

TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS USING PUPPET: A CASE STUDY IN ONE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SUMEDANG REGION

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Abstract

Teaching English to young learners has its own challenges, especially in Indonesia where English is categorized as Foreign Language. Teachers of young learners should provide the care necessary to meet young learners' needs so that they can thrive and focus on their learning (Linse, 2005:2). This study aims to investigate the use of puppet in teaching English at primary school and to seek the teacher's and students' respond and enthusiasm toward the use of puppet in teaching English. The research method used in this study was a case study conducted in one of the primary schools in Sumedang region on students whose the L1 is Sundanese. The results of the study reveals that with the puppet media teaching English to young learners become more interesting and enjoyable. The students are more comfortable, enthusiastic and confident in sharing their ideas. The teacher was assisted with the puppet to deliver the material. The study used classroom observation to gather the data related to the teaching-learning process; teacher's and students' interview to find out their respond and enthusiasm toward puppet in teaching English. The findings recommended English teachers of young learners to use the puppet in their teaching-learning process.

Keywords: *teaching english, young learners, puppet.*

Introduction

Teaching English to young learners has its own challenges, especially in Indonesia where English is categorized as Foreign Language. The first challenge is learners study English in the classroom only, in English subject only. After they finish studying English in the classroom, they will return to use their mother tongue (Indonesian) in daily communication with their parents, family and friends surround them. In fact, most of them will probably forget the English lessons that had been taught previously. In EFL context, the use of mother tongue (L1) highly affects the learners in learning second language (L2). Learners seem forget to use L2 because of the influence of L1. The second challenge comes from the young learners who have unique physics and psychosocial needs that might affect their learning. This has an impact on young learners teachers, especially English teachers. Teachers of young learners should provide the care necessary to meet young learners needs so

that they can thrive and focus on their learning (Linse, 2005:2). English teachers of young learners need to be creative in using teaching methods and medias, so the English lesson will not boring or in another word it will be more attractive and enjoyable for young learners to study.

In the preliminary study conducted in one of primary schools in Sumedang, it was found that the English teacher used monotonous technique in teaching. The English teacher used audio lingual method, teacher-centered and only focused on vocabulary translation. Learners seemed bored. It can be seen from the fact that some of the students did not pay attention and busy with their own activities.

This study aims to find strategy that can reduce the boredom of young learners in learning English. The strategy that was implemented in this study was puppetry. The use of puppet in teaching English to young learners is expected to help young learners become more comfortable,

interested and have a better understanding in learning English. Besides that, it is hoped that using puppet gives teachers a creative teaching media so they can provide an interesting and enjoyable teaching-learning process for their students.

Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the research questions of this study are:

1. To what extent does puppet improve teaching English in primary school?
2. How is the students respond and enthusiasm to the use of puppet?

Definition of Puppetry and Puppet

Puppetry is the art of presenting an inanimate object in the form of a living character (CHETNA, 1995:1). According to Bil Baird in Greder (2013) "A puppet is an inanimate figure that is made to move by human effort before an audience. It is the sum of these qualities that uniquely defines the puppet. Nothing else quite satisfies the definition...the player supplies the life for both of them." In addition, McCaslin (1984:120) in Overholt (2010) states definition of puppet as "...'actors' who come to life with the help of a puppeteer", either pre-fabricated or student made characters that are physically manipulated by the students and serve to represent a character related to the selected text".

Arnott (1964) in Standard (1999) defined "Puppet" as coming from the Latin "pupa", meaning doll. A puppet is a jointed representation of a human, an animal, or, abstract figure. He said, "A puppet can be manipulated to give an illusion of life..." The puppet is then defined as a "theatrical figure perceived by an audience to be an object, that is, given design, movement and frequently, speech, so that it fulfils the audience's desire to imagine it as having life, by creating a double vision of perception and imagination, the puppet pleasurablely challenges the audience's understanding of

the relationship between object and life" (Tillis, 1992:65 in Widjajanto, et al., 2009).

