

**ENGLISH AT KINDERGARTEN  
(A case study at TK Aisyiyah Makassar)**

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**Abstract**

Tulisan ini merupakan hasil penelitian tentang sikap anak-anak di Taman Kanak-kanak (TK) terhadap pemanfaatan nyanyian, permainan, dan kisah-kisah yang berbahasa Inggris dalam mengenalkan bahasa Inggris di TK Aisyiyah Makassar. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa anak-anak telah menunjukkan antusiasme tinggi dari pembelajaran kosakata bahasa Inggris dan bangga untuk dapat bernyanyi dan menghitung jumlah dalam bahasa Inggris. Faktor yang mendukung pengenalan bahasa Inggris dalam kegiatan mereka adalah lingkungan sekolah, kompetensi guru, metode mengajar, dan bahan untuk proses belajar mengajar. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa bahasa Inggris dapat diperkenalkan di TK tanpa adanya tambahan jam khusus untuk pelajaran bahasa Inggris.

*Key words:* kindergarten, TK Aisyiyah, enthusiasm.

**A. Background**

Indonesia has experienced an enormous growth of the study of English as a foreign language. Currently, English is taught not only at elementary schools, secondary schools, and tertiary level but also is introduced at the earliest school age for children, at kindergarten. Although the Department of National Education has not yet regulated the teaching of English at kindergarten, many kindergartens have taken early steps in introducing English to their little students at their school places especially in big cities such as Makassar.

There are a number of reasons why English is taught so early at school: (1) if children are exposed to foreign cultures from an early age they can build up feelings of being tolerant and sympathetic to others; (2) the school considers that to maximize learning time for important languages, the earlier the children start, the more time they have to develop a good mastery of them; (3) it is believed that children learn languages better than adults. (Diptoadi, 2000: 354)

There are around 213 kindergartens in the city of Makassar (BPS, statistic data, 2003) and of this number some kindergartens are taking early steps of introducing English at their teaching. This will grow in time due to the

awareness of people that English should be taught as early as possible to give learners ample time to develop a good mastery of foreign language.

Very young children are unique individuals and have their own characteristics based on that age period. Therefore, efforts in educating them should be carried out without losing their play time. Playing is an enjoyable activity for children, through playing children can have opportunities to explore, discover, express their feelings and to create. Besides, playing can help children to know themselves and the environment where they socialize.

In the guidebook of “Direktur Jendral Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Departement Pendidikan Nasional” number 6205/C/DS 1999, it is stated that skills in reading, writing and counting are not the main objectives of teaching in kindergarten, rather the skills which are developed through playing. The best way for teachers to facilitate this, is by equipping themselves with ability to identify children who are ready to receive teaching at higher level and by being able to give guidance individually or in small groups because not all children in that particular class are able to accept higher level of activity. It means that reading, writing and counting are not given classically because not all children have the same level of development. If this condition carried out at school, it will pressurize and the children and in turn it will disturb the development of the children (Diknas, 2000: i).

Having this condition as background, the writer would like to carry out research the children’s attitude towards the use of English songs, English games and story telling in the class, and factors facilitate the language learning of English at kindergarten.

## **B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **1. Previous Related Studies**

A research study conducted by Jeremy Harmer in Britain, Finland and Spain (Harmer 1991: 6) showed that secondary school children wanted a teacher who was fun or understood children and also motivated pupils through enjoyable and interesting class.

Children also need their teacher’s appreciation to help them building up their confidence. Confidence makes children feel secure in expressing their needs and wants in English. These situations only happen if the teachers are paying attention to them, listening to them, asking them question and responding to them to bring out their potential communicative competence (Yamamoto, 2000:4)

Teachers of English need to be creative in teaching using suitable supplemented activities. Brown (2004: 1-4) stated that children’s literature can be used successfully as the content for integrated skills EFL/ESL classroom.

She said that using children's literature based on her teaching experience with first, second, and third grade EFL learners can be effective and enjoyable way to teach language. Students who are enthralled by a story forget their worries and anxieties about the new language.

Imran, (2002:ix) has conducted a research in trying to find out the attitude towards the teaching of English at elementary school. He found that factors influencing the learning process of English at elementary school are the students, parents, teachers' attitudes, government and the materials used. He discovered that students, parents, and teacher have shown very positive attitudes.

