

# Teaching English as Foreign Language for Young Learners in South Sulawesi Remote Area

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**Abstract.** By considering the function of English as an international language, English becomes one of the subjects taught at all education levels in Indonesia to generate high-quality human resources who can adapt well. Learning English should be taught when children are in their critical period to ease their English learning process. This research employs the qualitative method, particularly the classroom action research method, and it was conducted for 6 weeks in one playgroup in South Sulawesi. The research finds out that learning English using nursery rhymes enhances young students' enthusiasm. Moreover, the use of 3-language-posters which include their local language can also help them to understand the meaning of the English words they say. Thus, this study encourages the use of learning media to make English learning more fun for playgroup students, which is proven by the result of the research which is that the students make a good improvement in English.

**Keywords:** TEFYL, Nursery Rhymes, poster; playgroup

## 1 Introduction

English is the language that is widely used for international activities because of the dominant role of English in all fields in the world (Rao, 2019).<sup>1</sup> Unquestionably, globalization makes English in line with power, advantage, and social status (Lie, 2017).<sup>2</sup> It is in line with Rini (2014), who stated that English learned for instrumental reasons can help someone in a job where mastering English, which is one of the requirements, can provide a good salary and opportunities.<sup>3</sup> This is one of the reasons why English has become an international necessity, which makes many countries obligate to learn English in their education system. Indonesia is no exception.

By considering the function of English as an international language, English becomes one of the subjects taught in curriculum in Indonesia to generate high quality human resources who can adapt well and can keep up with the times. English is one of the languages that is widely taught in Indonesia, in addition to Indonesian. English is introduced to Indonesian students starting from young learners all the way to a higher education level. English became an optional or compulsory subject at various levels of education in Indonesia, starting from pre-school, to

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<sup>1</sup> Rao, P. S. (2019). The Role of English as A Global Language. *Research Journal of English*, 4(1), 65-79.

<sup>2</sup> Lie, A. (2017). English and identity in multicultural contexts: Issues, challenges, and opportunities. *TEFLIN Journal*, 28(1), 71-92.

<sup>3</sup> Rini, J. E. (2014). English in Indonesia: Its position among other languages in Indonesia. *Beyond Words*, 2(2), 19-39.

university level. English should be taught when children are in their critical period to ease their English learning process (Hartshorne, Tenenbaum, & Pinker, 2018).<sup>4</sup> Learning a foreign language such as English in a critical period, that is young age, is possible to make the learners achieve good results (Du, 2010).<sup>5</sup>

In Indonesia, there have been many previous studies that have examined the phenomenon of English as a foreign language to young learners, among others, those conducted by Khulel (2021), Nufus (2018), and Hery et al. (2016). Khulel's (2016) research focuses on the obstacles experienced by teachers in teaching English to young students where researchers conducted research in several schools in Baureno, a small district in East Java. The research was carried out using this qualitative method which consisted of some questions that will be asked to English teachers to get results where the challenges faced by teachers are very diverse, such as for social life. Parents consider English as the language needed for the future, so it does not support their child's learning process well and a national curriculum that does not encourage learning English for elementary school children or young learners. And also, the latest obstacle that must be faced by everyone, namely the pandemic that lasts long enough so that the learning process for young learners cannot be carried out optimally.<sup>6</sup> For Nufus (2019), research was conducted to know the status of English in Indonesia. Of course, there are differences of opinion, especially regarding the right age to learn English because English is a foreign language where not everyone must be able to speak English and to be able to learn English. Good English must go through the process of second language acquisition. By considering age and needs, learning and understanding English should use fun things so that young learners in English can be interested in learning without feeling burdened.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, for Hery et al. (2021), the research was conducted in Yogyakarta with participants from two schools consisting of 40 people from each school which were divided into two groups where school A became an experimental group while school B became a control group with a research time of 10 weeks. The results of the study can be concluded that the interest of school A students in English is higher than the interest of school B students whereas for school A students learning English using nursery rhymes while school B using conventional methods.<sup>8</sup> Yet, the teaching of English to young learners in remote area in Indonesia has not been much researched and reported.