In relation to teaching media, puppetry and puppet can be one of the media to help teachers in teaching and learning process in the classroom. Lepley (2001) mentions that puppetry is a medium for students to use to express themselves and begin to explore the various components of the English language. In addition, for young learners, puppet are effective mechanisms for drawing out responses as depersonalising issues in this way encourages more focussed and applied thinking (Hodgson & Pyle, 2010). In elementary school classroom, puppetry also has great potential for use by teachers (Wallace & Mishina, 2004).

Types of Puppet

There are several types of puppet which can be used by teachers as medium in teaching. Here are several types of puppet taken from CHETNA (1995):

- a. Glove/Hand Puppet; it is used by the presenter's hand which becomes the puppet's body.
- b. String Puppet; the puppet's movements are controlled by the strings attached to different parts of its body i.e. hands, legs, head, etc.
- c. Rod Puppet; it is used by tighten the puppet's body to the rods or sticks.
- d. Shadow Puppet; it is basically flat puppets which is operated on a screen with a light behind or above the screen so that the audience can see the shadow of the puppet.

Other kinds of puppet are also presented by Yellen, Blake and DeVries (2004):

- a. Sock puppets which are demonstrated by placing fingers in the toe and the thumb in the heel. The puppet comes alive by opening and closing the hand. The sock is added by cloth, felt, buttons, beads, yarn and so on to make the eyes, nose, mouth, and ears.

- b. Finger puppets which are made of old glove. On each finger, draw, color, or paint facial features of different characters and add bits of yarn, sequins, or buttons. Each finger should contain a face with a different expression or look.
- c. Paper-bag puppets which are made of the paper bag. Large bags can be placed over children's heads and worn as full masks. Holes for eyes, nose, and mouth can be cut and the bags decorated with crayons or other materials. Smaller paper bags lend themselves as hand puppets.
- d. Stick and ball puppets which are made of wooden dowel, tongue depressor, or bent coat hanger plus a plastic foam ball or old tennis ball. First, cover the ball with felt or cloth and draw in the facial features. Then decorate with string, small buttons, and so on. Next, insert the stick to support the head. Finally, cover the stick with a loose cloth, decorated to form a distinctive costume for your puppet. Insert your hand beneath the cloth and grasp the stick.
- e. Shadow puppets which are made of stiff cardboard or oak tag. Cut a puppet shape from the flat pattern in profile. Next, attach the cutout to a stick to be held by the student puppeteer. Create the stage by stretching a sheet of translucent cloth tightly in a frame. Stand behind the frame and place a bright light behind the puppet and the screen. The audience sees a dark silhouette or shadow against the light screen.

The Benefits of Puppet

Puppetry or puppet can help students internalize language patterns, enhance listening skills, develop risk-taking skills and students' confidence and provide opportunities for students to work cooperatively as a group (Lepley: 2001). Working cooperatively as a group makes students more confidence to take and

share their ideas. She adds that the use of puppetry helps students to comprehend the structure of the story such as plot, theme, characterization and other elements.

In Boeriswati's research (2013), it was found that puppet encourage students to speak, be confidence, be more interested in learning. It was also found that puppet was colorful, fun and could enrich students imagination. Students were be able to do simulating on how they live in the society coming from different ethnicity, race, religion, class, social status and economic background.

Supporting statement also states by Korosec (2002) in Brezigar (2010) who says that "It is incridible to see how the children trust the puppet. They believe that puppet sleeps, that it watches over them, that it learns together with them, that it listens to them. Children possess that faith and sincerity that sometimes get lost by adults". Here, Korosec wants to show that puppet is trusted by the children which makes children more confident in expressing themselves.

According to Vygotsky in Majaron (2002a) "... Surprisingly puppetry integrates nearly all disciplines important for this development: perception, comprehension, movement, coordination, and interaction with the environment, speech and narration". It means that students are helped in developing their perception, movement, coordination and interaction, speech and narration by using the puppet because children who get shy to speak in front of other students are covered by the puppet. They can hide behind it. This statement is supported by Majaron (2002a:61). He also adds that puppet helps children to have richer vocabulary which is very important in developing their speaking skill.

