

# Realia: the Effective Media for Teaching English for EYL

By

**Siti Suharsih**

[Siti.suharsih@yahoo.co.id](mailto:Siti.suharsih@yahoo.co.id)

**Aisyah Hamidiyah**

[Asiyah.hamidiyah@gmail.com](mailto:Asiyah.hamidiyah@gmail.com)

Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University, Serang-Banten

**Abstract:** Since government declared that elementary school could add one lesson in their curriculum, English is considered to be the favorite subject added to the curriculum. Since then, many elementary schools put English as one lesson for the students. However, applying English for elementary students, especially for state schools, gives big challenge. It becomes big challenge since the teachers have to give best performance in teaching even in insufficient condition of the schools. Many problems arise from the schools such as the lack of facility, classroom management, books and also the educational background of the teachers. In the aspect of classroom management is about media, method or technique.

It is important to set the classroom to be fun and to be interesting. One of the efforts of making interesting teaching learning process is taking real object to the classroom. This technique is called realia. Realia is various kind of visual which can be effectively by EFL and EYL. Realia provides real-life object to class room. This study aims to describe how realia applied by English teacher in their classroom. The writer observed the class and then gave some questions to some English teachers who teach in some elementary school. The school was located in Serang Kota, that is SDN 03 Serang Kota. The writer gave the questions to some teacher of that school. From the answer from the questions, it can be found out that realia can be interesting media for elementary students. They knew the objects by experiencing those objects. This experience made them happy in learning English.

**Key words:** *Realia, effective media, teaching English*

## Introduction

The Ministry of Education in Indonesia has made the decree no 060/U/1993 which stated that all of the State Elementary Schools in Indonesia could put English lesson in the curriculum. The basic reason why English should be taught from first grade of State Elementary School is that, because English is considered as the important skill to be mastered. The skill is needed to face globalization when English is used as international language all over the world.

Based on the observation from some state schools in Serang Kota, a capital city in Banten province, some schools are still lack of facility to support media for teaching English. They don't have English laboratory where the students can practice listening and pronunciation. They don't have sufficient material to teach English since books for children are very limited. Moreover, some of the English teachers do not have English as their basic education.

Those problems might be more than what the writer has mentioned above. Especially for the English teacher, she/he is the one who faces the real condition in class room. Knowing the real problems of teaching English for the Elementary School, it is expected to find the solution of those problems.

Regarding to the fact and phenomenon, the researcher is interested in conducting the research dealing the implementation of teaching English using realia for Elementary Student. By doing

the research, the researcher will explore teacher's answer and opinion about teaching learning process during they teach using the media.

Teaching English for young learner needs creative effort to be more interesting. One of the efforts is that preparing real object in teaching process in the classroom. Presenting real objects in classroom is realia. As Chiarantano (2005) said that realia consists of real object or items which are used in the classroom to illustrate and teach vocabulary. In other side, Chiarantano (2005) added that realia is used as an alternative aid to facilitate language acquisition and production. Realia concretizes vocabulary and language and places it in a frame of language.

Realia supports the fact that young learners are in the process in acquiring new vocabulary in their level. In acquiring new vocabulary or new words, young learners need to have the real concept of world presented by words. To help the students to figure out the words and the concept, teacher needs media to present the idea become reality. For the reason, realia is considered to be the alternative media to run the teaching process to be more enjoyable and interesting.

## **Theoretical Foundation**

### **Teaching English to Young Learner**

Teaching English to young learners need a very much understanding of the characteristics of the learners, skillful in managing the classroom and good ability in the language.

Young learners are very special; they are in their period to get the ability in a second language. There is a golden age for learning a language. Tahta, Wood and Loewenthal (1981:45) state that children will be better in language learning before the age of 8, while Long (1990:24) remarks under the age of 6 will be better for them in learning language. Many experts go along together that sooner is better in language learning for children because they will get difficulties in learning new language at puberty or adolescent stages. The young and adult learners should have different treatment based on their characteristics, needs and ability.

Teaching English as a foreign language to young learners requires that teachers have a thorough understanding of young learners' development, needs, and characteristics. It needs a skillful teacher to be involved in the teaching learning process. There are three assumption of a skillful teacher as stated by Brookfield (2006:17)

1. Use whatever helps students learn
2. Adopt a critically reflective stance towards their practice
3. Do a constant awareness of how student are experiencing their learning and perceiving teacher's actions.

