

Developing Song-Based Listening Materials for Grade A Students of Kindergarten

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Abstract: The objective of this study was to develop song-based listening materials for grade A students of kindergarten. Specifically, it aimed at: 1) finding out the target needs of group A students to learn English, 2) finding out the learning needs of grade A students to acquire English based on nursery songs, and 3) describing the appropriate song-based English listening materials to make students enjoy learning English. This study belongs to Research and Development (R&D). The subjects of this study were the A graders of kindergarten at TK Negeri 1 Sleman. This study adapted the materials development procedure from Jolly and Bolitho in Tomlinson (1998). The steps of this study consisted of identifying the needs analysis, developing the course grid, developing the first draft of materials, evaluating materials, and writing the final draft materials. There were two types of questionnaires and one interview guideline used to collect the data. The first questionnaire and interview guideline were made for collecting data in needs analysis while the second questionnaire was made for collecting the data about the appropriateness of the materials through the expert judgment. The data was analyzed through descriptive statistics. The results of the research showed that the children needed to learn English in order to be able to say some vocabularies and simple sentences from the topics provided, to develop their awareness towards a foreign language and to prepare the next school comprehension level. This research was developed teachers' and students' book in three units entitled "Parts of the Body", "Foods and Beverages", and "Farm Animals". Each topic had a song to be the main text of vocabularies and activities. The books had 6 to 8 tasks to be completed by the teachers and students. The developed activity was combined with TPR. The books were completed with CD consisting of songs, posters and flashcards. The main score of all aspects of the three developed units, in the scales of 1-4, was 3.35 that can be categorized as "Very Good".

Keywords: *kindergarten, children, listening, song*

INTRODUCTION

Based on Curriculum 2013, Indonesian children officially get a chance of learning English when they sit in junior high school. However, the spirit of learning English also spreads to elementary schools and kindergartens. Parents want their children to start learning English in the early age. They believe that learning English earlier can help their children improve their knowledge. This condition happens mostly all around the world. In accordance with Brewster (2002), the weight to present English earlier has regularly originated from parents who explicitly trust that having English as a learning subject profits their kids significantly by giving them more chances to increase their education points of interest.

TK Negeri 1 Sleman provides English as an additional subject to their children while other schools tend to postpone it. Fulfilling parents' demand, the school called an English course, LCI, to teach the children. LCI (Learning Centre Institute) located in Maguwoharjo is a private institution running English course for very young learners (VYLS). The school has hired LCI because the school has no English teachers.

The school has a policy that should be accepted by the teachers. According to the policy, teachers should not teach reading and writing. The principal worries that the children got disorientated of different English sounds and symbols. This reason can be understood because English is not the children's mother tongue that has the same sounds and symbols. Previous studies by Pinter (2009) state that it is worthy to introduce English to the children in the early age even when they cannot read or write. Therefore, it is reliable to let the people learn English without worrying about sounds and symbols. Then, other activities like listening and speaking can be provided for the children.

LCI teachers mostly have content knowledge of English yet the teaching ability is heterogeneous. Some of the teachers are skillful while the others are less skillful. There are teachers who can engage VYLs in doing activities yet the others cannot. Thus, a coursebook consisting of a teacher's guide book and children worksheet could help and give some benefits for both of teachers and the institution. The book will help teachers equalize learning materials from one class to another. Besides, if the teacher cannot come to the class, another teacher can help to teach because they have the same guide book. In addition, worksheets for children can assist them during the learning process.

From the preliminary observation, it was found out that teaching and learning process in the classroom was full of joy and happiness. Both of the teachers and children were pleased to sing songs. In the classroom, the teachers focused on spoken texts (listening and speaking) to teach the children. The teachers employed songs to assist the listening resource. The combination of listening activities with songs can help children maximize the benefits of their golden time in acquiring the language.

