to pay attention, to do their work, and/or to rearrange their seating in the correct order but they still did not obey her. The teacher then called them out again several times and they still did not obey. Then the teacher came to their seats and talked to them personally one on one, asking them not to make noise, to pay attention, to do their tasks and to re-arrange their seating. Then they obeyed the teacher for a while but when the teacher went back to the front and continued the lesson they started to chat and make loud talk again. Sometimes, the teacher even knocked loudly on the white-board several times to get the students' attention.

Problems with Classroom Physical Size

While observing the beginner classes, the teacher could not move around the class easily because the physical size of the classroom was too narrow so most of the time the teacher just stood in front of the class. Sometimes she moved around the classroom but she could not reach the students sitting at the very back of the class. However, she continued to pay attention to the whole class. The number of students in each class was 25 to 27 students. In grades 1 to 3, there were 8 to 12 students that were sitting on the floor with a long table in front of them that they had to share, while the other students were sitting on chairs with one table for each. However, the classrooms for grades 4 to 6 were bigger in size and the teacher could move around easily.

Discussion

The teachers had to prepare and design their syllabus and lesson plan, prepare the teaching materials and provide the teaching media. The school principal said that it was a must for all teachers to prepare their syllabus and lesson plan, but the teachers were given flexible time to submit them. Some principals also require teachers to periodically submit teaching plans one or two weeks in advance so that they can be assured that their teachers have thought carefully about what they will do and how they will do it. The principal of the *Nurul Quran* School also assisted his teachers to complete their syllabus and lesson plan designs. Good principals are good instructional leaders and try to help their teachers as much as possible. Additionally, teaching plan (books) is useful when supervisors come to observe.

The principal said that he scheduled supervision visits to observe his teachers. He entered the class to observe his teachers based on their schedules. In evaluating the teachers, he used an observation instrument that he had designed himself. After an observation session, the principal and the teacher would discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher's performance, without making any judgments. Through the observations and the instrument, he might rate the teachers as good, very good, or excellent. Excellent teacher was given rewards such as a model teacher certificate.

Preparation of teaching media is a part of teaching preparation, and so far, the teaching media provided by the English teacher at *Nurul Quran* School were fair and suitable for the students' needs. Sudjana and Rivai (1992) in Arsyad (2014) have said that good media for teaching can benefit teaching-learning processes a lot. The media can motivate the students as it attracts the interest and curiosity of the students. Also the media can make the teaching materials more explicit so that the students can comprehend the concepts more easily. Also with media, students are exposed to more activities such as looking at pictures and demonstrations etc., not just listening to the teacher. This helps dispel students' boredom and enables teachers to save their energy. Examples of teaching media are pictures, diagrams, charts, cassettes, computer files, in-focus, etc.

The researcher observed that most lessons for grades 1 to 3 were vocabulary based on certain topics such as *friendly animals, I love my bicycle, my house, my body*, etc., while in grades 4 up to 6, the teacher were observed to teach higher level lessons such as the use of *pronouns, to be, the present tense, the simple past tense*, etc. Tizard and Hughes

(1984) have said that the primary focus of these early lessons should be on communication and laying a solid foundation for further English coursework. Students should practice the different sounds of the English language and learn material such as the alphabet, numbers, colors, shapes, animals, and so on. Teachers should introduce vocabulary words gradually and may choose to study some simple structures that relate to everyday life.

Through the observation, it was found that the teacher never gave homework. This is in line with Fisher (1995) who has stated that there are many other things that a teacher can do to ensure that students succeed in class. There is no need to assign homework at this stage but be sure to track individual and class progress so that students can visually see what they have learned and how they are doing.

In pre-teaching activities the teacher reviewed what was learnt at the last meeting lesson before starting the new lesson. The teacher built up the students' memorization through repetition. Fisher (1995) has also said that it is important to constantly review and to avoid introducing too much new vocabulary at a time. Students may not remember material from one day to the next so repetition is important. The more students are exposed to certain material, the faster they will learn it. This is how native speakers learn English, by listening to people around them and expanding their range of vocabulary gradually.

