



Ar-Rohmah English week: Expanding English for Young Learners program in an Indonesian Islamic primary school

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history Received: 2023-01-10 Revised: 2023-01-19 Accepted: 2023-01-23 Published: 2023-01-24</p> <p>Keywords English Week English for Young Learners Qualified education Islamic Primary School</p>	<p>English is an elective subject at Indonesian primary schools and every school is allowed to offer English for providing young learners (YLS) opportunity to practice English for communication in global society. Moreover, English is introduced earlier in primary education as an extra-curricular activity as well as a locally-tailored school subject. This community service program aims at facilitating the sixth graders with extended activities to support the English for Young Learners (EYL) program that they have attended for six years and preparing them with initial experience before enrolling in English a compulsory subject class in lower secondary education. Ar-Rohmah English Week was conducted for 60 minutes within four working days with activities to enhance the YLS' English listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Four activities were selected based on the learners' needs within meaningful activities such as Virtual Tour to the USA, Reading Theater, Students' Activities Journaling which infuses Islamic content, and Act Out and Presentation. All of those activities were also designed by addressing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (UN SDGs 2030) number 4 on quality education. With their English proficiency, all students are expected to be able to compete in mastering various knowledge in facing global challenges in the future.</p>
<p>Kata kunci Bahasa Inggris anak usia dini Pekan Bahasa Inggris Pendidikan berkualitas SD Islam</p>	<p>Ar-Rohmah English week: Program pendalaman Bahasa Inggris usia dini pada sekolah dasar berbasis Islam di Indonesia. Sebagai mata pelajaran tambahan pada jenjang Sekolah Dasar (SD) di Indonesia, Bahasa Inggris dapat diajarkan pada siswa SD dengan tujuan memberikan kesempatan kepada mereka untuk berlatih menggunakan bahasa Inggris untuk komunikasi dalam masyarakat global. Bahasa Inggris dapat diperkenalkan lebih awal sebagai kegiatan ekstra kurikuler ataupun mata pelajaran berbasis sekolah. Program pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memfasilitasi siswa kelas enam dengan program pembelajaran bahasa Inggris tambahan untuk mendukung program English for YLS (EYL) yang telah mereka ikuti selama enam tahun. Selain itu, program ini juga bertujuan untuk mempersiapkan siswa dengan pengalaman awal sebelum mengikuti pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris yang menjadi mata pelajaran wajib di Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP). Bertajuk Ar-Rohmah English Week program ini dilaksanakan selama empat hari, masing-masing selama selama 60 menit dengan berbagai kegiatan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menyimak, berbicara, membaca, dan menulis dalam bahasa Inggris. Seluruh kegiatan yang dilaksanakan tersebut diseleksi berdasarkan kebutuhan seperti, Virtual Tour to the USA, Reading Theatre, Student's Activities Journaling, dan Act Out and Presentation. Seluruh kegiatan tersebut juga didesain untuk mendorong United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (UN SDGs 2030) urutan ke 4 tentang pendidikan yang berkualitas. Dengan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris tersebut, seluruh siswa diharapkan dapat bersaing untuk menguasai berbagai ilmu pengetahuan dalam menghadapi tantangan global di masa depan.</p>

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction to an international language like English is urgent for YLs in primary schools in Indonesia because of its status of English as a foreign language. Since English is no longer a compulsory subject for Primary School students, the school gets autonomy in designing the teaching and learning activities (Setyaningrum et al., 2020; Sulistiyo et al., 2019). This fact should be supported by English teachers' ability to design enjoyable and meaningful lessons aiming at providing YLs with learning experiences that will help them prepare to enroll in English as a compulsory subject class at the lower secondary level. Related to enhancing teachers' ability in teaching, Zein (2015) suggests the Indonesian EYL teachers' field-based professional development in ways that teacher educators are paired with in-service teachers to adjust real-life classroom context. His suggestion is in line with a community services program endorsed by the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia entitled *Program Penugasan Dosen ke Sekolah* (PPDS). This program is a simultaneous program that is linked to Teachers' Professional Development (TPD) and school inquiry for providing teaching models which support the learners' needs. Furthermore, this program also aims at improving the quality of education in Indonesia in the area of English learning. Thus, this effort is supporting one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) no.4 on quality of education (United Nations. Department of Economics and Social Affairs, 2020).