In Indonesia, some children already know basic English such as counting numbers in English even though they have not entered formal school. This is because English is taught non-formally, such as taught by the mothers at home when the children were small. For children who are old enough to enter formal education, they can start by entering kindergarten. The kindergarten education level is the lowest compulsory levels of education that must be taken by all Indonesian children. In Indonesia, the kindergartens can be the regular school or schools with certain specifications, such as specification on internationalization or religion-based (introduces and focuses its students to religious knowledge from early age). One kind of religion-based

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<sup>4</sup> Hartshorne, J. K., Tenenbaum, J. B., & Pinker, S. (2018). A critical period for second language acquisition: Evidence from 2/3 million English speakers. *Cognition*, 177, 263-277.

<sup>5</sup>Du, L. (2010). Assess the Critical Period Hypothesis in Second Language Acquisition. *English Language Teaching*, 3(2), 219-224.

<sup>6</sup>Khulel, B. (2021). TEACHING ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNERS IN RURAL AREA: TEACHERS' CHALLENGES. *Lingua*, 17(2), 115-130.

<sup>7</sup> Nufus, T. Z. (2021). Teaching English to young learners in Indonesia (Pros and Cons). *English Language in Focus (ELIF)*, 1(1), 65-70.

<sup>8</sup> Hery, I. S., Nair, S. M., & Krishnasamy, H. N. (2016). Optimizing Nursery Rhymes to Promote Interests towards Learning English among Young Learners in Indonesia. *Behavioural Science*, 17(1), 1-14.

kindergarten is called Raudatul Atfal (RA) which is the level of school equivalent to kindergarten which focuses on Islamic knowledge. The lessons learned by RA and kindergarten children are basic learning such as writing, reading, and also counting. For RA children themselves, because kindergarten schools also focus on religious knowledge, the languages taught by their teachers are Indonesian and Arabic. For RA in remote area in Indonesia, usually the students are using local language, while the Indonesian and Arabic are the languages that are introduced by the school to the students.

In this article, I reported the results of my experience in conducting an action research during my service as a volunteer in teaching English to young learners in a RA at a remote area in Sulawesi. The name of the school is RA Hafizh Impian, Bulu-bulu village, Tonra District, Bone Regency, South Sulawesi Province. RA Hafizh Impian school is strategically located in the middle of a residential area with rice fields that stretch out behind it. The school building which is divided into four rooms looks very good with some paintings on the blue walls but it still does not have a ceiling and also the existing facilities around the school are still inadequate for the process of learning and teaching activities. The area is so remote that the nearest printing facilities is far away from the school and with relatively expensive price. There are 60 students in this school who are divided into two class groups, namely group A for children aged 4 years and group B for 5 years old and others. For language used in daily life in RA Hafizh Impian is their local language namely Bugis. They learn Indonesian and Arabic at school. As for English, this is a newly introduced foreign language when I was serving as a volunteer English teacher at the school. At the beginning of my service, I found out that RA Hafizh Impian students could already say numbers in English only up to the number 10 and also have the ability to mention the correct pronunciation of letters in English up to the letter G only. Meanwhile the school has several outcomes to be achieved in teaching English, which could not be achieved yet by using traditional way of teaching. Therefore, I then decided to conduct an action research with the purpose to see what is the best teaching method that can be used to increase the students' achievement in learning English.

## 2 Review of related literature

Teaching English as a foreign language is a job done by teachers and institutions. Learning English has become a very common thing for everyone and do not rule out the possibility of English becoming a language that must be learned and mastered from an early age. It's in line with Sutopo, et al. (2020) that says English for Young Learners (EYL) is a popular thing in Indonesia. Most of schools all over Indonesia teach English to their students.<sup>9</sup> And also as stated by Sukmahidayanti (2015), regarding English, many parents compete to make their children learn it as younger as they are.<sup>10</sup> Besides studying, of course, some methods must be used by educators in teaching English. Abduramanova (2021) said that there are two methods used to teach English, namely the classic or fundamental method and communicative

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<sup>9</sup> Sutopo, A., Ali, R. M., Aditama, M. G., Wiguna, A., & Syafiq, A. (2020, October). EYL in Indonesia: Implementations, Problems, and Challenges. In *The 5th Progressive and Fun Education International Conference (PFEIC 2020)* (pp. 105-113). Atlantis Press.