Puppetry is expected to help young learners encourage their English learning. Puppet can be as a mediator between teachers and students that helps students to express their thoughts bravely because

the puppet will help them and they can follow the lessons uninhibited (Martin, 2009). Moreover, Martin (2009) stated that the puppet can create tension, curiosity, and excitement and it can be used to impart knowledge by repeating something said or repeated wrongly so that the students have to correct it. In accordance with Martin, Ozdeniz (2000:9) in Khameis (2006) states that when a child speaks through the puppet, it is not the child who is perceived as making errors but the puppet, and children find this liberating.

Puppet makes children more confident to speak as Linse (2005:54) states a child who developmentally is too shy to speak to an adult in front of his peers, may feel very comfortable when the same adult is holding a puppet and speaking to the child as the puppet. Besides that, the puppet can help teachers represent the foreign language in authentic way. Hunt (1982 in Wallace & Mishina: 2004) suggests that young children can usually accept puppets as non-threatening, sympathetic friends.

Puppet gives opportunity for students to communicate not only in group but also in individual communication (Ruddell et al., 1994; Bennett, 2002). In addition, the purposes of teaching English by using puppets is stated by Mahoney (1998:72) in Nilawati (2009). They are: (a) to develop students imagination and creativity; (b) to provide opportunities for students to share oral interpretations; and (c) to provide a supportive environment for experimenting with voice and language.

Characteristics of Young Learners

Young learners are unique characters. They have a unique characteristics. They develop emotionally, morally, physically and cognitively at different rates (Linse, 2005:3). One child may be able to speak in earlier age while

another may struggle. Young learners have different characteristics with adults learners. They have a lot of physical energy and often need to be physically active and they have a wide range of emotional needs; they are emotionally excitable, developing conceptually, at an early stage of their schooling and still developing literacy in their first language; they learn more slowly and forget things quickly, tend to be self-oriented and preoccupied with their own world; they get bored easily; they are excellent mimics; they can concentrate for a surprisingly long time if they are interested; and they can be easily distracted but also very enthusiastic (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2003:27).

According to Scoot (1990: 2-4) in Nilawati (2009), young learners have general characteristics: (a) they are competent user of mother tongue, (b) they can tell the difference between fact and fiction, (c) they love to play and learn best when they enjoy themselves seriously and like to think that what they are doing in real work., (d) they are enthusiastic and positive thinking, (e) they rely on the spoken as well as the physical words to convey and understanding meaning, (f) They are able to work with others and learn from others, (g) their own understanding comes through eyes, hands and ears, (h) they have very short attention and concentration.

Harmer (2001: 38) in Pratiwi (2014) adds some general characteristic of children: (a) they respond to meaning even if they do not understand the words, (b) they often learn indirectly than directly, (c) their understanding comes not just from the explanation, but also from what they see hear and crucially have a chance to touch and interact with, (d) they generally display an enthusiasm for learning and curiosity about the world around them, (e) They have a need for individual attention and approval from their teacher, (f) they are taken on talking about themselves and responding well to

learning that use themselves and their own lives as main topic in the classroom, (g) They have limited attention span, unless activities are extremely engaging can make them easily getting bored, losing interaction after 10 minutes or so.

Teaching English to Young Learners

In EFL context, teachers of English need to choose an interesting, enjoyable and creative media for encouraging young learners to learn English. Good and Brophy (2000:9) in Khameis (2006) say that “learning should be fun and motivation problems appear because the teacher somehow has converted an inherently enjoyable activities into drudgery”.

According to Linse (2005) a teacher of young learners should consider the children’s development and interests. In order to do that, teacher should first become familiar with the students. Moreover Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2003:5) add that the general aims of early foreign language learning should appear attractive to parents, teachers and administrators and workable for children while avoiding being over-ambitious and unrealistic. It means that to teach English as foreign language, teachers should consider the attractive methods or activities for children and for their parents.

