



Investigating Teacher's Strategies in Teaching English Language to Young Learner: A Comparative Study between 1st and 3rd Grade of Elementary School

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Abstract: *This study investigates the comparative teaching strategies employed by English teachers for 1st and 3rd-grade elementary school students, emphasizing the need to tailor approaches to the developmental stages of each age group. This research is done by qualitative method where classroom observation and interview were used to collect the data. An English teacher at SDI Miftahul Diniyah Pamulang was the subject in this research. This research found that for 1st graders, characterized by concrete thinking, short attention spans, and the early stages of language acquisition, effective strategies include play-based learning, phonics-focused activities, and the use of visual aids. Structured routines and immediate feedback are essential for classroom management and student engagement. Conversely, 3rd graders, who exhibit emerging abstract thinking, longer attention spans, and advanced language skills, benefit from project-based learning, reading comprehension activities, and discussions that foster critical thinking. Classroom management for 3rd graders involves clear expectations and opportunities for self-management, as they are more independent and responsible. The study also highlights the social and emotional development differences, with 1st graders needing structured social interaction and emotional expression activities, while 3rd graders thrive on peer learning and collaborative projects. This analysis underscores the importance of adapting teaching strategies to align with the cognitive, social, and emotional development of young learners, thereby enhancing their educational experiences and outcomes.*

Keywords: *Young learners, English language, Teaching strategies.*

INTRODUCTION

The field of education is constantly evolving, with teaching strategies being a critical area of focus for educators aiming to optimize student learning outcomes. Understanding the effectiveness of various teaching methods is particularly important in the context of early childhood education, where foundational skills in reading, writing, and comprehension are developed.

Since elementary school students enjoy learning about new things, including foreign cultures, it is a strategic policy to introduce English to them as an international language. In fact, fostering an enjoyable and creative learning environment is crucial to teach children English efficiently and preventing them

from feeling under pressure to learn foreign languages (Oktavia et al., 2022). According to Mulyadi, the process of teaching and learning needs to be enjoyable and relevant to everyday life, "Children have fun with physical movements and the more excited they are, the easier it is for them to remember the language learned (Mulyadi, 2016).

The effectiveness of teaching strategies in early childhood education has long been a subject of interest for educators, policymakers, and researchers. The formative years of schooling, particularly in the 1st and 3rd grades, are crucial for the development of foundational skills in reading, writing, and comprehension. These skills are not only essential for academic success but also for the overall cognitive and social development of children. As such, understanding and optimizing the teaching strategies employed at these stages is of paramount importance.

In recent years, educational research has highlighted the need for differentiated instruction to cater to the diverse learning styles and needs of students. This has led to the adoption of various innovative teaching strategies in early childhood education. Interactive and engaging methods such as the use of technology, collaborative learning, and play-based learning have become increasingly popular (van Laar et al., 2017). These strategies are designed to enhance student engagement, motivation, and ultimately, learning outcomes

First grade marks the beginning of formal education for many children, where they transition from pre-kindergarten activities to a more structured learning environment (Hosni, 2014). At this stage, teaching strategies often focus on basic literacy skills, phonemic awareness, and the introduction to reading and writing (Yim, 2016). Teachers in the 1st grade typically employ a variety of interactive and engaging methods to capture the attention of young learners, including the use of songs, games, storytelling, and visual aids. These strategies are designed to make learning enjoyable and to foster a positive attitude towards education.

In contrast, 3rd grade represents a more advanced stage of elementary education, where students are expected to build on the foundational skills acquired in earlier grades. At this level, the emphasis shifts towards reading comprehension, critical thinking, and the application of knowledge. Teaching strategies in the 3rd grade often include more complex activities such as group discussions, independent reading assignments, and written exercises that encourage analytical thinking. Teachers might also introduce more structured learning tools, such as textbooks and workbooks, to facilitate a deeper understanding of the material.