The teachers should also have not only the required personal qualities, but also training in the discipline and fields of study appropriate to the language teaching process because young learners' needs are different from adults' need, they need:

- Affirmation of their abilities and interests
  - To believe that they are contributing to the class
  - To feel a sense of belonging, that they matter to others
  - Self-confidence, safety, trust, and acceptance
  - Interaction with others
  - To connect new information to their lives
  - To learn in an orderly, clean, and well-light environment in which their work is displayed
- (Tomlinson, 2002; Miller and Tallal, 2006; and Gregory and Chapman, 2002)

The need of young learners to interact with others should bring the classroom into a communicative and meaningful atmosphere. Classroom management is a key to skilled teaching and enhances learning by optimizing time on task. It is the teacher's responsibility to create a welcoming and safe classroom which offers a rich learning environment. Thus, the goal of teaching learning can be achieved.

## **Teaching Media**

Teaching language needs good and interesting media. Media used in the teaching learning activity will keep the learner focus on the teacher, thus the classroom will be on teacher's control. The media used should be effective and interesting; Suyanto (2007: 6.4) said that the use of effective and interesting media in teaching can help the students understand the material easily. There are kinds of media can be used in the teaching learning English to young learners, they are:

- Flashcards
- Diagram
- Chart
- Poster
- Video/film
- Animation
- Audio
- Power point
- Smart board
- Puppet
- Realia

The creativity of the teacher will give functions to the media used.

## **Realia**

If a teacher brings a rose or sunflower, a rabbit or a cat, a stove or a pan, into a classroom to help her/him in teaching, she/he is using realia. Realia helps to make English language input as comprehensible as possible and to build "an associative bridge between the classroom and the world" (Heaton, 1979 in Smith, 1997). Learners can directly connect the language to the objects mentioned in the material. By having realia in the classroom, young learners can develop their multi-sensor function by experiencing the learning "through seeing, hearing, touching, and manipulating" items (Rivers (1983, in Smith, 1997). The teaching learning process will be effective and enjoyable, and most of all they will not forget the activities in the classroom.

There are advantages of presenting realia in the teaching learning process:

- Kinesthetic learning is the type of learning that students will most effectively acquire, mostly because they will have hands-on experience.
- The use of realia brings a welcome change in the class, a break from typical class activities like reading and writing.
- The unexpectedness of having to suddenly interact with real objects will keep students on their toes; it will create excitement, and they'll have fun.
- Students have the chance to practice real life situations like using maps and asking for directions in a foreign language, but with the guidance of someone who speaks fluently and will help them get it right. Once they hit the street, they will feel more confident in speaking the language with the locals.

- Students will clearly understand the reason they're learning a particular ESL component. Instead of wondering when and where they might have use for a particular language element, they'll know the reason. (Smith, 1997)

### **Teaching English to young learners using realia**

Drinkwater suggested the use of realia in teaching English to young learners, she used tennis ball, dried bean, plastic bags, scarf and many others to help learners to connect between words and objects (2008).

A research done by Chiarantano (2005) proved that Using realia in the EFL classroom serves to foster a more creative and active teaching-learning environment and promotes cultural understanding. The realia used in the teaching learning should be appropriate with the material and the learners' condition.

Chiarantano (2005) suggested some realia used for teaching English to young learners as mention below.

- to teach vocabulary for animals, clothing, fruit, use actual objects or facsimiles thereof (pieces of clothing, toy animals, plastic fruit). For young learners, it's a very useful tool in making the abstract concrete.

- to introduce learners to Canada (or countries) use a Canadian flag, a map of the world, and photographs of Canada. Create a picture of a country, introduce and practice target vocabulary and sentence patterns (for example: I'm from Japan), and serve as a springboard to compare and contrast Canada with Japan (Japan is part of Asia. Canada is part of North America.)

- to teach prepositions of place (such as on, in, under, next to, in front of, over). Objects can be placed on a desk, in a desk, under a desk and so on.

- to create a dialogue using the present simple tense and present perfect tense use chado (The Japanese tea ceremony)

- to tell a story use Christmas cards as a means to explain the concept of Christmas and some of its many traditions, to illustrate Christmas images such as Santa Claus, reindeer, candy cane, Christmas trees, poinsettia and to teach Christmas greetings such as "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Christmas cards provided a springboard to get my students to talk about their own holidays and customs.