Research Methodology

This study was a case study conducted in one of the primary schools in Sumedang that involved one English teacher as a respondent. The students participated in this study were the third graders. The class consisted of 30 students. Since the primary school was not the international school, the students came from different background of family, education and economic status. The data collection tools that were used in this study were observations and interview. The observations were conducted twice. The first observation

was conducted to see how the English teacher teach the students with his own method and strategy. The second observation was conducted to find out whether the puppet that was used by the English teacher during his lesson could give better atmosphere in teaching English and had benefit for the future English lesson. Besides that, the observation also used to know the students’ response and enthusiasm in learning English with or without puppet. The researcher used observation field notes and video to observe the teaching-learning process in the classroom. The interview was conducted to gather the information from the teacher’s point of view related to the use of puppet. The students’ response and enthusiasm were gathered from students’ interview.

Findings and Discussions

Teaching English before Using Puppet

Through the classroom observation it was found that the teaching and learning process was conducted in monotoneus activity. The material lessons were greetings, introducing and telling time. The teacher opened his lesson, wrote the lessons in English on the whiteboard and translated into Indonesian. Then, he asked students to write down all the lessons in their book. The teaching and learning process in the classroom was also revealed from the teacher’s explanation in the interview session.

R : *“Yaa, mmm...I started with greeting the students. Asked them to pray. Made them prepare the tools, such as pencil, note book, etc. Commanded them to pay attention to me. Sit tidy. Then, I began to write the lesson on the whiteboard. I wrote all lessons in English then, translated them into Indonesian. I asked students*

to write down the lesson on their note book.”?”

From the teacher's explanation, it can be said that the teacher delivered the lesson without apperception activity. He started the lesson straight to the point. It made students hard to gather their concentration and their attention. This finding supported the theory from Scoot (1990: 2-4) in Nilawati (2009) who say that "young learners have very short attention and concentration." It means that if the teacher can not direct students' attention and concentration in interesting way, students will get bored easily and loose their attention and concentration easily.

During the lesson, there was no dialogue between teacher and students related to the lesson. Students were busy in writing the lesson. The teacher stood up in front of the class, paid attention to the students who were writing the lessons. Some students looked unpleased of this writing activity. They just played with their friends. Playing their pencils, books and other things. Some of them were talking. It can be said that some students felt bored with the writing activity. This condition was not appropriate with the theory of Good and Brophy (2000:9) in Khameis (2006) who say that "learning should be fun and motivation problems appear because the teacher somehow has converted an inherently enjoyable activities into drudgery".

Because of the boring situation, students could not concentrate in long time. It can be said that the reason was because of the teacher who could not make the situation of the classroom interesting. This situation supported the theory of Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2003:27) who say that "...young learners can concentrate for a surprisingly long time if they are interested; and they can be easily distracted but also very enthusiastic."

If there were students who played with their friends and did not write the lesson, he began to yell out and ordered them to keep silence. He walked around the classroom, checked students' work. The yelling and the ordering of the teacher made students felt uncomfortable. It seemed that students were forced to obey the command. Students obeyed their teacher because they were scared to their teacher.

The classroom observation also showed that after the writing activity had finished, the teacher read the materials and asked students to imitate his pronunciation. After that, the teachers gave students written tests. Ten questions were given. The teacher gave students opportunity to finish the exercises. Then, he began to call student's name one by one to answer the questions.

From the observation, it can be seen that some students were not ready to answer the questions. Not because they were lazy, but it seemed like students felt bored and were not interested in finishing the exercises. They thought that the English lesson was not enjoyable and it was hard to understand because their teacher did not make the teaching process interesting.

After all, students' comprehension was not assessed perfectly since the teacher only gave ten written test to assess students' comprehension. It means that only ten students who got the opportunity to answer questions.

From the findings that were found in the observation, it can be said that the English teacher did not make the situation of the classroom enjoyable and interesting for students. The teacher also did not create or try to use an attractive activity in the teaching and learning process. In the interview, the teacher explain his reason related to the situation.

