

## STUDENTS' RESPONSES TOWARD THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THEME-BASED TEACHING IN EYL CLASS

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**Abstract:** This paper presents to report the research that was conducted to find out what the students' responses were toward the activities presented in the classroom as the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching. This research was carried out to the third graders in one primary school in Bandung. Action research was conducted by managing classroom observation and interview to collect the data. Based on the research findings, it is revealed that the students responded to the reading activities presented in the classroom positively by actively participating in each activity. In accordance with the findings, it is suggested that teacher take into account the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching in teaching young learners since it leads to the positive response from the students.

**Keywords:** *Theme-Based Teaching, response, action research*

### Introduction

In Indonesian education system, curriculum is one of the aspects that have undergone some changes. The most recent curriculum implemented in Indonesian Education is Curriculum 2013 that has been implemented in certain schools in the beginning of education year 2013-2014. In this curriculum, Theme-Based Teaching is chosen as the method in conducting teaching and learning process.

Theme-Based Teaching is regarded as an approach that is suitable to be applied in teaching young learners since "*the use of this approach offers exciting possibilities for young learners and their*

*teacher*" (Cameron, 2001, p. 197). As an example, there was a study conducted by Yang (2009) in an English course for primary English as a second language (ESL) students in a non-school setting in Hong Kong. The study was aimed to investigate the learners' perceptions and the impact of Theme-Based Teaching on their levels of interests in an English course. As the result, it was found that most of the participants involved in the study agreed that teaching activities and tasks were more integrated and organized with the adoption of theme-based teaching. She also adds that with the adoption of theme-based teaching, many children found learning English became more

meaningful and interesting, and more vocabulary items centering on a certain theme could be learned easily.

Regarding to the positive achievement of the use of Theme-Based Teaching as described above, this research investigates the students' responses toward the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching in classroom activities.

### **Literature Review**

- **Theme-Based Teaching**

Theme-Based Teaching is a part of integrated-skill approach which places an equal value on content and language objectives. Cameron (2001) states that the essential notion of Theme-Based Teaching is that many different activities are linked together by their content. Theme-Based Teaching necessitates the teacher to design teaching and learning activities by structuring a course around themes or topics (Brown, 2001; Cameron, 2001). Cameron (2001) also describes that Theme-Based Teaching required teachers to choose a theme or topic and then to plan a range of teaching and learning activities related to the theme.

In the implementation in the classroom, the activities presented were designed based on a certain theme which is suitable for the students. Consequently, all

the activities are linked each other by the theme.

- **Characteristics of Young Learner**

The characteristics of young learner are described by Moon (2000) who mentions that there are seven characteristics of young learners. First, children use language creatively. Halliwell (1992) states that in the early stage of their mother tongue development, children will creatively explore grammatical form and also concept. When they do not know a certain word to express what they mean, they use another word that can deliver their idea. The alternative words they use are derived from what they have learned earlier.

Second, children have "*good instinct of interpreting the meaning of a situation*" (Moon, 2000, p. 5). By examining the situation happened around them, children are able to construct the meaning according to the situation they faced. It is supported by Scott and Ytreberg (1990) who say that young learners understand situations more quickly than the language.

The third characteristic of children is that they tend to use chunk of language. Moon (2000) explains that children often learn how to use language by using phrases they have learned from others to be used to complete their conversation. Even though the phrases, which usually called "chunk",

are not learned formally, they help children to communicate.

The next characteristic is that children learn a language subconsciously as they enjoy all their activities. Moon (2000) states that *“when children are enjoying themselves, they are usually absorbed by the activity and want to continue with it. They are not always aware that they are learning language”* (p. 6). In line with Moon’s statement, Scott and Ytreberg (1990) tell that *“young children love to play and learn best when they are enjoying themselves”* (p. 4). In order to cope with this characteristic, Brown (2001) mentions that teacher should provide variety of activities to make the students able to keep their interest and attention. When young learners enjoy the learning activities, they will be interested in continuing the lesson. The more lessons and activities they do, the more language learning experiences they will get.

