

## Practice and barriers of technology integrated pedagogy in teaching EFL young learners: A critical analysis

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**Abstract:** Young learners' characteristics, which differ from those of young adolescents, adolescents, and adults, encourage EFL instructors to implement technology-based learning strategies with high consideration. If EFL teachers fail to implement the appropriate strategy for teaching English, young students may likely encounter academic difficulties in subsequent years. Teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) have implemented technology-based learning strategies to improve students' literacy, vocabulary, and critical thinking abilities. There are also implementation obstacles. This article aims to identify the types of digital-based learning strategies implemented by Indonesian EFL teachers for teaching English to young learners, as well as to identify the challenges faced by Indonesian EFL teachers when implementing digital-based learning strategies for young learners. The findings indicated that EFL teachers in Indonesia employed a variety of technological approaches to develop their students' language and critical thinking skills. EFL teachers utilized multimodal e-books to improve reading skills; animated e-books were employed to enhance literacy skills; flipped classroom was utilized to augment vocabulary; and digital folklore was used to foster analytical and critical thinking skills among EFL young learners.

**Keywords:** Critical review, teaching EFL young learners, technology integration

## Praktek dan hambatan pedagogi terintegrasi teknologi dalam mengajar pelajar muda EFL: Sebuah analisis kritis

**Abstrak:** Karakteristik pembelajar muda yang berbeda dengan remaja muda, remaja, dan dewasa mendorong instruktur EFL untuk menerapkan strategi pembelajaran berbasis teknologi dengan pertimbangan yang tinggi. Jika guru EFL gagal menerapkan strategi yang tepat dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris, siswa muda mungkin akan menghadapi kesulitan akademik di tahun-tahun berikutnya. Guru Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) telah menerapkan strategi pembelajaran berbasis teknologi untuk meningkatkan kemampuan literasi, kosa kata, dan berpikir kritis siswa. Ada juga hambatan implementasi. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis strategi pembelajaran berbasis digital yang diterapkan oleh guru EFL Indonesia dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris kepada pelajar muda, serta untuk mengidentifikasi tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru EFL Indonesia ketika menerapkan strategi pembelajaran berbasis digital untuk pelajar muda. menunjukkan bahwa guru EFL di Indonesia menggunakan berbagai pendekatan teknologi untuk mengembangkan keterampilan bahasa dan berpikir kritis siswanya. Guru EFL memanfaatkan e-book multimodal untuk meningkatkan keterampilan membaca; e-book animasi digunakan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan literasi; kelas terbalik digunakan untuk menambah kosa kata; dan cerita rakyat digital digunakan untuk menumbuhkan keterampilan berpikir analitis dan kritis di kalangan pelajar muda EFL.

**Kata Kunci:** Tinjauan kritis, pengajaran EFL untuk pelajar muda, integrasi teknologi

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## INTRODUCTION

Children aged 5 to 12 years are considered young learners (Scott & Yreberg, 1990). The younger the learner, the more holistic their learning style (Cakir, 2004). The younger learner (2 to 7 years old) was categorized by Piaget as lower-grade students who think symbolically but haven't used cognitive operations, known as the pre-operational stage (Copland et al., 2014). In this stage, the student's attention span lasts only 10-15 minutes (Alsagoff et al., 2012). They gain knowledge through a series of events they encounter (Musthafa, 2010). Young learners respond to language based on what they can do with it rather than as an abstract system (Philips, 2001). Their involvement in learning is process-oriented rather than outcome-oriented (Broughton et al., 2022). As a result, EFL teachers must first identify the traits of children who grow in a social context (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Musthafa, 2010; Alsagoff et al., 2012). Understanding the characteristics of children is vital for EFL teachers because it allows them to select instructional strategies, design syllabuses, develop assessment systems, and plan language activities appropriate for the child's age development (Copland et al., 2014).