Supporting materials for the children, LCI has provided worksheets for A graders. However, the worksheets did not provide song-based English listening activities. Thus, it was important to provide VYLs with song-based listening materials because listening stimulates VYLs to be familiar to sounds, pronunciations and vocabularies (Pinter, 2009), while songs create safe and warm atmosphere for the children to learn language (Brewster, 2002).

Taking into account of the situation, it was important to have a standard to teach listening to VYLs using songs. A coursebook of song-based English listening materials would be developed as a solution. It could help the schools introduce English for VYLs either they had an English teacher or not because the course book was completed with additional materials and instructions for the teachers which were: a teacher's book, children workbook, and a CD consisting of songs, posters and flashcards. The product was developed using topic-based Curriculum 2013 for kindergarten. The materials included some song-based listening activities such as singing, dancing, drawing, sticking, cutting, and connecting with other TPR activities. It aimed to help teachers introduce English in an interesting way that could make children learning English with joyfulness and pleasure.

Considering the things mentioned before, the researcher conducted a study and developed the song-based listening materials using the TPR and topic-based approach for the A graders children of kindergarten. The formulated problems were: 1) what are the target needs of very young learners in TK Negeri 1 Sleman to start learning English, 2) what are the learning needs for grade A children in TK Negeri 1 Sleman to acquire English based on nursery songs, and 3) what are the appropriate song-based English listening materials for A graders to enjoy learning English.

Research Method

This research is categorized as an Educational Research and Development (R&D). It was conducted on November 3rd 2016 at TK Negeri 1 Sleman. The subjects of this research were 25 children of A.1 graders. They were 4-6 years old.

The procedure of the research was adapted from a model of materials writing proposed by Jolly and Bolitho (in Tomlinson, 1998:98), namely (1) identifying needs, (2) developing the course grid, (3) developing materials (first draft), (4) evaluating materials, and (5) writing final draft.

The data of this research were collected by distributing questionnaires and conducting interviews. There were two types of questionnaires used in this research. The first questionnaire was made to obtain the data for the needs analysis and the second was used to obtain the data for the teacher book and children book. There were two types of expert judgment: one was from the kindergarten teachers as a practitioner and another one was from an English Education Study Program lecturer. The data from the first questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The percentage of each answer in the questionnaire was calculated to define the students' preferences. The data from the second questionnaire were analyzed based on Likert Scale containing four-point scales. Then, the data were calculated by using a formula proposed by Suharto (2005). Meanwhile, the data from the interviews were analyzed using qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994).

Findings and Discussion

The needs analysis was conducted to the 8 teachers and the principal of kindergarten at TK Negeri 1 Sleman. First, the close-ended questionnaire was distributed to the teachers. Then, an in-depth interview was conducted with the principal.

The results of needs analysis show that the children's purpose of learning English was developing positive attitude towards foreign language, and mastering some vocabularies and simple sentences in the topic provided. The necessities of the children's communication skills were listening skills. Children needed to know more about vocabulary and simple sentences or chunks of language. In addition, songs were needed in kindergarten. The topic necessities for the materials were taken from Curriculum 2013. They were the body parts, food and beverages, and farm animal. The three topics were the most favorite topics in the classroom.

In term of lack, it was found that the children still had difficulties in vocabulary mastery related to the topic provided. It can be understood because they had a limited input. In terms of difficulty in listening to English songs, the children did not understand the words uttered by the speaker.

Related to wants, its showed that the school wanted the children having abilities to mention some vocabularies appropriately and get English experiences for the next educational level. The teachers also wanted to have a teacher's guide book and a children's workbook with a listening audio cassette. It will help the teachers to get a lot of activities and input to teach the children. Completing the materials developed, the analysis results also show that a cartoon illustration with colorful binding-glue book was comfortable for the children.

The analysis of the learning needs of the children was divided into five points: input, procedures, setting, learners' role, and teachers' role. Related to the input, the teachers preferred song and rhyme for the teaching and learning activity. The teachers also preferred

songs accompanied by dancing or doing small movement (TPR). In terms of duration, 2-4 minutes were the appropriate length of song for the listening input. Thus, 4-8 activities were appropriate for the children in a topic.