The following characteristic of young learners stated by Moon (2000) is that children are naturally curious and active. Their zealous desire to be able to explore their environment and interact with other helps them to understand the situation where they are. Through active interaction with circumstances around them and experiences of many activities, children learn how to solve problem where

the process of learning is happening (Piaget as cited in Cameron, 2001).

Furthermore, Moon (2000) mentions that physical activities provide excellent context for language learning. The language is closely related to what is happening in the situation, and so children can get clues about the meaning from the activity which accompanies the language. By means of this activity, children will find the reason why they have to use the language so that it will be easier for them to acknowledge the language.

Next, Moon (2000) says that children really enjoy talking. Naturally, children are in the stage where they *“keen to talk about themselves”* (Harmer, 2001, p. 82). It is likely that children will talk to others about anything without even asked. When it comes to a certain activities, they have a strong desire to participate and express their ideas, especially when the activities are interesting. In terms of learning foreign language, children will also eager to participate even though it is still limited so that they only use simple phrases (Moon, 2000). One of the way to take full advantage of this, providing interesting activity will encourage children to learn language better since *“if they are engaged in an interesting activity, they will talk their heads off happily”* (Moon, 2000, p 9). When they have enjoyed talking in the

activity where they can learn language, it is very useful because it means that they have the opportunities to practice in using language.

Last but not least, Moon (2000) states that one important thing that should be considered when teaching young learners is keeping their feeling. *“If they are happy and secure, they are more likely to enjoy and benefit from their language learning”* (Moon, 2000, p. 9). When they feel comfortable with the learning activities, they are likely to be more active and confident in participating at the activities so that they can practice their new language more.

The enlightenment related to the characteristic of young learners above had better to be one of the considerations in designing learning activities for teaching young learners. In this case, the study is focusing on how the students' responses toward the activities presented through Theme-Based Teaching.

- **Students' Response**

According to Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) as cited in Azwar (2012), there are three components of attitudes that is called tripartite model. The first component is cognitive. This component can be identified by the representation of what does someone beliefs or thought toward something (Azwar, 2012). The

measurable dependent variables from cognitive component are based on perceptual responses and verbal statements of beliefs.

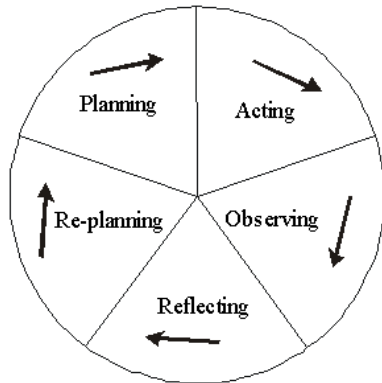
The second component is affective which is defined as emotional feeling toward something. Generally, emotional reaction is affected by belief or what someone believes of something. It can be favorable and unfavorable toward something. The measurable dependent variables of affective component are sympathetic nervous responses and verbal statements of affective.

The last component is conative (behavior). It refers to someone tendency to act in a particular manner that is congruous to his/her attitude. The measurable dependent variables from conative component are overt action and verbal statements concerning behavior.

## **Methodology**

This research was conducted by using action research since it enabled the teacher to observe her own educational practice in order to find out the resolution with the intention to enhance the quality of the teaching process (Ferrance, 2000; Alwasilah, 2011). This method involves spiral of self-reflective cycles which include the process of planning, acting and observing, reflecting, replanning, acting

and observing, reflection, and so on (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).



The Action Research Cycle

There were two cycles involved in this research with two actions in each cycle. The main theme is about classroom which was derived from the competence standards. In the first cycle the students were taught about the things in the classroom while in second cycle, the sub-theme was about the activities in classroom.

This research was conducted to 35 students in grade three in one of elementary schools in Bandung. Interview and observation were conducted to collect the data. The observation was accomplished four times for about 70 minutes in each meeting. This observation was focusing on investigating the responses toward the activities showed by the students.

Furthermore, to achieve the triangulation which was intended to prove the validity of the research, the interview was also conducted in the end of Cycle 2 – Action 2 to 5 students who were chosen randomly.

The data presented in this research was collected after the students accomplish learning process in 4 meetings.