Students looked excited when they were playing *Simon says*, *guessing games*, *puzzles* and *scrabble*. Those games provided motivation and devices to show the students that learning English is fun and interesting. Alexander (2004) has suggested that in order to encourage everyone to participate, it is important to make the lessons relaxed and fun. Young learners are generally very enthusiastic about songs, especially if they can sing along, and play active games.

It was observed that after finishing their task, some students looked bored waiting for the teacher to check their friends work books. They chatted, talked, played, and walked around. Some made drawings in their books. Since these students have short attention spans and are easily distracted, teachers need to keep exercises fun and short. Overacting and projection will help keep them focus on teachers. It is good to teach students how to behave in a classroom by asking them to be quiet while teachers are talking and raise their hands if they have questions or want to answer a question. This may not be directly related to English but it is important that students learn good behavior early on. Teachers should teach students to respond to basic classroom English phrases such as

“*Please sit down.*” because these are expressions that they will hear repeatedly throughout their study of English (Fisher, 1995).

Size affects the way teachers teach and the behavior of students. The teacher said that in a small class (20 students or fewer), they could spend more time on teaching and less time on maintaining discipline. Students in large classes were less likely to pay attention and more likely to engage in off-task behavior. Similarly, students in smaller classes in elementary grades were more engaged in learning and less disruptive, possibly because their teachers got to know them more intimately and developed a greater tolerance for their behavior since having fewer learners would seem to promote more teacher-student interaction. Also, smaller classes contribute to improved student learning. The availability of space in a class-room permits the teacher to use more instructional options than does a crowded environment. A larger room can also provide each pupil with more private place (Finn, Pannozzo, & Achilles, 2003).

Albert (2003) has encouraged teachers to think of misbehaving students as students with “choosing disability” – an underdeveloped ability to choose appropriate behavior. Responding to misbehavior, then, is the process of helping students decide to control themselves so that they can function productively in group settings such as classrooms. It is important to keep in mind that there is no fool-proof method for correcting misbehavior. No single disciplinary technique will solve the variety of behavior problems exhibited in today’s classrooms. To respond to misbehavior in an effective, personal way, teachers must carefully consider the context of misbehavior and the motivation of the student before choosing how to react.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The conclusions that can be drawn from the findings of this study are as follows.

It was found that the English teacher at SDIK Nurul Quran made fairly good preparations before teaching English including designing her syllabus and lesson plans, preparing teaching materials, and providing teaching media. This teaching preparation was fitted to the curriculum applied at the school namely the combination of the KTSP and Islamic Character Based curriculum. The lesson plans were carefully designed to provide easy and fun activities that were suitable for students at that level.

The activities presented in the classroom were based on what was stated in the lesson plan. The activities were procedural and met the level

of the students. The teaching methods applied in the classroom were various such as Cooperative Learning, STAD, CTL, and others. The teacher also tried to make the learning fun and interesting by teaching English through games such as Simon Says, Scrabble, Guessing, etc. Co-operative interactions took place in the classroom where the students appeared to be free to speak and to ask questions.

The teacher had several problems in conducting the teaching such as problems with the joint curriculum, syllabus design, and the lesson plan, problems with two students with special needs, problem with noisy classes and student discipline, problems with catching students' attention and problems with classroom size. However, the teacher was capable to solve all these problems so that her teaching-learning could run well. It was found that the English teacher at *Nurul Quran* Character Based Islamic School maintained good class management to cover the problems she faced in the classroom.

Based on the result of this study, there are several suggestions which are considered useful for the teacher to improve her teaching at *Nurul Quran* School. They are as follows:

- It is suggested that the teacher improve her teaching preparation by adding more teaching media, providing more varied teaching materials, and designing more detail into the lesson plans.
- The teacher should use more varied teaching methods and techniques to avoid monotony in the classroom and to prevent the students from getting bored. In this case, the teacher should be more creative and find more interesting approaches for teaching English to young learners.
- The teacher should upgrade her knowledge of teaching language to young learners, it is recommended that the teacher attend some teacher training seminars regarding the issues of teaching English for Young Learners (EYL). Those training seminars usually present the latest issues related to EYL, improving the point of view, providing new techniques and methods, solving problems found in EYL classrooms and so on.

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