Children in grades 4, 5, and 6 (8 to 11 years) are in the third stage of child development, namely the concrete operational stage, marked by organized and rational thinking development. Because it marks the beginning of logical thinking, the concrete stage is a significant turning point in a child's cognitive development. Children are mature enough to utilize reasoning or logical thinking at this stage, but they can only think logically about physical objects (Karea, 2016; Lelasari et al., 2021; Pambudi et al., 2022). Children at this stage can perceive the same things from various perspectives considering that they are based on direct experiences from different contexts (Slavin, 2011). They can make decisions about their own learning and have developed a sense of fairness about what happens in the classroom, prompting them to question the teacher's decision (Scott & Yreberg, 1990). As a result, it is critical to activate the socio-emotional elements for EFL classes to run smoothly. As a result, the teacher should provide a psychologically relaxed and secure learning atmosphere (Karea, 2016).

Furthermore, EFL teacher experience in teaching young learners should be established at this stage; the experience required is not only in terms of language experience but also in how to communicate or delivery method. This stimulates students' engagement and raises awareness of an interesting language to learn (Karea, 2016). At this point, the cooperative is more effective than the competitive strategy, where they can share their experiences and create an atmosphere of involvement and togetherness, as well as they will feel a sense of belonging among them (Scott & Yreberg, 1990).

Teaching English to young learners is undeniably challenging for elementary school teachers in Indonesia. The majority of the issues encountered by English education teachers when teaching English to young learners emerge from their training to teach English with a general purpose without due consideration for age grouping (Alfurqan et al., 2020). Whereas understanding the characteristics of children is vital for EFL teachers because it allows them to select instructional strategies, design syllabuses, develop assessment systems, and plan language activities appropriate for the child's age development (Copland et al., 2014). Therefore, before constructing English lessons, teachers must understand how to teach English to students of various age groups and ability levels (Nunan, 2003). Harmonies with Mustafa's argument that EFL teachers must first identify the target learners

(Musthafa, 2010). As is well known, the teaching method for young learners differs significantly from that of adolescents and adults. Because young learners' characteristics differ from those of teenagers and adults, the strategy must be tailored to the child's stage of development. Moreover, physical objects and social interaction strategies encourage young learners to become more engaged in learning (Musthafa, 2010). Indeed, Ellis and Brewster emphasize three primary factors that must be considered when instructing young students: psychological, linguistic, and cultural. The factors mentioned earlier are crucial in formulating suitable and efficient pedagogical strategies for young children (Ellis & Brewster, 2002).

Additionally, other challenges that teachers face today include demands for the integration of technology in learning as a transformative attempt at technological advances in the field of education. This is an extraordinary phenomenon considering that teachers in Indonesia are a group of digital immigrants who have had to adjust to using technology and integrating technology into learning for a lengthy moment. This is extremely unlike the current circumstance of young learners, who are categorized as digital natives and tend to comprehend Hi-tech more than educators. However, even though they are digital natives that are familiar with the technology, students must be taught how to use technology appropriately in the learning process and produce meaning in communication, and it involves the teacher's intervention (Koszalka et al., 2019).

Presently, an essential aspect that teachers must prioritize when incorporating technology into their instruction is to possess a comprehensive understanding of the functionality and purpose of technology. Whilst using technology is not solely about looking more modern with this technology but also about how merging technology supports students to engage in classroom instruction (Mayo, 2007). Regrettably, Goodyear and Retalis (2010) highlight that lack of exploration into the significance of technology in formal education leads to a lack of understanding of learning in the digital age. Harmonies with Smith and Greene (2013), they claims that teachers' pedagogical practices stay static even when advanced inventions are merged into the teaching process.

Nevertheless, Incorporating technology into the educational process is essential as it enables students to access and receive information and knowledge effectively. It is supported by Koehler and Mishra (2005), they claim that a paradigm shift has occurred regarding technology integration in education, transitioning from a solely technological focus to one incorporating pedagogical principles. It highlights the significance of incorporating technology into the educational process and how technology is employed to facilitate learning. For instance, Sprenger and Schwaninger (2021) conducted a study that offers additional insight into how technology facilitates visual communication and learning in academic settings. Following this, Damopolii and Kurniadi (2019) emphasized that technology usage should be planned to facilitate student expression and enhance cognitive abilities. Thereby, educational advancements may be introduced to students through the active engagement of instructors in the design of technologically-enhanced learning experiences (Damopolii et al., 2022). In addition, educational endeavors in responding to rapidly changing societal challenges, for example, developed numerous media as a tool for communication and learning (Koszalka et al, 2019). Indeed, technology today can generate new social and cultural contexts, as well as emerging world learning communities. As a result, illiteracy is not merely associated with people who cannot read and write but is also

defined as people who cannot function in today's digital era. Moreover, adapting pedagogy and curriculum, as well as incorporating innovative and transformative technology, is one way to bridge the gap between informal and formal education (Koszalka et al, 2019).