This paper aims at exploring how PPDS was carried out to meet the school partner's intention of conducting both TPD and learners' English enhancement. SD Alam Ar-Rohmah, an Islamic primary school located in Malang, East-Java province, which is reported as a school applying the national curriculum for the primary school level and considered English as an elective subject accepted this program for some reasons. Due to time constraints, English is offered to grade 4. Moreover, English lesson has not been connected to regular thematic lesson suggested by the curriculum. In addition, the teachers still based their teaching on commercially published textbooks. All of the aforementioned facts encouraged the school to provide grade sixth students with experience using English contextually by the providing the extended EYL program before graduation. Hence, Ar-Rohmah English Week was designed to facilitate the learners with an extensive program of English learning.

English can be delivered in various ways according to the time allocated for each meeting (Johnstone, 2019). When it is offered to the YLs during 1–1.25 hours per week, it is considered a modest time of learning. Within a modest time, the learners get limited exposure to English because only a teacher who dominantly uses English in the class. This requires teacher creativity in using, stories, songs, drama, as well as physical activities in the class. To provide more exposure, the teacher can initiate an international conference with YLs from other counties. English can be learned with the other aspects of the curriculum within 20%-30% of the total curriculum time. The YLs spend their time learning English simultaneously when they learn subjects like mathematics, sciences, history, or geography as English is the medium of instruction. This situation is commonly found in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Coyle et al., 2010) which has proven to influence the YLs' English vocabulary, foster scientific knowledge and increase their motivation in learning other subjects using English (Agustín Llach, 2017; Huang, 2020). Moreover, when English is taught in essential time, 50% - 90% of the total curriculum, Johnstone (2019) suggests an early total immersion is applied.

In the case of Indonesia, English is allocated in a modest time, thus, various supported activities should be carried out. Rixon (2019) suggests child-friendly activities for EYL by integrating topics and task-based learning. It is also suggested to practice thematic learning for students in Indonesian primary schools because students can achieve language skills and abilities to communicate in various discourses (Mujahidah et al., 2022; J. Shin & Crandall, 2014). Likewise, an attempt of integrating local culture which is the Islamic value in Islamic primary school context is what Farah et al., (2021) have been supported. In addition, if the EYL activities still need to be extended, virtual conferences with international YLs can be conducted by exchanging students' performances to show real-life contexts to develop intercultural awareness (Abidasari & Setyaningrum, 2020; Johnstone, 2019; Setyaningrum et al., 2022). Considering the aforementioned suggestions, the most viable program to carry out during the Ar-Rohmah English Week should be contextualized to the existing situation, providing new knowledge about interculturality, infusing Islamic values in English learning, serving the students with opportunities to practice using English in communication.

METHOD

Ar-Rohmah English Week was conducted in 60 minutes for four days and taught by four different lecturers and EYL enthusiasts from English Language Education Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang. All learners got the opportunity to listen to stories in English, discuss the content and meaning of the stories, play roles, write summaries or short messages, and display one type of art that can be collaborated with learning English. No less important and interesting, the YLs are also assigned to present their work in the future using appropriate work clothes and utilizing media that they make or prepare themselves. All activities aims to train students to be more confident and fully aware that English is an international language and expose meaningful activities in EYL to school English teachers. The Ar-Rohmah English Week activities are as follows.

Virtual Tour to the USA

Virtual Tour to the USA was led by Mr. Badhar from the University of Arizona. He introduced students to shopping in supermarket in the USA. He started his trip to the supermarket from his apartment. On his way to the supermarket, he introduced how to cross the street, get in to the bus, pay bus ticket, and press the button to stop the bus. On his way to the supermarket, he was asking the students what they can see from the bus window. This activity provided the students' similar experience of traveling in the USA. Figure 1 displays a virtual conference with Mr. Badhar.



Figure 1. Mr. Badhar as a Tour Leader

Arriving at the supermarket, the YLs were familiarized with the situation in one of the well-known supermarkets in the USA, Fry's Food Stores. Figure 2 is showing what inside the supermarket.