Therefore, this comparative study examines the teaching strategies employed by English teachers in the 1st and 3rd grades of elementary schools. By analyzing the differences and similarities in approaches.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As stated by (Hedge, 2003), early learners have specific characteristics. First, even if they cannot understand every word, the kids react to meaning. This indicates that they will understand the meaning of the entire sentence rather than concentrating on the meaning of every single word. Second, instead of learning directly, they tend to do it indirectly. Rather than concentrating totally on what they are being taught, they will learn about everything around them. Third, kids learn from both what they see and hear along with explanations. According to (Nufus, 2019), children respond to language better when it comes to concrete objects than abstract ones. Fourth, they usually demonstrate an enthusiasm of learning and a curiosity about their surroundings. Fifth, they require the teacher's approval and undivided attention. They must comprehend what learning entails, and in order to do so, they require their teacher to give them careful attention. Sixth, they have a strong desire to share personal experiences and learn from them as the primary subjects in the classroom. Lastly, they have a short attention span; unless an activity holds their interest for longer than ten minutes, they are likely to become bored and lose interest.

Based on the young learners' characteristic above, teachers should try to find right strategies by considering their needs. According to (Petina, 2023) there are two areas on which the defining of strategy might be concentrated, firstly, a strategy is an action plan that comprises several teaching and learning resources and methodologies. It implies that developing a plan is a process of preparation rather than actual action. Second, the plan is organized to achieve the objective. It suggests that the primary objective of developing a strategy is to carry out objectives in real life.

The main goal of education for young learners is to stimulate all areas of a child's development—physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and linguistic—so that they can grow to their full potential (Pratiwi et al., 2021). Every facet of a child's growth influences every other one. Multiple studies have indicated that different teaching pedagogies can aid in the learning process. According to (Putra, 2016) verbal illustrations, demonstrations, question-and-answer sessions, and look-and-say exercises are the most successful tactics that teachers commonly use to encourage the participation of young learners (Pratama & Awaliyah, 2008).

This critical period in a child's educational journey involves the development of foundational skills in literacy, numeracy, and socialization. Effective teaching strategies for this age group must be engaging, developmentally appropriate, and flexible to cater to diverse learning needs. (Camreon, n.d.) explained in her books some types of strategies in teaching: (1) play-based learning, Vygotsky's theory of social development highlights the importance of play in cognitive development. Play allows children to experiment, solve problems, and develop language skills in a natural context (Olds et al., 2021). Research has indicated that learning through play can greatly improve one's reading and numeracy abilities. For instance, children who participated in play-based activities improved more in vocabulary and reading comprehension than children in more typical, direct instruction settings, according to a study by (Pachler et al., 2020) storytelling,

Teachers can use picture books, puppets, and digital stories to make storytelling sessions interactive and engaging. Encouraging children to retell stories or create their own stories can further reinforce language skills (Mu'tashim, J, P, and Syafi'i, 2018). According to (Purwatiningsih, 2015), kids who participated in frequent storytelling sessions shown a significant improvement in their language ability when compared to those who did not; (3) phonics instruction, the relationship between letters and sounds is taught through phonics instruction. Research indicates that young learners can enhance their reading fluency and word decoding skills with the support of systematic phonics training (Mamuaya, Nova Ch., 2023). Their meta-analysis shows that systematic phonics training improves spelling and reading accuracy significantly; (4) multisensory approaches, the foundation of multisensory learning is the notion that using various senses improves memory and learning (Hidayatulloh & Sugirin, 2022). This method works especially well for young students, who frequently require tangible experiences in order to comprehend abstract ideas;

(5) integration of technology, technology offers many kinds of apps or websites that can be used in teaching English language. Digital tools can provide interactive and personalized learning experiences that traditional methods cannot. Interactive apps and software can offer immediate feedback, helping students to correct errors and practice new skills effectively.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses qualitative research. In order to fully understand the phenomenon and place it in its real-world context, this study will employ a descriptive case study methodology.

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As said by Yin (Yin, 2018) The case study makes an effort to explain "how" and "why" a social phenomenon occurs. Researcher asks the students about their perception towards the use of debate activity for their critical thinking skill.

1. Participants

The participant of this study is an English teacher at SDI Miftahul Diniyah at Pamulang. The teacher teaches English for the 1st until 6th grade, but in this research the researcher only compared the strategies in teaching English language between the 1st and 3rd grade.

2. Instruments

This research will use classroom observation and interview as the data collection. The field note-taking will be the instrument for classroom observation and notes also recorder as the instruments for interview session. The classroom observation is used to see the real condition for the teaching and learning activities in the 1st and 3rd grade of SDI Miftahul Diniyah Pamulang. Meanwhile interview is used to support the research. In this research interview was conducted to find out what is the teacher's strategies in teaching English to young learners and also to find out the differences between teaching in the 1st and 3rd grade.