Q : *"Pardon me, Sir.
Have you ever tried
to use media in your*

teaching and learning process?"

R : *"I would love to. But, there is no media in this school."*

This kind of situation was not appropriate with the theory that Good and Brophy (2000:9) in Khameis (2006), and Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2003) who say that learning English for young learners should be fun, interesting and attractive for the students.

Teaching English Using Puppet

From the classroom observation, it was found that the teaching English using puppet showed different activity than before. The teacher came to the classroom, asked students to sit and opened the lesson. He announced that he brought a surprise. Then, he showed puppets to students. He began to deliver the same lesson with the previous week. He used different voice for different characters of puppet.

The classroom situation became more and more enjoyable as the teacher began to make dialogue between puppets and students. Students became very excited. They were able to make a dialogue with the puppets. The puppets seemed increased students' self confidence and courage. Puppets helped teacher encourage students to speak and provided an opportunity for students to speak actively in the dialogue. It can be seen from the observation that students' with low achievement or students who usually do not have encouragement to speak were active and enthusiastic of making conversation with the puppets. This situation in accordance with the theory of Linse (2005:54) who states "Puppet makes children more confident to speak as states a child who developmentally is too shy to speak to an adult in front of his peers, may feel very

comfortable when the same adult is holding a puppet and speaking to the child as the puppet." The findings also supported the theory from Boeriswati (2013) who found that puppet encourage students to speak, be confidence, be more interested in learning.

The findings also showed that puppets helped teacher in making the classroom more attractive, enjoyable and fun. The findings supported the statement from Wallace & Mishina (2004) who state that "In elementary school classroom, puppetry also has great potential for use by teachers."

From the data gathered from the observation, it was founded that students became actively involved in dialogue and their vocabulary became richer and richer since they got more active and active in the dialogue. This is accordance with Majaron (2002a:61) who states that puppet helps children to have richer vocabulary which is very important in developing their speaking skill.

Students' response and enthusiasm to the use of puppet

In the interview, students were asked about their response and enthusiasm related to their feeling towards the use of puppet. All students whom were interviewed answered that the English lesson was interesting, fun and pleasing. They added that the teaching and learning process was different with previous lesson. It was more enjoyable for them. They felt happy and please to study. They also became more motivated in learning English.

From the students' answer in the interview, it can be said that the teacher had succeeded in creating the situation in the classroom interesting, enjoyable and fun. The teacher succeeded in eliminating the awkward and drudgery situation in the classroom. This finding is in accordance with the theory from Good and Brophy (2000:9) in Khameis (2006) who say that "learning should be fun and motivation

problems appear because the teacher somehow has converted an inherently enjoyable activities into drudgery”.

The data from the classroom observation showed that students gave positive response to the use of puppet. It can be seen from their attitude during the lesson. They showed happy faces. There were a lot of smile and laugh. The finding supported the theory that puppet can be as a medium to help teachers in teaching and learning process which is stated by Lepley (2001) and in elementary school classroom, puppetry also has great potential for use by teachers (Wallace & Mishina, 2004).

The classroom observation also showed students’ enthusiasm in getting involved in the dialogue. Students were enthusiastic to speak. They could express themselves when the teacher used the puppets to ask them questions. Students also tried to explore themselves to built a lot of vocabularies to construct sentences. This is in accordance with Lepley (2001) who says that puppetry is a medium for students to use to express themselves and begin to explore the various components of the English language.

The data from the classroom observation showed that students became more interested to speak and they seemed to be more confident in speaking. Although the situation in the classroom were noisy, but the noisy came from the students’ enthusiasm in speaking. This is appropriate with the research of Boeriswati (2013) whose found that puppet encourage students to speak, be confidence, be more interested in learning.

The interview revealed the reasons why students get more interested, confident, fun and joyful in learning English using puppets.

