

# **PROCEEDINGS**

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## **REVITALIZING THE PRACTICE OF TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS IN INDONESIA (TEYLIN)**

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ENGLISH EDUCATION  
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**Revitalizing the Practice of Teaching English to Young Learners in Indonesia (TEYLIN)**

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## ACTIVATING BOTH LEFT AND RIGHT SIDES OF BRAIN IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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### INTRODUCTION

Teaching English involves four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Grammar, Vocabulary and Pronunciation are the materials to support the four language skills. And in the process of the teaching, teachers tend to use the left brain to deliver the materials of teaching in spite of the other side. They pay less attention on the right brain. As McFarland (1981) said that in most human being, almost all right handed as well as most left handed, their left hemisphere is slightly larger than the right. Perhaps it is because the language and speech areas are usually located in the left hemisphere. Besides they work differently: the left side seems to operate logically, while the right side functions in more spatial-intuitive mode.

When the process of teaching, especially teaching English only uses the left brain it will bore the students, because the process of teaching tend to be teacher-centered, the teacher are more active than the students. That is why we can see that a lot of students are not interested in studying English. English becomes one of the uninteresting subject to study.

How can we activate our right brain then? How can we maximize our right brain function as many as we use our left brain to improve our language skills? This paper will share our experience in teaching English by activating our both sides of brain to make the English teaching more enjoyable, especially for young learners.

### CHARACTERISTIC OF YOUNG LEARNER

As the international language, the objective of teaching English is that at the end of the study the students are expected to be able to master the four language skills. The young learners have special characteristic of their psychology and attitude. It is different from adult students. So, the teaching English must be also different from them. Young learners refer to children of four to twelve years old. They tend to be interested in playing and moving more, whereas adults seem reluctant to move and regard playing as childish. Child worlds are their daily games and activities. Playing games has its own meaning for them that is enjoyment. Besides children learn from their environments by improving what they have, they will interact with all of things they meet around them.

Young learners have their own special characteristics. These characteristics should be known and understood by the teacher to give contribution to improve the quality of teaching and learning process. Clark (1990) recommends some special characteristics of young learners:

1. Young learners are still in the process of developing their concepts. They develop their way of thinking from the concrete to abstract thing.
2. Young learners do not have real linguistic need. Different from the adult learners who already had certain purpose in learning language for instance, to have a better job. Children rarely have such needs in learning a foreign language. They teach subjects what school provides to them.
3. Young learners learn more slowly. They are in the process of learning many things at the same time such as developing knowledge about the world, developing awareness of concept, acquiring a multiplicity of skills and developing their first language. In learning language, they learn more slowly too but in the long run they have a better result comparing to the adult learners who learn faster.



Haliwell (1992) mentions that: 1) Young learners already have great skill in using limited language creatively. In the early stages of their mother tongue development, children are excellent at making a little language go along away. So, they are creative in both grammatical forms and concepts. 2) Young learners frequently learn indirectly rather than directly. In their ages, the capacity for conscious learning of forms and grammatical patterns is still relatively undeveloped. They go through subconscious process or acquisition more than the direct learning. If their surrounding provides more encouragement, it will much help them to learn. 3) Young learners take great pleasure in finding and creating fun in what they do. Children's world is always fun and they know exactly how to create fun. 4) Young learners have a ready imagination. Children's world is full of imagination and fantasy and it is more than simply a matter of enjoyment.

### LEFT AND RIGHT SIDES OF BRAIN

McFarland (1981) in his book "Psychological Psychology" explains that human brain divided into two hemispheres, which are commonly called left brain and right brain, work differently. The left side seems to operate logically and verbally, the other side functions in more spatial-intuitive mode.

McCarty also supports that the two different sides of the brain control different 'modes' of thinking. Experimentation has shown that the two different sides, or hemispheres of the brain are responsible for different manner of thinking. Most individuals have a distinct preference for one of these styles of thinking. Some, however are more whole brained and equally adept at both modes. In general, school tend to use left brain modes of thinking, while downplaying the right brain ones. Left brain scholastic subjects focus on the logical thinking, analysis, and accuracy. Right brained subjects, on the other hand, focus on aesthetics, feeling and creativity. ([http://www.funderstanding.com/right\\_left\\_brain.cfm](http://www.funderstanding.com/right_left_brain.cfm))

Budhisetiawan also suggests that left brain indicates logic, analytic, language, sequence, and mathematics. So the left brain respond on stimulus in which it needs criticizing skill, declaring, analyzing, explaining, discussing and judging. On the other hand, the right brain deals with rhythm, creativity, colour, imagination, and dimension. So the right brain functions if a person is drawing, pointing, playing, exercising, singing, and other motoric activities. (<http://www.ialf.edu/kipbipa/papers/marjanSBudhisetiawan.doc>)

The following table illustrates the differences between left brain and right brain thinking (McCarty):

LEFT BRAIN	RIGHT BRAIN
Logical	Random
Sequential	Intuitive
Rational	Holistic
Analytical	Synthesizing
Objective	Subjective look
Looks at parts.	Wholes

Windura (2009) also adds that that right brain has long term memory and the left brain has sort term memory. He also classifies the different sides of brain as the following:

LEFT BRAIN	RIGHT BRAIN
Words	Conceptual
Numbers	Rhythm
Lines	Pictures
Logic	Colours
Orders	Dimension
Counts	Imagination
	Daydream



He explains that people will remember other people's faces they have met rather than remember their names. It is because names are words (language) and that means the left brain takes part, meanwhile people faces are figure/picture which have been the characteristics of right brain.