### Data Presentation and Discussion

The data collected through interview and observation provided the answer related to how students' responses toward the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching in the classroom activities. The result indicated that the students showed positive attitude toward the activities. The results were mainly obtained from interview which was conducted to five students chosen randomly presented the students' responses on the aspect of cognitive and affective. In spite of this fact, observation also discovered students' behavior responses and provided the confirmation to enhance the findings from the interview.

The following table presents the result of interview and observation according to the component of responses suggested by Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) as cited in Azwar (2012).

Response	Students' Response				
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Cognitive	+	+	+	+	-
Affective	+	+	+	+	+
Behavior	+	+	+	-	+

In terms of students' cognitive response which was related to the effect of the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching to their comprehension of the material given, the result of interview revealed that most of the students stated that the use of theme in the teaching and learning process help them to comprehend the lesson better.

That statement was proven by students' ability to recall the theme and materials they learned in the previous meeting. Moreover, the students were also able to answer the question related to the material they learned and mentioned the vocabularies learned in the classroom.

By means of the findings, students' answers indicate that the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching helps them in understanding the lesson. In addition, it proves the principle of Theme-Based Teaching stated by Brown (2001) that is in teaching language, acquiring language subconsciously through meaningful use and also focusing on the purpose of the use of the language without analyzing its form helps in learning language. Next, in the

case of their affective responses toward the teaching and learning activities presented through Theme-Based Teaching in their classroom, it reflected that the students also showed positive response toward the activities presented in the four meetings. All the respondents stated that they enjoyed the lesson.

The reason behind their positive response toward the teaching and learning activities is discovered in the following question. In this occasion, students revealed several reasons of why they seemed to enjoy the lesson. As stated by Student 3, she enjoyed the lesson because it was presented through various activities so that the lesson was not boring.

The similar response was also shown by Student 1 who stated that the activities were interesting and it attracted her to follow the lesson more. Likewise, Student 2 said that the use of pictures, games and other medias make the lesson more attractive.

In line with the students' affective response, their positive response toward the learning activities presented through

Theme-Based Teaching was reflected through their behavior in the classroom. This could also be seen from the observation when the students showed their excitement and also actively participated in some classroom activities such as in games.

This finding is relevant to Scott and Ytreberg's statement (1990) that is "*young children love to play and learn best when they are enjoying themselves*" (p. 4). Here, the students expressed their enthusiasm toward teacher's question about whether they wanted to play game or not by answering concurrently that they are want to play. When the teacher decided to play, the students promptly cheered together. This situation displays the state where children will be enthusiastic to do the enjoyable activity.

Variety of activities implemented by the teacher here was pertinent to Brown's statement (2001) who mentions that the teacher should provide variety of activities to make the students are able to keep their interest and attention. Furthermore, the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching is essentially helpful in the view of the fact that Theme-Based Teaching offers the freedom to the teacher to create their own material and also activities for their lesson. As stated by Cameron (2001) that "*Theme-Based Teaching required teachers to*

*choose a theme or topic and then to plan a range of teaching and learning activities related to the theme*" (p. 181).

Additionally, the findings also indicated that students' anticipation toward the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching in their learning process is highly expected. It is projected due to the positive points, for instance the variety of activities, they experienced from the last four meetings. This projection is supported by the statement of Brinton, *et.al.* (2003) as cited in Yang (2009) who believe that if the lesson content is perceived to be relevant by the learners, their motivation is more likely to increase and effective learning can then be promoted. Furthermore, Moon (2000) also stated that "*when children are enjoying themselves, they are usually absorbed by the activity and want to continue with it. They are not always aware that they are learning language*" (p. 6). In the other words, when students, in this case are young learners, enjoy the learning activities they will be interested to continue the lesson.

## **Conclusions**

This study was intended to investigate the students' responses toward the activities presented in the classroom as the implementation of Theme-Based Teaching. The findings of this research

revealed that the students showed positive response toward the activities presented in the classroom which was implemented through Theme-Based Teaching. The students mainly considered that the activities presented helped them in understanding the lesson. The implementation of various activities such as games and pictures that were used to deliver the lesson makes the students enjoy learning process so that they found that it helped them to understand the lesson easier. As a result, the students would like to continue learning through this method.

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