3. Data Analysis

Data could be analyzed in a number of methods, including transcription, member verification, coding, and content analysis. Transcribing involves transferring oral facts into written language (Gerring, 2007). In order to maintain privacy, the researcher had altered the names in this stage to pseudonyms. Member checking, sought to confirm the accuracy of the data by double-checking it. If there is any material that was overlooked, participants are welcome to contribute it and provide clarifications regarding the data. Additionally, the researcher sent the data to the participants via email. Additionally, every participant gave their approval for the research's data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Questions	Answers
1. How is the difference between teaching English in 1 st and 3 rd grade in elementary school	“The first grade is quite harder because they need to adapt from kindergarten to elementary school, they love to play, they often confused or even wrong in doing their task from the teacher instruction” “Meanwhile for the 3 rd grade, they grow, they understand the instruction”
2. What teaching strategies do you find most effective for 1 st and 3 rd graders?	“It is good to use picture and playing game, but since they are the very young learner, we need to combine methods and strategies in one topic”
3. How do you manage classroom behaviour and keep young learners engaged, for the 1 st and 3 rd grade?	“For the 1 st grade change the setting class weekly, using punishment and reward” “For the 3 rd grade the teacher need to ask the learner to involve in the classroom activity and using punishment and reward”
4. How do you differentiate instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of your students in 1 st and 3 rd grades?	“We need to know and understand students’ needs”

Teaching English to 1st and 3rd-grade students involves adapting strategies to suit the developmental and educational needs specific to each age group. This comparative analysis highlights the differences and similarities in teaching approaches, focusing on cognitive, social, and emotional development, as well as instructional methods and classroom management.

The comparative analysis of teaching strategies for 1st and 3rd-grade students in English reveals significant differences in instructional approaches

tailored to their distinct developmental stages. First graders, characterized by their concrete thinking and short attention spans, benefit immensely from play-based learning and the use of visual aids (Oktavia et al., 2022). Activities such as role-playing, educational games, and storytelling capture their interest and facilitate foundational literacy skills through phonics and simple reading exercises (Purnami, 2022). The need for structured routines and immediate feedback in classroom management is crucial for guiding behaviour and maintaining engagement among first graders, who require significant teacher support and reassurance (Nilma Taula'bi', 2022).

In contrast, third graders, who exhibit emerging abstract thinking and improved focus, thrive on more complex and project-based learning tasks. They are capable of handling longer-reassignments and engaging in discussions that promote critical thinking and deeper comprehension. Their advanced language skills allow for a shift towards reading comprehension and sophisticated writing tasks, fostering a more nuanced understanding of language. Classroom management for third graders involves clear expectations and opportunities for self-management, as they are more independent and responsible in their learning.

Socially, first graders are in the early stages of developing peer interaction skills, necessitating structured activities that encourage sharing and cooperation. Emotional expression is also a significant aspect, with young learners needing strategies to manage their emotions. Third graders, on the other hand, have improved emotional regulation and can engage in more complex social interactions, benefiting from peer learning and group projects. The development of empathy and cooperative skills is more pronounced in third graders, allowing for a more collaborative classroom environment.

Overall, the differentiated instructional strategies highlight the importance of aligning teaching methods with the cognitive, social, and emotional development of students. By understanding these developmental differences, educators can create tailored learning experiences that effectively meet the needs of both 1st and 3rd-grade students, thereby enhancing their educational outcomes and fostering a supportive learning environment.

CONCLUSION

The need of adjusting instructional tactics to the unique developmental stages of young learners is brought to light by a comparative analysis of teaching methods for first- and third-grade elementary school students. Play-based learning, phonics, and visual aids are particularly useful for first graders, who are concrete thinkers with shorter attention spans. To control their behavior and maintain involvement, regular feedback and structured routines are crucial. On the other hand, project-based learning, reading comprehension exercises, and discussion-based activities that foster critical thinking are beneficial for third graders, who exhibit developing abstract thinking and increased independence. Clear expectations and chances for self-regulation are key components of classroom management for these older students. The study also highlights the disparities in these age groups' social and emotional development, with first graders needing more regulated social interactions

and emotional assistance and third graders being more prepared for peer-driven and collaborative learning experiences. Teachers can

improve educational achievements for younger students by designing more supportive and productive learning settings that are in line with the developmental needs of each age group. This customized strategy builds a solid basis for students' future learning experiences while supporting their overall developmental well-being and academic growth.

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