



## Non-English Teachers' Challenges in Teaching English for Young Learners at Barunawati Kindergarten Padang

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### Abstract

This research explores non-English teachers' challenges in teaching English for young learners at Barunawati Kindergarten, Padang. This study focuses on teachers who do not have formal training in English language instruction but are responsible for teaching English as a local content subject. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach by utilizing classroom observations and semi-structured interviews to gather data from one non-English teacher. The study's findings revealed several challenges faced by teachers at Barunawati Kindergarten, including classroom behavior management, student engagement and motivation, student work assessment, organizing teacher work, and meeting the diverse needs of students. Moreover, organizing teacher work and meeting the diverse needs of students were identified as the main challenges. In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of professional development programs that equip non-English teachers with practical strategies for teaching English, particularly in organizing lessons and addressing students' varying needs. These findings provide valuable insights for improving English language instruction in early childhood education settings where teachers may not have a background in English.

### Keywords:

Non-English Teachers,  
English Language Teaching,  
Young Learners

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## INTRODUCTION

The term "Young Learners" in English language learning can vary. Young learners are defined by a broad educational age range rather than a single fixed age (Pinter, A. 2011). The focus is on children in preschool and primary or elementary school. Preschool typically starts around three years old, and primary school follows between 5-7 years old. It means young learners encompass those in the preschool years (roughly 3-5 years old) and middle childhood (primary school years, roughly 5-11 or 12 years old). According to Syafei (2020), Teaching English to Young Learners is guiding and facilitating Young Learners ages 5-12 years old for their activities in learning, knowing, understanding, and comprehending ideas, attitudes, values, skills, and information of English using tricks and strategies which

will be used in changing and redefining their thought forward their daily surrounding situation as a foreign languages learners. To conclude, this paragraph explored several viewpoints regarding the age range that defines "Young Learners" in learning English. This research focuses on children between 4 - 6 years old who are categorized as kindergarteners.

Teaching English for young learners is a complex endeavor filled with specific challenges. Early childhood development necessitates unique approaches, and teachers must possess a particular skill set to engage this age group, especially kindergarteners, effectively. The current emphasis on communication skills is one of the major obstacles (Copland et al., 2014). Although this change aims to provide students with practical language skills, teachers who are used to a primarily scientific curriculum may find it challenging. It is further compounded by potential anxieties about their own English proficiency, especially when expected to use Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methods that heavily involve speaking the target language. Teachers needing more confidence in their abilities may need help implementing these methods effectively.

Shin (2013) stated that students' motivation could be another significant challenge. In contexts with limited exposure to English outside of school, mainly rural areas, young learners may need help to grasp the purpose of learning the language. This lack of inherent motivation can be a persistent challenge for teachers. Classroom management is another challenge in Teaching English for Young Learners. Andrea (2016) notes that it is difficult for one teacher to actively engage and supervise 15–30-spirited young learners. Moreover, according to Wright et al. (2016), teachers must invest a great deal of time in producing their resources due to a lack of specialized teaching materials catered to the developmental stages of young learners. According to Shin (2013), teachers must also accommodate the vast range of individual variations and language abilities among young learners, which calls for classes that match different needs and paces.

English teaching for young learners at Barunawati Kindergarten, Padang, is carried out by teachers from non-English departments. They are not used to English and are not trained to teach English for young learners. Based on preliminary research by interviewing non-English teachers, it was found that they need help teaching English for young learners. That is why it is essential to discover their challenges in teaching English for young learners.

Talking challenges in teaching English for young learners, previous research has highlighted the various challenges teachers face when teaching English for young learners, i.e., Copland et al., 2014; Lee & Macaro, 2013; Pransiska, 2016; Tekin et al., 2023, explain that teachers' challenges in teaching young learners are various such as, first limited attention span generally refers to the short duration of time that young children can focus on a single task, activity, or subject before becoming distracted or losing interest. Second, lack of language proficiency refers to having insufficient language proficiency due to gaps, struggles, or inability to use a language to the level required to function competently in various situations due to limitations in one or more language skills. Third, cultural differences refer to the diverse ways groups think and behave due to dissimilar historical experiences and social learning processes. Fourth, the term "class size" describes the number of

students a teacher teaches at any given time, and it is the standard of instruction. Fifth, a curriculum is a coordinated set of learning standards and guidelines that define the contents and processes of educating students in a school or educational program.

However, these challenges are faced by teachers who come from the English Department. For this study, the challenges that will be analyzed come from teachers outside the English Department or non-English teachers.