Marier (2004) matched the use of realia with the activities can be done in the teaching learning process. The students are designed to be involved actively in the activities. One activity mentioned by Marier (2004) is below:

### **Alphabet Soup**

#### *Materials*

One large soup pot

Eight cups chicken, beef, or vegetable broth

Various vegetables, such as carrots, green beans, cabbage, peas, potatoes, mushrooms, onions, tomatoes

1/4 to 1/2 lb. alphabet noodles

One bay leaf

Two teaspoons each of oregano, thyme, and basil (or to taste)

Salt and pepper to taste

Knife for chopping (for adult use only)

Plastic knives (optional)

### *Activity*

This is an excellent group activity and a great way to involve parent volunteers. About a week ahead, send a letter home asking families to provide some of the ingredients for the soup. Place the soup stock in a large pot. Simmer the stock as you chop the vegetables. If appropriate, have the children help chop the softer vegetables using plastic knives. Then each child can help add the vegetables he or she brought to share. Cook the alphabet noodles according to package directions. Drain the noodles and add to the soup.

Season the soup with herbs, salt, and pepper. Provide bowls, spoons, and napkins, and ask students to set the table for the meal. As children and parents eat their soup, talk about the alphabet letters in the soup!

Note: You can also do this activity using canned alphabet soup. If you don't have access to a kitchen, portable stove, or microwave oven, serve children alphabet cereal with milk for a healthy, fun snack.

Teacher can take the advantage from the activity above. Not only the teacher can teach the vocabulary but also can advance the teaching to procedure text as it has a specific generic structure.

### **Methodology**

Place of research was taken from one of state elementary schools in Serang Kota. It is SDN 03 Serang. SDN 03 Serang is located in city center and it is in the middle of housing complex. The number of students in this school is quite large, since each class has around 48-50 students.

Research methodology is qualitative. Researchers used qualitative design to describe the implementation of realia. Qualitative is a method which gives descriptive data in written or spoken from the observed community (Surahmad, 1986:21). Data were taken from the result of the interview and source of data are two English teachers who teaches English in SDN 03 Serang. The questions were designed to get vivid picture of the classroom situation during the teacher implementing realia.

In qualitative, the instrument is the researcher herself (Miles and Huberman, 1996: 23). To collect the data researcher use interview with 5 questions. The questions are listed in appendices. Interview is chosen since this technique helps the researcher get sufficient data for the research. A type of interview is individual interview (Kvale, 1996: Silverman, 2005). Researcher used semi-structured interview (Nunan, 1992: 142) that is one technique in interview which tries to give a freedom for the researcher to get the data. Interview was done individually in class room.

### **Discussion**

Data were taken from the interview by the researchers to some English teachers. There are two English teachers in SDN 03 Serang. They are Miss Iis and Miss Neni. The questions are spread to gain the information about the implementation of realia in teaching English. The result of interview is described as follows:

The implementation of Realia in teaching English

When researchers asked about the concept of realia, both of the teachers said that they have not got the idea of realia. However, when the researchers explained that the concept of realia was taking real object to classroom, both of respondents understood the concept. The two respondents agreed that realia was an alternative media to help students understand the meaning through real object. By teaching English using realia, students were easy to memorize some

words. One of the respondents, that was Mss Iis, said that realia was best used for students in first level. In this level, students were having many problems in understanding their new language, that is English. By realia, the concept of meaning did not only rely on abstract one, but it relied on the concrete one. The implementation of teaching English using realia had some varieties. One of the respondents implemented teaching using realia by providing some real object. If the teacher wanted to give some vocabulary about fruit, the teacher asked the students to take the fruit from their home. Then, teacher gave the name of the fruit. Here was the illustration of teaching vocabulary using realia (based on teacher explanation)

- Teacher : anak-anak sekarang keluarkan buah-buahannya dan letakkan diatas meja  
(then the students put the fruit on the table).
- Teacher : Siapa yang hari ini membawa apel?  
(some of the students raise their hand)
- Teacher : Ya..., apel dalam bahasa Inggris adalah *apple*. Sebutkan sama-sama ya..., *apple*  
(Students follow their teacher's instruction. They mention the name of the thing, that was apple)
- Students : Apple (they mentioned the name of the fruit together)
- Teacher : yang membawa pisang siapa?  
(Some students raise their hand and show the fruit)
- Teacher : pisang bahasa Inggrisnya *banana*. Sebutkan lagi bersama-sama. *Banana*  
(Students said together, banana)
- Teacher : ada yang membawa jeruk? Siapa yang membawa jeruk?  
(Some students raised their hand)
- Teacher : siapa yang tahu apa bahasa Inggris nya jeruk?  
(Students answered, *orange*.....)