## **2. National Education Guidelines in Kindergarten**

### **a. Function**

The functions of children education for the age of 4-6 are;

- 1) To develop good attitude and behavior
- 2) To develop the skill and capacity of the children according to their stage of development.
- 3) To introduce children to the surrounding environment
- 4) To develop socialization
- 5) To introduce rules and discipline to the children

### **b. Objectives**

#### 1) General objectives

- a. To create a basic foundation of attitude development, knowledge, skill and creative imagination that will enrich the cognitive development of the children.
- b. To prepare children to enter the next education stage.

#### 2) Specific objectives

One of the specific objectives is to teach children communicate effectively and useful for them to learn and to think (Diknas 2002:6).

### **c. Areas of basic competence**

Basic competence for early age children is the development of children potential which is reflected in the form of capability that has to be possessed by the children of their age. Basic competences that need to be achieved for children at the age of 4-6 are;

- 1) Children are able to move their body in the form of muscle exercises.
- 2) Children are able to know and to understand various simple concepts in everyday life.
- 3) Children are able to communicate orally and enrich vocabulary and imitate simple form of symbol (writing preparation)

- 4) Children are able to interact with other people, obey rules, and show appropriate emotional reactions.
- 5) Children are able to express their ideas and creativity in various forms
- 6) Children are able to appreciate God's creation and respect each other ( Diknas 2002:9)

### **3. Young Children's Language Learning**

Among the traditional conceptions of second language learning is the idea that children learning second languages in natural environments learn more easily and more proficiently than do adults under similar circumstances. This widely held belief has led to the idea that there is an optimal age or critical period for language acquisition, which ends around the age of puberty. There are basically three considerations that are relevant to this idea: biological, cognitive and affective (O'grady, et al. 1989: 300-301).

The biological argument is that a child's brain is more "plastic" and consequently, should be more receptive to certain aspects of language acquisition, especially in the area of pronunciation.

The cognitive argument is that the adult's superior in the domain of abstract thought should give adults the edge over adults in L2 acquisition.

Affective or emotional differences between children and adult also have a crucial influence on second language learning. Adolescents are learning to think more abstractly, they are also experiencing the familiar adolescent feelings of self-consciousness and anxiety. Children do not have negative attitudes towards the second language culture and they usually have strong desire to be part of group and community which enhances their desire to learn the language.

Based on the explanation above, the writer concludes that young children are better second language learner than adults and will reach higher proficiency in second language.

### **C. Theoretical Framework**

The framework of the research covers the education at kindergarten in city of Makassar. The research target would include three levels of kindergarten based on their number of students and teachers background.

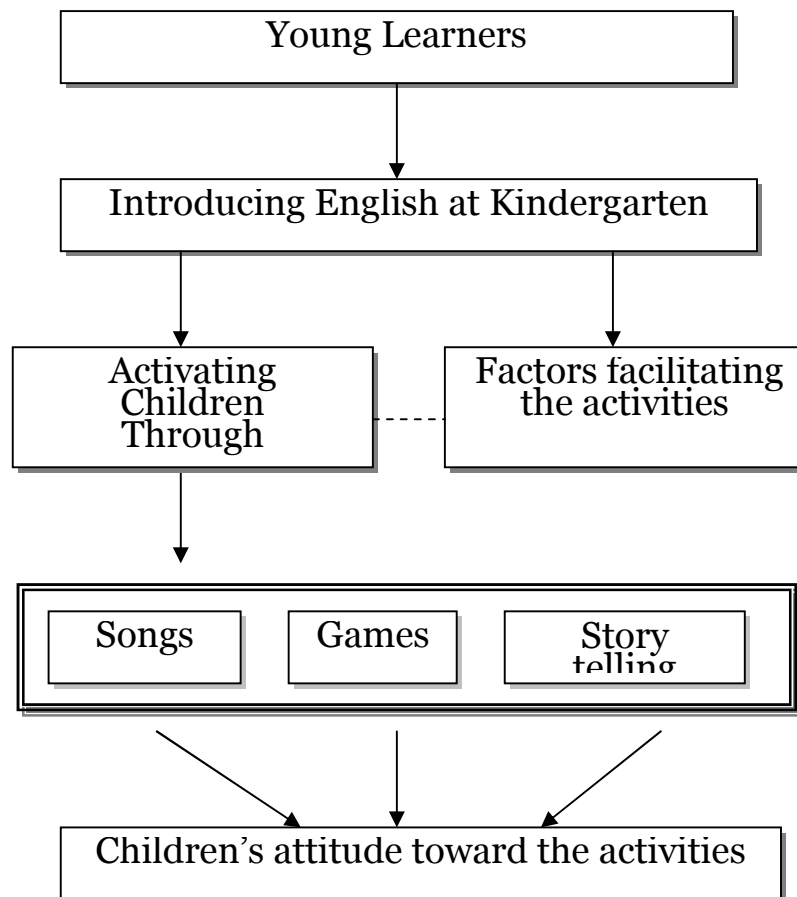
An assumption of children at early age of kindergarten age are able to acquire language faster and better than other development age of the children, is the background foundation of this study.