Basically the two sides of brain function equally, they are support each other, but most of us prefer one side over the other. So it is important for school to be more 'whole brained' in the teaching and learning processes. To increase a more whole brained scholastics experience, teachers should use instruction techniques that connect both sides of the brain. In language classroom, teachers can use right-brain learning activities by incorporating more patterning, metaphors, analogies, role-playing, visuals, and motor activity. So theoretically, we will have double brain force, because we use both sides of the brain capacity. (McCarty, [http://www.funderstanding.com /right\\_left\\_brain.cfm](http://www.funderstanding.com /right_left_brain.cfm))

### TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH STRATEGIES FOR YOUNG LEARNER

As a teacher, in teaching English for young learner we have to know about all the characteristic they have, so we can decide the approach and method we are going to use, because teaching English is actually an effort to transfer the English knowledge from the teacher to the students by approaching the students with all their special characteristics.

The purpose of teaching English is to help the students learn how to communicate in English well. Besides, teaching English is making new habits based on orthography, structure and vocabulary of English through regularly and widely practices. Teaching English is to give the skill and knowledge of spoken and written ability in English that consists of four language skills; they are listening, speaking, reading and writing.

As a professional English teacher, we are demanded to be able to apply varieties methods accurately. Method of teaching is very important because it gives big influence to the teaching – learning process. The successful teaching – learning process is not only depends on the teacher or learners but also the accurate of choosing method of teaching and material of teaching. Brown (2001) reminds us that method is a generalized set of classroom specifications for accomplishing linguistic objectives. Methods tend to be concerned primarily with teacher and students roles and behaviours and secondarily with such features as linguistic and subject matter objectives, sequencing, and materials.

Our left brain is responsible to the enhancement of language learning. However, in learning language we should also concern about giving the right brain stimulus so that the two sides of the brain work equally. It is because those sides of the brain function differently, but they support the learning processes to the maximum achievement.

The left brain is more rational and logical analyses thing in detail and it is related to verbal production (language). The right brain, on the other hand, examine thing as a whole and it tends to be more imaginative and intuitive. Language learning is maintained by the left brain, so in order to be more whole brained, teachers should think of some teaching strategies which also stimulate the other part of the brain, right brain. In this case, the two hemispheres need to be functioned in equal portion.

To give stimulus on both sides of the brain, we should understand the characteristics of left-right brain. The language learning motivates the left brain, so we should think of strategies in language learning which give more stimuli to the right brain. Right brain react more on motor activity. Asher as quoted by Brown (2001) suggests learning activity which combine the linguistics and motor activity. Asher realizes that children in learning their first language do a lot of listening activities before they try to speak; they try to respond by physical activities. TPR or Total physical Response gives the students more chance for listening and acting. The teachers play as the instructor and the students are the actor.

Right brain also concerns to conceptual, music/rhythm, colours, pictures, dimension, imagination, and daydream (Windura, 2009). Teachers can use those materials as teaching resources. Bringing song into the classroom will give students motivation, because they can listen to the music with full relaxation and enjoyable moment. Colourful pictures are very interesting. Those will give sort of situation in the language usage in real context.



Those characteristics of the right and left brain should inspire the teachers to be more creative to invent the new techniques in teaching English for young learners. These followings are suggestions to lead the English classroom to be more whole brained.

### LANGUAGE AND PHYSICAL RESPONSE

Brown (2001) argues that TPR has limitation since the teachers are the only part who is producing the language and on the opposite the students just respond the instruction by physical activity without producing the language. It seems to be officially effective in the beginner level of language proficiency. Moreover after the students overcome they fear of speaking English, they should be led into the classroom conversation and any other communicative language classroom.

Combining physical activity and language is not limited to the use of original TPR. In the other occasion teachers can lead the students to do the action and sometime to be the instructor. Teacher can ask the students to stand in circle. The first student starts the activity by giving instruction, (*take me the book!, open the door!, close the window! etc*) then the next student respond the instruction by doing the action and after that the student can take the role as the instructor and it should go on to the next students. Each student should give different instruction, so that each student should think of new sentences differently from the others.

On the next section, teachers can reverse the activity. One student is chosen to be the model or actor. The teacher should decide the topic first. If the teacher decides 'animal' as the topic, the actor should behave like the animal chosen and the rest of the students guess 'what kind of animal it is'. On the next level, teacher can ask the students to guess the activity in sentence by using different tenses; *an elephant is playing football, a bird is eating corns, monkey is eating banana, etc.*

The technique suggested above is suitable for teaching vocabularies or speaking for the beginner students. To get the students engage to the materials, teachers can ask them to mime their activities during the day, and then the other students try to guess and write the action into one full text.