Then teacher asked the students for every fruit they took. After they knew the name of each fruit, teacher asked them to eat it. During the activity of introducing new vocabulary of fruit, the teacher also gave the concept of another part of speech. For instance, when they were eating the fruit, the activity of *eating* was also introduced by the teacher. Here, the students didn't only recognize *noun*, but they also recognize *verb*.

Miss Iis then gave the opinion that implementing realia was a basic concept of understanding the meaning of word. By implementing realia, teacher had given interesting and fun situation in learning English, especially in vocabulary. Interesting and fun situation was considered as PAKEM (Pembelajaran Aktif, Kreatif, dan Menyenangkan). By realia, students were promoted to be active; trying to find new words based on the thing they brought. The activity of students led the students to be more creative for they also tried to find new word in others part of speech. Finally, the students felt happy in learning new words. When the process of acquiring new words make them happy, Miss Iis said that the media was effective enough to help teacher. The opinion from the teacher (Miss Iis) supported Read's opinion (2003), that was young learner should be accommodated with interesting and enjoyable situation. Moreover, realia also met the criteria of having natural, contextual and part of a real event (Read, 2003)

In other hand, based on the result of the interview with other the teacher, that is Miss Neni, she sometimes asked students to go around the classroom. She explained that for acquiring new vocabulary of flower, teacher mentioned the name of flowers which were planted outside the classroom. Mss Neni gave others examples that she brought some miniature of car when she wanted to introduced new vocabulary related to car. She explained the components of car, such as door, wheel, and also shape of the car. Besides, she also took some pictures to the classroom. She felt the response of students was very good, and they were motivated in learning English.

However, one of the obstacles in implementing realia was that the number of students. Most of state elementary schools have large students. Miss Neni complained that she couldn't manage the class very well. Particularly, when she asked the students went outside, the students must be in chaos. To cope the problem, the teacher (Miss Neni) used mixture technique, that was realia and contextual teaching learning. She explained the mixture of the two techniques by asking students to mention some words related to the things in their class. Here was the illustration given by the teacher:

- Teacher : coba perhatikan, apa nama benda yang diduduki oleh kalian?  
(Students answered together, *kursi*....)
- Teacher : kursi bahasa Inggris nya apa?  
(chair...)
- Teacher : ya betul. Kalau kursinya panjang seperti ini (show the long object made from wood) namanya apa?  
(Students answered *bangku*...)
- Teacher : ya, bangku bahasa Inggrisnya apa? Ada yang tahu tidak? (no students can answered the question) ya, bangku itu adalah *bench*. Ayo ucapkan sama-sama  
(students mention the name of the object, bench...)
- Teacher : mana dinding?  
(students touch the object)
- Teacher : dinding bahasa Inggris nya apa?  
(some students answered wall)
- Teacher : ya, good. Dinding itu dalam bahasa Inggrisnya adalah *wall*

The illustration above showed that the teacher led the students to relate real object in their classroom and the name of the object. The teacher said that it is called a mixture technique with media; they are between contextual teaching learning (providing object based on students' environment and students' life). Basically, As Chiarantano (2005) said that realia consists of real object or items which are used in the classroom to illustrate and teach vocabulary. In other side, Chiarantano (2005) added that realia is used as an alternative aid to facilitate language acquisition and production. Realia concretizes vocabulary and language and places it in a frame of language. From the opinion and also the fact, realia needs to be contextual since the object is around the students. Miss Neni added that she also asked the students to have little observation around their school. She mentioned one example, that was when she wanted to describe toys, the students were asked to go to the nearest kindergarten where there were many kinds of toys. She watched the students while the students were having observation. Next, after the students finished, they worked it with their group and they had to find the name of the objects using English. Finally, the students reported it and then she discussed with the students. Therefore, she thought that realia is media that can be combined with many techniques.

The result of discussion above shows that realia is an alternative media which provides many advantages for teacher and for students. One of the advantages got from this media is giving classroom more interesting. Interesting design of classroom is a fundamental way for elementary teacher to persuade and asked students learn English without forcing them. Realia also supports students to be more creative and active. They can involve in work group, and they can find the name of the object by having discussion with the group. From this case, realia can be a bridge to build cooperative and collaborative activity.

To provide real object, teacher can use many ways. She doesn't only take a real object, but she can bring a picture of the object, miniature of the object, and also pointing some objects around students' environment. For this case, realia can be also combined with contextual teaching learning. There for, realia can be one alternative to give English teaching learning effectively.



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