The materials also considered the setting of activities for the task. The teachers and principal preferred the children to learn indoor (in the classroom). The teachers said that the children were expected to be active participants who was directly involved in activities both with the teachers and classmates. Thus, the teachers chose their own role to be a motivator for the children to learn.

After analyzing the needs, the researcher developed the course grid by adapting the steps of materials by Jolly and Bolitho (1998). The course grid was developed as the guidance in planning and developing the materials. The developed course grid consisted of the unit title, competences, learning materials including songs, vocabulary, and expressions / sentences, then activities (teachers and children), time and media.

The topic of the first unit was body parts. The title of the unit is "The Body Parts". This unit focused on the list of body parts vocabulary, song, instructions and numbers. The song used in this unit is "Head, Shoulder, Knees and Toes". Then, the topic of the second unit was food and beverages. The title of the unit was "Food and Beverages". This unit focused on the list of food and beverages vocabulary, songs, simple expressions of like and dislike, orders and colors. The song used in this unit was "Do You Like Spaghetti-Yoghurt". The topic of the third unit was farm-animals. The title of the unit was "Farm Animals". This unit focused on the list of farm-animals vocabulary, farm-animal sounds and farm-animals food. The song used in this unit was "Old MacDonald had a Farm".

After developing the course grid, the next step was developing the first draft of the materials. There were three units in the developed materials. Each unit varied in the number of tasks depending on the competences that the children have to reach. The three units had the same unit design; introduction, main activity, enrichment activity, and self-assessment for the children. The unit design for the teachers guiding book consisted of the introduction, main activity, vocabulary bank and classroom English.

After the first draft of the materials had been developed, the next step was expert judgment. The materials evaluation was done by distributing a questionnaire which was made based on some theories. There were six aspects of the materials that were being evaluated: appropriateness of the content, appropriateness of teaching and learning activities, appropriateness of the language content, appropriateness of the learning input, appropriateness of the song and appropriateness of the book / format. The questionnaire was then distributed to the two expert judges.

Based on the results of the expert judgments, the appropriate English learning materials for children in kindergarten can be categorized as "Very Good" with the mean score 3.35. The English teachers categorized the teachers' guide book as "Very Good" with the mean score 3.3. The developed materials were considered to be appropriate.

Conclusions

Based on the needs analysis, the children were expected to develop their positive attitude towards a foreign language and be able to know some vocabularies and simple sentences from the topics provided. Learning from the target needs, the school wanted the children to learn listening through songs before the other skills.

Based on the results of the expert judgments, the appropriate English learning materials for children in kindergarten can be categorized as “Very Good” with the mean score 3.35. The English teachers categorized the teachers’ guide book as “Very Good” with the mean score 3.3.

There were three units in the book. They were Unit I “*Parts of the Body*”, Unit II “*Food and Beverages*” and Unit III “*Farm Animals*”. In the children’ book, each unit had an introduction, a song, activities and a self-assessment.

The activities on the book were set up based on the children’ needs; there were TPR, singing, gaming and drawing. All of those activities were blended up to be suitable and friendly for the children to acquire vocabularies and chunks of languages. Then, the enrichment activities aimed to give the children an additional activity when they have finished their main activity. The last part of each student unit was self-assessment.

The developed materials for teachers’ guide book consisted of information, main activity, vocabulary bank and classroom English. The first part, information, described the information needed like: theme, level, age, goal, skill and section. The second part was the main section which consists of three sections: pre-listening activity, while-listening activity and post-listening activity.

The third part of the unit was vocabulary bank to help teachers pronounce some words. The last part was classroom English. It facilitated the teachers to bring an authentic language to the classroom. The material developed was provided with a CD. The CD contained songs, pictures, posters and flash cards which were related with the children activities in the book. Therefore, when the teachers use the material they will find anything they need in one package.

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