Figure 2. in Fry's Supermarket

Mr. Badhar took the YLs to different isles to get the things listed on the shopping list. While listening to Mr. Badhar's explanation, the learners were reading the shopping list and labels on the shelves. Simultaneously, all learners activated their multiple intelligences such as linguistic, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and mathematic. A group dynamic was carried out to discuss what the YLs had learned from the virtual tour. As the last activity, the YLs completed a worksheet about shopping and transportation in America.

Reading Theatre

Reading Theatre is a combination of reading and drama activities. Reading theatre participants should participate in both activities, reading the drama script and then acting based on the script. As the YLs from this school have limited experience in role-playing or playing drama, they were instructed to watch a virtual drama “The Tale of Wendit” before reading the drama’s script, then acting as the drama characters. Figure 3 shows the situation when all YLs were watching the virtual drama.



Figure 3. All students watching a virtual drama “The Tale of Wendit”

If the learners are reluctant to read the script, the teacher can help reading the script. Reading Aloud can be an alternative if that particular situation only permits it. During group-dynamic as shown in Figure 4, students-teacher interactions started by grouping the students and assigning them to play the characters.



Figure 4. The students were reading “The Tale of Wendit” and were playing the drama

From figure 4, it can be explained how the teacher helped the YLs choose a specific character in “The Tale of Wendit” which consist of Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Son, Father, Villager 1, Wise man, Villager 2, Villager 3, Villager 4, Divine Voice, Monkey 1, Monkey 2, Monkey 3, Monkey 4 before rehearsal.

Student’s Activities Journaling

Daily Activities are common theme in EYL. This theme was selected for Ar-Rohmah English Week and managed to a different point of view. As all YLs had been taught with vocabulary related to Daily Activities, Islamic value was integrated into the teaching and learning process. PPT about Allah’s creations such as trees, animals, and stars were displayed and discussed. Some extended vocabulary like “creator, blessing, merciful, thanks, and pray” were presented in the crossword puzzle which scaffold the YLs understanding when they watched Omar and Hana video “I eat, I say Alhamdulillah”. Figure 5 explains the setting.



Figure 5. Students doing a crossword puzzle of Islamic Values

Conducted in an Islamic primary school, the Ar-Rahmah English Week was also designed for YLs to sharpen their cognitive activity that can be related to Islamic values. Before writing activities in their journals, all YLs were assigned to list the everyday blessing of Allah and then selected which activities they like orally.



Figure 6. Co-teacher were guiding the students to make a Photovoice about

the daily activities they like or dislike

Figure 6 presents how the YLs create the photovoice of the photos that they had taken from their home. From that photos, they could express their feeling about daily activities and always be grateful to all blessings. In their photovoice all learners described each photo by considering the prompt of SHOWeD: (1) What do you See here? (2) What is really Happening here? (3) How does this relate to Our lives? (4) Why does this situation, concern, and strength exist? (5) What can we Do about it?

Act Out and Presentation

As the last activities of Ar-Rohmah English Week, acting out and presentation was attracting the YLs to tell about their dream job. They were assigned to bring specific uniforms or equipment for some specific jobs. As follow-up activity, they can present what job they had selected and what they have to do for doing the specific job. Some students mentioned modern jobs which exist in this recent digital era. Content creators, youtubers, chefs, share traders, online sellers, and couriers were the examples (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Students discussing “Dream Jobs” and acting like someone working on the job

Figure 7 exhibits a group dynamic when the teacher and all learners discussed the dream jobs that they had selected. The discussion ran smoothly because the YLs had already prepared their presentation from home. While choosing uniform or equipment, all YLs had activated multiple intelligences such as kinesthetic, mathematic, interpersonal, and spatial.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As Ar-Rohmah English Week is found benefited to the school, teachers, and students. The headmaster appreciated the program because the lecturers provided program design, ways to orchestrate the lesson, as well to provocative learning atmosphere for the students. The following is his explanation.