By observing teachers and children in the teaching and learning activities, the writer would try to find out how the children react by observing the attitude of the children of the introduction of English in their playing

learning activities and from the observation, the writer expect to define aspects of linguistics that can facilitate and hamper the students' English language learning, by applying songs, games and story telling to the children.

The result of the study is expected to contribute some recommendations of English language learning at early age in the kindergartens as what expected for the national curriculum for teaching children in kindergarten.

**Theoretical Framework**



## **D. Discussions**

### 1. The children's attitude towards the integration of English at Kindergarten

There are three aspects of learning and teaching according to the general theory that can be observed towards the students or learning participants; the cognitive, affective and conative aspects. This is similar to Lambert in Van Els (1984:24) where he divides attitude into three components:

- a. A cognitive component which refers to one's believe about certain objects
- b. An affective component which refers to the amount of positive or negative feeling one's have
- c. A conative component which refers to one's behavior intention.

These three components ideally should be able to be observed in any learning and teaching process. For this particular research, the writer managed to analyze those aspects, but component of attitude was dominantly observed was the feeling of the children or the affective component.

Measuring cognitive component of the children, the writer analyzed from the observation whether the children are following the teacher's instruction or not which reflect their understanding of what the teacher said. Such details can be seen when the teacher mentioned "clap your hand" and they would clap their hands.

For the affective component, we can see from the fact that they have positive feeling shown from their enthusiasm in singing and imitating the songs even some of them were shouting, singing with a louder voice. While for the observation of the conative aspects of the children, we can see that the children still sing the song even after the school hours.

The result of the video observation analysis has shown nearly all students imitated, sang, followed the teacher's instruction and even responded on the questions to the teacher questions.

### 2. Factors that facilitate the language learning of English at kindergarten

Factors facilitating the integration of English in kindergarten learning and teaching activities observed in this research are the kindergarten environment, teachers with minimum English training skills, teacher methodology and material used.

From previous research, Rasyid (1993) stated that there are four crucial factors in learning and teaching language at school, they are four crucial factors in learning and teaching language at school, they are: teachers, students,

materials and contexts (time and place). Imran (2002) who conducted a similar research but focus on the elementary school students has identified other additional factors that considered to be significant supporting the success of the teaching and learning process, they are: the involvement of parents and government policy program.

In relation to kindergarten environment, one kindergarten taken as representative of a model school has good facilities and various teaching materials. This environment leads the children to have much more varieties of activities compared to other observed schools.

Teacher's competency especially creativity is significantly needed to make the learning activities as enjoyable to the children as possible. Teacher should create good atmosphere and excellent ways in teaching to build children's motivation and interest.

Teacher's creativity in providing teaching material is also essential. Kinds of teaching material therefore are another essential factor for the success of the teaching English at kindergarten. Kinds of songs, games and stories must be carefully considered to achieve the objective of the integration of English in kindergarten activities. Material should be designed and created well by the teacher before she teaches.

## **E. Conclusions**

The writer concludes the following conclusion:

1. Children at the very age of 4-6 years old considered as formal age for children attending kindergarten. The result of this research, have shown a very positive attitudes towards the integration of English in the forms of songs, games and story telling in the learning and teaching activities at the chosen kindergarten under the management of Aisyiyah Educational Division in Makassar. This led to conclusion that songs, games and story telling are considered to be effective in raising the children interest and motivation
2. Factors facilitate the success of learning and teaching of English at kindergarten are kindergarten environment, teacher's existing qualification, methodology of the teacher in delivering the activities, and materials. This led to conclusion that these factors play important role in teaching and learning process.

To sum up the concluding points above the writer synthesized that English can be introduced integratedly in kindergarten. It does not need to take extra hour as English session.

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