<sup>10</sup> Sukmahidayanti, T. (2015). The utilization of instructional media in teaching English to young learners (A case study of an elementary school teacher in Bandung). *Journal of English and Education*, 2015(2), 90-100.

method.<sup>11</sup> The method that will be used in this study is the classic method where this method is used for people who want to learn English from the basics so that it is very suitable to be applied to early childhood. This method is also used to introduce English so as not to feel afraid of foreign languages that are around us. In the teaching process, there are many things that must be considered in order to get good learning outcomes. Learning media can also affect whether or not learning outcomes are good. For young children, they are more interested in something brightly colored or something that makes them use their physique and are not too hung up on textbooks. For this reason, learning English using nursery rhymes or photos can be an easy-to-use alternative. So in order to make an enjoyable introduction to young learners, nursery rhymes and poster are used in this research. As cited on Sayakhan and Bradley (2019), nursery rhymes are songs composed by anonymous poets, nursery verses are usually highly rhythmic, tightly rhymed, and liked with small children (Temple, Martinez, and Yokota: 171).<sup>12</sup> In short, it can be said that Nursery Rhymes itself is a song created for children so children really enjoy it and then can learning English while doing something that they like. Teaching English by using nursery rhymes are recognized by literature in the role of nursery rhymes in paving the way for the learners in order to developing their language (Pourkalhor & Tavakoli, 2017).<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile for the poster itself, it's used due to students curiosity and attraction to something colourful. The picture from the poster used their belongings especially in "Things around us" poster and the content of the poster is talk about themselves. Based on the Common European Framework of References (CEFR), young learners is at Level A.1 as a beginner in learning language or can speak English in basic way.

### 3 Method

This research was conducted at RA Hafizh Impian using a qualitative method or more precisely the research design is classroom action research (CAR). This classroom action research method is research conducted for educators to find out changes in the classroom to the activities carried out to suit the research objectives that is improving the proficiency of the students in English.<sup>14</sup> The participants of this study were 30 children of RA Hafizh Impian who were in class B. This study was conducted for six weeks with four sessions every week at the school to determine their progress in learning English with daily teaching.

There are four learning outcomes which need to be achieved during the CAR, namely: (1) the students can memorize the number 1 until 15 with correct pronunciation, (2) the students can memorize the letter A to Z with the right pronunciation, (3) the students know the parts of the body and things around them, and (4) the students can introduce themselves in a basic way. The process of each cycle is based on the media used. For nursery rhymes cycle, students learn English word by lyrics that contained in the song while for the posters students learn English by the content itself which is related to themselves.

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<sup>11</sup> Abduramanova, D. V. (2021). METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE. *Academic research in educational sciences*, 2(8), 260-263.

<sup>12</sup> Sayakhan, N. I., & Bradley, D. H. (2019). A nursery rhymes as a vehicle for teaching English as a foreign language. *Journal of University of Raparin*, 6(1), 44-55.

<sup>13</sup> Pourkalhor, O. & Tavakoli, M. (2017). Nursery Rhymes and Language Learning: Issues and Pedagogical Implications. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, 5(1), 111-116.

<sup>14</sup> Khasinah, S. (2013). Classroom action research. *Jurnal Pionir*, 1(1), 107-114.

## 4 Findings

This part is presenting the findings of the study. The action research was conducted in 6 weeks. There were two cycles of Classroom Action Research (CAR). There are four learning outcomes which need to be achieved in the CAR, namely: (1) the students can memorize the number 1 until 15 with correct pronunciation, (2) the students can memorize the letter A to Z with the right pronunciation, (3) the students know the parts of the body and things around them, and (4) the students can introduce themselves in a basic way. Evaluation was conducted every day almost at the end of the meeting. The evaluation was conducted orally. The teacher would ask the students one by one to present what they have learn on that day. Each cycle is described respectively in the following part.