"I am happy that the presence of the English Language Education Department, FKIP-UMM team in this school has provided a new atmosphere in teaching English. It is fresh to our context that Islamic values can be integrated in English learning. Our students looked excited and enthusiastic in the learning process designed for these four days and the English teachers are excited to practice similar activities in their English classes. I hope to continue this program for providing grade 6 students experience to use English contextually and to accelerate our English teachers' professional development. I would like to extend the collaboration with the university in the future." (Interview, School Headmaster)

From the interview, the school headmaster realized the importance of Ar-Rohmah English Week for the sake of TPD and students' English enhancement. Not only by sitting in a room listening to the resource speakers about how to enhance the teachers' professionalism, teachers need to work together with teacher educators (Zein, 2015). If the learning

atmosphere supports the learning, the school headmaster believed that all YLs would get real-life experience as well as the foundation for their future education. English learning atmosphere is also related to the fact that YLs need an encouragement of using the language because we cannot postpone their growth to be bilingual (Sulistiyo et al., 2019; Zein, 2019). Interestingly, the integration of Islamic value that is contextual to Islamic school is not well accommodated in English learning. Thus, it is suggested that Islamic content can be a cultural aspect that is explored in English teaching as it is appropriate for students' daily experiences and contextual to their Muslim identity (Farah, 2020; Farah & Sukarma, 2020).

Additionally, the English teachers benefited from the Ar-Rohmah English Week as the learning activities could be applied to their teaching. One of the teachers' statements is as follows.

"The lecturers gave me fresh ideas. I am interested in conducting English learning activities that encourage my students to learn English. I could see how my students were actively participating in all learning sessions, especially the Virtual Tour to the USA. I also appreciate the PPDS team which invited a speaker from America because both my students and I could sharpen our intercultural awareness." (Interview, an English Teacher)

The teacher's statement related to the idea of inviting a speaker from America and taking YLs on a virtual tour for learning transportation and shopping in America shows his interest in strengthening the student's intercultural awareness while learning English as a Foreign Language. This intercultural awareness is feasible to allow YLs' acceptance of other cultures without neglecting their own culture. When the learners could find similarities and differences between cultures and evaluate the cultural practices, Baker (2011) identifies it as the highest level of intercultural awareness. In the case of a virtual trip to the USA, the YLs had learned how to use public transportation, name various landscapes on the way to the supermarket, shop with a shopping list, as well use banknotes in dollars, without any intention of underestimating Indonesian as well as American culture. Baker (2015) explains that ICA focuses on the INTER or TRANS cultural dimension where there is no clear language-culture-nation correlation, particularly in global uses of English. This also entails a shift away from cross-cultural comparisons, in which cultures are treated as discrete entities that can be compared to one another.

One significant finding related to Ar-Rohmah English Week was from one female student. She approved that English Week is meaningful and she enjoyed its activities. She explains that,

"I am happy to join Ar-Rohmah English Week. My favorite session is playing drama as a villager. Not only me, but my friends also actively play their respective roles." (Interview, a female student)

As stated previously in the introduction that the EYL activities in the school are only commercial textbook-based activities and playing drama is evidenced to encourage the YLs to practice English for communication (Johnstone, 2019; Mujahidah et al., 2022; Shin, 2014). Reading the script, memorizing the words in English, and acting based on the character of the drama made the YLs activate their multiple intelligences like linguistics, kinesthetic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal intelligence According to Faidah et al. (2019), multiple intelligences are urgent for teaching YLs English.

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanations from the school headmaster, English teacher, and student, it can be confirmed that teaching English to YLs requires teachers' knowledge and ability in linguistics and pedagogical aspects. YLs enjoy learning English if they can learn new knowledge while from its learning content. This PPDS has been evidenced to be a proportional program that simultaneously provides new knowledge for teachers in teaching EYL and new experience of learning English for the students. The extensive language learning designed as Ar-Rohmah English Week evidenced beneficially and the quality of EYL teaching should be enhanced by referring to its activities. When YLs follow continue to reach English proficiency, they are potential to get their success in the future. When the teachers of EYL put their efforts into upgrading their knowledge for EYL teaching betterment, they contribute to quality education. All of them are in line with UN SDGs number 4 about quality education to ensure inclusive and equitable education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

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