## **METHOD**

### ***Research Design***

As outlined by Creswell (2013), descriptive qualitative research is a methodology within a qualitative inquiry that prioritizes providing detailed and comprehensive descriptions. It delves into the "what" and "how" of a phenomenon, experience, group, or setting. This approach aims to create a rich and nuanced picture by gathering in-depth data through interviews, observations, documents, and other qualitative methods. This type of research involves systematic data collection through methods such as observations and interviews.

### ***Data and Source of Data***

Data for this research were collected by observing one non-English teacher from Barunawati Kindergarten. This teacher had already been interviewed during the preliminary research stage. Since the problem addressed in this research was based on the results of interviews with this teacher, it was appropriate to select her again as a data source. Using the same participant ensured consistency and allowed for an analysis of how her perspectives and experiences may have changed.

The main data were gathered from classroom observations based on the theory and findings of Cameron (2001), Shin (2013) and Copland et al. (2014) and were used as indicators to guide the collection of observational data, the supporting data were obtained from interviews and interview guidelines, which were informed by the observation results with teachers who provided further information about non-English teachers' challenges in teaching English for young learners at Barunawati Kindergarten.

### ***Instrumentation***

The main instruments used to collect data in this study were observation and interview. The observation focused on the selected teacher as the data source, and data were collected based on the theory and findings of Cameron (2001), Shin (2013) and Copland et al. (2014) presented earlier regarding the key challenges in teaching English for young learners.

The study used semi-structured interviews to collect data. The purpose of these interviews was to support the data collected from the classroom observations. The data gathered from the observations informed the questions asked during the interviews. These questions were then validated by one of the lecturers in the English Language Study Program at Universitas Negeri Padang.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *Research Finding*

The findings revealed the following challenges:

1. **Classroom Management:** While the teacher generally applied classroom management strategies, they struggled to integrate movement breaks through songs and English instructions, limiting students' active engagement and vocabulary acquisition. The teacher predominantly used Indonesian, fearing that students would not understand English instructions, which further reduced exposure to the language.
2. **Motivating Students:** The teacher employed strategies to foster interest in English but lacked interactive activities, like games or role-playing, that actively involve students. Challenges in preparation, resource availability, time constraints, classroom management, and limited experience hindered the effective use of engaging activities.
3. **Assessing Students' Work:** Although assessments were conducted, there was a lack of hands-on, creative language-learning activities. For instance, vocabulary practice was limited when students were not prompted to label their artwork in English. Constraints such as time, resources, and classroom management affected the teacher's ability to implement creative assessment strategies.
4. **Organizing Teacher Work:** Organization emerged as a key challenge, with teachers relying on general lesson plans tied to weekly themes, such as "animals," without a comprehensive focus on language skills. Insufficient preparation of materials before class also disrupted learning, with lost time and unfocused students due to the teacher's lack of readiness.
5. **Meeting Diverse Needs:** Addressing students' varied needs posed significant challenges, as activities primarily focused on listening and repetition without adapting to different learning styles (e.g., kinesthetic or visual). The teacher also struggled to differentiate support according to students' English proficiency levels, impacting the effectiveness of language instruction across the class. Limited resources, time, and training further exacerbated these challenges in supporting diverse learners effectively.

### *Discussion*

Based on the data obtained, it can be concluded that the main challenges faced by teachers at Barunawati Kindergarten were related to organizing their work and meeting the diverse needs of their students. As teachers without a background in English, they struggled with lesson preparation due to language limitations and a lack of knowledge about effective English teaching strategies.

This aligns with the research by Donaldson and Johnson (2010), which indicated that teachers who teach outside their area of qualification often face challenges in designing and implementing lessons, ultimately impacting the quality of instruction. According to Tsui (2003), the process of lesson planning and

preparation was influenced by teachers' language skills and access to resources. This challenge was exacerbated by the need to manage and adapt teaching materials, which required both linguistic skills and the ability to navigate and utilize various educational tools.

Research by Goldhaber and Brewer (2000) also showed that teachers without relevant certification were likely unable to meet the diverse needs of students effectively. Furthermore, research by Du Plessis et al. (2014) highlighted that the lack of ongoing professional development for teachers prevented them from optimally supporting students with varying levels of ability. Therefore, the challenge in meeting the diverse needs of students was not only due to the teachers' language limitations but also due to the lack of sustained professional support.

## CONCLUSION

This study identified several challenges non-English teachers face in teaching English for young learners at Barunawati Kindergarten. Critical challenges in classroom management included difficulties with implementing movement breaks and logical consequences, while a lack of interactive activities hindered student motivation. In assessing students' work, teachers needed help with integrating creative tasks. Organizational issues, such as lesson planning, preparation, and material management, were also significant challenges. Finally, teachers needed help meeting the diverse needs of students, particularly in addressing multiple intelligences and providing varying levels of support.

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