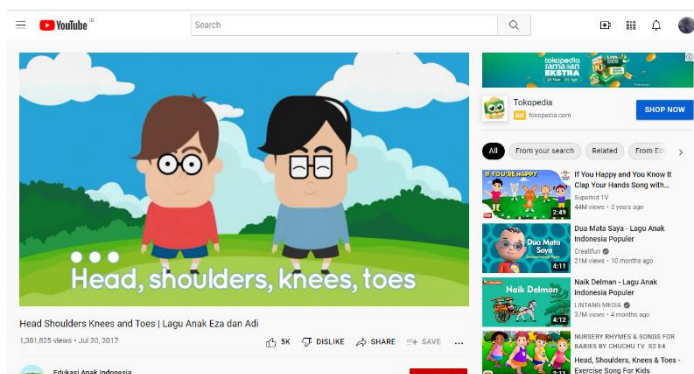
While application and the second cycle which conducted for two weeks is posters in 3 languages containing Indonesian as the national language, English as a foreign language, and Bugis as a local language which was made by the researchers themselves as a fun introduction to English. Findings that will be discussed in this study are how student improvement day by day in six weeks by learning using posters in 3 languages that are also accompanied by basic English and nursery rhymes also.

### Cycle 1

Cycle 1 was conducted in the first 4 weeks. The material provided were numbers, letters, parts of the body. The teaching media used during the first cycle was children's songs or nursery rhymes on YouTube. The following is the weekly report of the teaching activities.

#### *First week of research*

In the first week, researchers taught basic English to students so that they would get used to it because English itself was not a subject taught by the teachers who were there. The material taught in this first week is how to say letters in English, memorize numbers 1 to 10 and also learn English from the body parts where for this material the researcher uses nursery rhymes which can be easily accessed by the public. The nursery rhymes used during the study were "Head, Shoulders, Kness, and Toes" which can be accessed on the Indonesian Children's Education YouTube account as can be seen in Figure 1.



**Fig. 1.** Nursery Rhymes

Video Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1io44ucVgtI>

From the evaluation process, it was found out that for the basic material mentioned above, in the English letters section students can only pronounce well up to the letter M where for the next letter they are a bit difficult to pronounce, for numbers in English, students can say 1 to 10 fluently but there is mispronunciation for the number 8 in English where they pronounce it with "eg" for "egg" instead of "eIt" for "eight", while for body parts that use nursery rhymes it really attracts their attention in learning.

#### *Second week of research*

As mentioned in the first week of the study, students liked learning media using nursery rhymes and for this week the material was repeated about body parts. The use of nursery rhymes media can indeed increase students' enthusiasm for learning, but the researchers found that there were some children who only focused on making movements according to the lyrics without mentioning them themselves so that the repetition of the material was carried out where the researchers also asked students to sing the nursery rhymes themselves either in front of the class or in class. circle so that researchers can teach pronunciation and they can understand body English correctly by mentioning body parts in English one by one without relying solely on nursery rhymes.

#### *Third week of research*

The repetition of material regarding body parts continues with enthusiasm from students who often ask to do activities in learning English. This week the researcher also continued the material on numbers and letters in English. For the letters themselves, they were able to pronounce them better than before and for the numerical material the researchers continued to the next numbers, namely 11 to 15. For numbers 11 and 12 students had difficulties, especially in number 12 because the pronunciation was different and difficult for 6 years old students. For numbers 13 to 15 it is very easy because the endings of the words are the same so that their voices are louder in pronouncing them.

#### *Fourth week of research*

For this week, the researchers used a different nursery rhyme, namely regarding the names of fingers in English which were replaced according to the correct finger names, but students were less interested especially they only needed to move their fingers and more English words than before, so the use of nursery rhymes not continued. The repetition of material about numbers continues so that students can mention the number 12 well. Students were asked to name the numbers 11 to 15 so that the researcher could help students who could not pronounce the numbers well.

For cycle 1, the students have fulfill three learning outcome which is can memorize the number 1 until 15 with correct pronunciation, the students can memorize the letter A to Z with the right pronunciation, and the students know the parts of the body and things around them which is achieved through the learning process even though they have some little problem in pronounce it.