S1 : *“Yes, that was fun..I felt no shame when teacher asked me. It was funny.”*

S2 : *“Mmm...it was..mmm..it was interesting..it was not boring at all. It was not the same with last week. Last week was boring. I was more confident to answer if the teacher asked using puppet.”*

From the students’ answer of the interview, it can be concluded that students trusted the puppet as someone who asked them questions not the teacher. They felt brave and confident since they considered the puppet as somebody else besides their teacher who give questions so they felt no shy to answered the puppets’ questions. This is in accordance with the statement from Korosec (2002) in Brezigar (2010) who says that “It is incredible to see how the children trust the puppet. They believe that puppet sleeps, that it watches over them, that it learns together with them, that it listens to them. Children possess that faith and sincerity that sometimes get lost by adults”.

In the classroom observation, it was seen that the teacher gave students opportunity to use the puppet. The teacher and students used puppet in the dialogue. It was found that students got more active to express their thoughts and ideas. According to students’ answer they could follow the lesson easier without any hesitation. This is appropriate with the statement from Martin (2009), “Puppet can be as a mediator between teachers and students that helps students to express their thoughts bravely because the puppet will help them and they can follow the lessons uninhibited.”

From the interview, it was found that students felt no shy for making error because they assumed that the puppet who made the errors and students feel free to speak without thinking any errors. This is in accordance with Ozdeniz (2000:9) in

Khameis (2006) who states that when a child speaks through the puppet, it is not the child who is perceived as making errors but the puppet, and children find this liberating. The statement of the student who felt no shy and assumed that the puppet which made the error can be seen from the S3's answer.

S3 : *"I tried to use the puppet. It was fun. I feel no shy even my friends were laughing at me. They were laughing at the puppet, not me."*

From the findings of the classroom observations and interviews, it can be concluded that learning English using puppet showed positive enthusiasm of students. The puppets could be as a medium to help teacher and students in delivering the speech. Students' enthusiasm could be seen from their participation, attention and concentration in communicating using dialogue with their teacher and friends. Students who got shy in the previous teaching and learning process became active and confident to speak and get involved in the dialogue.

Teaching English using puppets give beneficial effects in teaching and learning process. The classroom situation and condition was interesting, attractive, enjoyable, fun and had a lot of smile and laugh. These findings give supporting evidence from the previous research findings that using puppets in teaching English gives positive advantages and gets positive response and enthusiasm from the students.

Conclusions

In the teaching and learning process before using puppet, the teacher taught students in monotonous activity. He started the lesson without any

apperception. It made students surprised and shocked. There was no approach to students. The teacher did not try to gather students' attention. He just started the lesson straight to the point.

In delivering the lesson, the teacher wrote it on the white board using English and then he translated it to Indonesian. He asked students to write it down on their note book. After finishing their writing, the teacher asked them to imitate his pronunciation. In the end of the lesson, the teacher gave tests for students to finish. He assessed students' work one by one.

There was no communicative activity between the teacher and students. Students' comprehension and skill whether it is in listening, speaking, reading and writing was not assessed appropriately since the teacher only gave ten written questions for all students in the classroom.

The teaching and learning process before using puppet was boring and not interesting based on the students' answer in the interview and the circumstances in the classroom observation.

Different with the teaching and learning process before using puppet, the circumstances in the classroom using puppet was full of fun, smile, happiness and laugh. Surprisingly, lot of students got involved in the dialogue. When the teacher asked students using puppets, students answered him bravely and without any hesitation. Students felt free to express their thoughts and ideas.

Some students used puppets while they answered the questions from their teacher. They had no shy although some of them made errors in speaking English. They laughed and had a lot of fun. Some students who usually did not involve in making the dialogue were tried to speak and make communication with others.

Students' response and enthusiasm to the use of puppets in teaching English were positive. They responded the puppet with happiness. They showed their

enthusiastic with getting involved in the dialogue.

From the findings above, it can be concluded that teaching English to young learners using puppets is effective and it is an attractive way that can be used by teacher. It helps the teacher as a medium to attract students attention, concentration and enthusiastic in learning English. It can make the classroom situation more interesting. Students does not feel bored anymore.

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