### MUSIC AND PICTURES

Music and pictures give excellence contribution to the language learning. Harmer (2007a) says that instrumental music can turn the students' mood, or as a stimulus for any number of imaginations to build up a story. Teachers can dictate the first sentence of the sentence of the story and then have the students to complete the whole story base on the music. Teachers can play several different music/song at the class; so that the students will create different story and they can read out the story and let the others guess which song excerpt inspire it. In the listening section students can fill in the blank in song lyrics, rearrange lines or verses, or listen to songs and say what mood or message they convey.

Pictures offer challenging activities in language learning. They are not only implying the aspect of the socio-cultural situation, but they give interesting, meaningful practice in the sound, structure, and English vocabulary. (Finocchiaro, 1974). She also suggests three kinds of picture; (1) pictures of individual figure, (2) pictures of situation relate to people's activities and object involved, (3) a series of pictures.

In PPP procedures (presentation, Practice, Production), Harmer (2007) explains that in Presentation section, teacher shows the students a picture of situation which describes people activities and ask the students whether the people in it are at *work*, or *at home* to elicit the situation. The teacher then points to one person and attempts to describe that person doing in a sentence. At the practice point, he teacher gets the students to repeat in chorus or individual. At the production point, the students are asked to use the new language in sentences of their own. For example, they can think of their family or friends might be doing at this moment, like: my mother is cooking, my brother is studying. Etc. (2007b: 66)

In a simple technique a teacher can show the students colourful pictures and ask hem to describe the picture, like colour of the clothes people wearing, colour of flower, animal and so on.



Other interesting pictures are series pictures. These pictures can give more information about people activities and situation in a longer section. Teacher may add variety to the 'sameness' of pictures by pointing them orderly or randomly, and then ask the students to describe, example; the first picture is describing a man is getting up, the next picture describe a man taking a bath, next picture describe a man is having breakfast.

In more complex pictures, teacher can show the student a comic. Comic is series of pictures which present a story, so based on the picture the students can create their own stories.

### STORY TELLING

Story telling can be applied in the process of teaching and learning English as Harmer (2007a) argues that people spend a lot of time telling other people stories and anecdotes about what happened to us and other people. Students need to be able to tell stories too. As it is explain previously, pictures can inspire people to make a story. A sequence pictures give more opportunity to the students to create a story base on them. Students are divided into groups; each group is given one piece of the sequence pictures, and let the group make their story base on the picture they have got. The first group will tell their story and the other group should continue the previous one.

Teachers can also encourage the students to retell the story they have just read in their book. Narrative is one of students' favourite genres, because it tells about legends from their country or about fairy tales. Some students are very impressive when telling about narrative. They use costume to express what in the story, and they sometime try to act as the characters in the story.

### AUDIO-VIDEO

Audio-video can be an alternative media of teaching. 'Video provides audio which can be heard by our students, moreover the speaker can be seen; their body movement give some clues to the meaning, the clothes they wear and the colour, their location and background of information can be visually seen.' (Harmer:2007). He advises some technique for second language learner: Play the video without sound; after playing the video, give the students some times to think and predict on what the characters have said and rewind the conversations letter with the audio. Play the audio without picture; the students are played the audio only without watching to the video. They are expected to guess where the speakers are, and what are they look like, what is going on and so on. Once they have predicted the teacher rewind and play the audio with the video. Freeze frame; the teacher sometime presses the pause button and asks the students what's going to happen next. Dividing the class in half; half the class faces the screen, while the other half sits with their backs to it. The 'screen' half describes the visual images to the 'wall' half.

### POETRY

Writing poem is fun because we can express our feeling freely. It uses more metaphors which language can be more imaginative. It presents our imagination and feeling vividly. Anderson, and Anderson (1997) say 'the poetic text type is usually concerned with feelings and in vivid description. The purpose of a poem is to present a description or point of view usually with thought-provoking images'

Harmer (2007a) suggests that poetry writing is appropriate for young learners who are usually not afraid to express what in their mind, but it is also appropriate for older learners too, since it allows them to be more creative than is permitted in some other activities.

There are many kinds of poetry. Teachers can start from creating acrostic poems, where the letters of each line can be read down words, from a word which is the topic of the poem.

### **Thunder**

Terrifying sound  
High above  
Un-nerving  
Noisy, so loud  
Disturbing the peace  
Electrical energy gone wild  
Reverberating all around

Louisa Di Bartolomeo

Chinquapin is another type of poetry which the first line consist of one word, the second line consists of two words, line three consists of three words, line four consists of four words and line five consists of one word

### **Lizards**

Lizards  
Shiny, sleepy  
Resting in sunshine  
Look at him closely  
Prehistoric

Henry Lowson

Haiku is another kind of poetry. Line 1 consists of five syllables as the subject, line 2 consists of seven syllables describes the subject, line 3 consists of 5 syllables continue description.

### **Winter**

A frosty morning  
Children sitting together  
With shoulders up high

Kelly Evans

Those suggestions mention above are only few numbers from several others. Good teacher should explore his teaching material to give some interesting variation to the students, so they will not get bored for some monotonous in learning but highly motivated in their learning process and the most important is that they stimulate students' right brains.



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