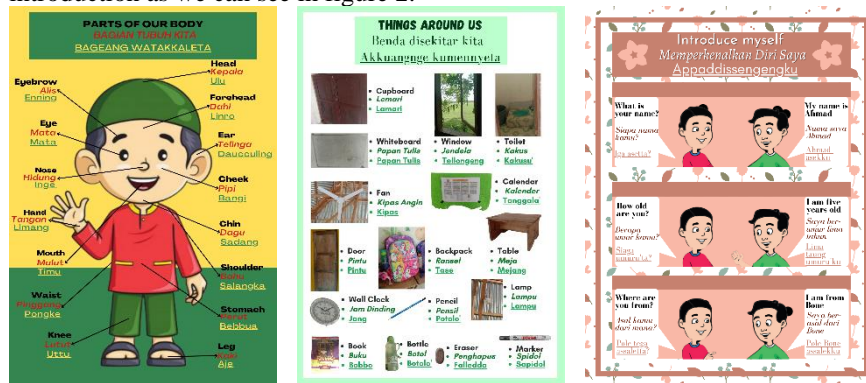
### **Cycle 2**

Cycle 2 was conducted in the last 2 weeks of my service as a volunteer in this school. There was additional material namely short and simple self-introduction as an addition to the material provided from the first week namely: were numbers, letters, parts of the body. As for the

teaching media, there was additional media used, namely Language Posters. The posters used 3 languages using English, Indonesian, and their local language, Bugis. 3 language posters using English, Indonesian, and their local language, Bugis The teaching media used during the first cycle were still implemented, namely: children's songs or nursery rhymes on YouTube were still used. The following is the weekly report of the teaching activities.

*Fifth week of research*

Due to the lack of printing facilities in the village, researchers had to print posters in 3 languages that would be used in research at one of the shops that provided poster printing services in the Shopee application so researchers had to wait to be able to paste the posters on the classroom walls so that students could use them for as long as possible. lesson hours. The 3 language posters pasted on the wall are posters of parts of our body, things around us, and a brief self-introduction as we can see in figure 2.



**Fig. 2.** 3 Languages Poster

This week the researcher taught students a short self-introduction material which contained the name, age, and place of residence of the student. The material begins by introducing their names. Learning and teaching activities are carried out with researchers who will ask the names of students one by one and they will answer them with "My name is Adiba", the researchers also explain the meaning of English in Indonesian and Bugis so that they can understand what is being asked. To say their own name, students have no difficulty but after they learn how to say their age where they answer "I am six years old" they start combining it into "I am Adiba" when asked what their name is which is certainly not wrong but not according to what was previously learned.

*Last week of research*

This week, there is a follow-up on the material for a brief self-introduction and also the objects around them. For a brief self-introduction all that remains is to mention where they live. For this material, students also did not experience difficulties, therefore in this last week the researcher tested the students one by one to state their name, age, and place of residence to find out whether the 3 languages poster learning media could help them in learning English and most of the students could understand and mention a brief self-introduction well. For objects that are around them, researchers use their own photos at that location so that they can recognize and study them well.

For cycle 2, there is only one learning outcome that have to be fullfil which is introduce themselves in basic way. The outcome is achieved which they can answer three questions that related to them in English which is asking for their name, age, and live.

For young learners of English, it is proven that they prefer learning and teaching activities that use energy or movement so that they can feel that learning is fun compared to learning it using textbooks. It is line with what Lestari, et al. (2021) stated that by using children songs or nursery rhymes can be used as activities in teaching and learning process.<sup>15</sup> And also by using things that are common and something around them can help in learning and teaching activities where they will be interested in something they do not know about things they are familiar with. The results of this study were divided into two cycles for two learning media, namely nursery rhymes and posters for one group at RA Hafizh Impian because if the learning process only uses rhymes, the learning materials cannot be varied considering that nursery rhymes is not exist for all materials where for previous research conducted by <sup>16</sup>Hery, et al (2021), research was carried out using two different methods for two different schools and also the results of this study are supported by the results obtained by <sup>17</sup>Khulel (2016) where the national curriculum does not encourage English to be taught to young learners.

## 5 Conclusion

The research which was conducted at RA Hafizh Impian for 6 weeks with researcher focused on 30 students of group B can help students learn about and learn English from an early age so that they will get used to and like learning English as a foreign language which they will certainly learn at the next level of education. Students show improvement in learning English by using nursery rhymes and 3 language posters using English, Indonesian, and their local language, Bugis. Research is not carried out for a longer time so that it can help students learn English better which for the the future researchers can be used as a note. As well as for the EYL teachers, it can be used as the best alternative in learning and teaching process for young learners in studying English.

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