As a result, understanding these two challenges is essential for EFL teachers. An EFL teacher must consider age-appropriate learning activities for the learning instruction to run smoothly. Furthermore, teachers must be able to adapt activities and atmosphere based on the strategy and even media that relate to the current trend. Based on these issues, this paper highlights the various digital-based learning strategies that EFL teachers use in teaching English to young learners.

## **VARIOUS DIGITAL-BASED LEARNING STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY INDONESIAN EFL TEACHERS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS**

### **Digital folklore to develop EFL young learners' analytical and critical analysis**

Folklore is a story about human interaction with nature in which the material aims to instill life and how to live it. Although folklore is a traditional myth that evolved from common people's oral heritage, this folklore contains such high moral and cultural values that, when used in teaching and learning, can produce true cultural learning. As a result, incorporating folklore into learning can help students connect with their local culture while developing critical thinking skills. Folklore is thought to be capable of encouraging students to think analytically and critically in EFL classes. As a result, folklore is regarded as a method of teaching scenarios.

EFL teachers in Indonesia have combined folklore with visualizations such as videos and illustrations texts to provide young learners with a complete picture of the context. Indeed, to make learning more engaging, EFL teachers develop some features to their learning media, such as; English subtitles, sound, music, moving graphics, and animation. Thus, creatively designed folklore can help students improve their English skills (Yoedo & Mustofa, 2022).

Based on an in-depth investigation conducted by Yoedo and Mustofa (2022), the incorporating text visualization and other visual elements in English translations of Indonesian folk tales has several significant benefits in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction. It fosters students' enthusiasm for reading, supports their comprehension and vocabulary growth, and establishes more meaningful associations with real-life scenarios. Additionally, students comprehend English more rapidly using visuals instead of other methods, such as predicting folk tales.

Furthermore, teachers of EFL employ a great variety of instructional approaches when incorporating folklore into their lessons. The purpose of this course is to aid in the development of students' critical and logical reasoning abilities, such as the capacity to detect deviations, exercise independent thought, embrace divergent viewpoints, uncover concealed information, offer solutions, formulate conclusions, employ logical reasoning, engage in preventative thinking, and apply these skills to real-world scenarios.

In addition to enhancing students' motivation to study foreign languages, this strategy also refines their analytical and critical thinking abilities through the study. Therefore, by employing this strategy, learners are allowed to engage in language instruction that is culturally significant and interactive, thereby fostering their growth in multiple facets of English language acquisition.

### **Flipped classroom to enhance EFL young learner's vocabulary**

Learning in flip form is a method of communicating information by utilizing various educational concepts. In addition to being performed in class, students are usually given assignments they must complete outside class. Flipped classrooms can help students resolve issues, improve concepts, and even engage in collaborative instruction (Kachka, 2012). Even flipped classrooms are thought to be capable of advancing traditional lectures as well as student learning (Berret, 2012). The flipped classroom has evolved over time, combining various learning models and utilizing technology-based supporting media. Because lecture material can be covered at home and using a video-based platform that can be accessed privately, students can freely connect material and understand it according to their own level of understanding without feeling anxious about being monitored by classmates. Furthermore, students can check material repeatedly by advancing, stopping, pausing, and rewinding material (Jenkins, 2012). Moreover, the flipped classroom provides teachers with insight into their students' constraints and learning styles and the duration of learning that can be used effectively, efficiently, and creatively.

Flipped classrooms allow students to be dynamically involved in their learning, so students become more appreciative of the teacher's approach, class, and effort. They also like the teacher, making it easier for them to understand the material provided (Fulton, 2012). Simply, when the teacher employs this strategy correctly, it becomes more meaningful. The application of Instructional-based technology necessitates careful planning in order to enhance the learning experience so that students identify the learning experience as their objective (Anwar, 2017). In addition, the successful implementation of a flipped classroom requires instructional videos that are both effective and of a duration not exceeding twenty minutes. Furthermore, to ensure the efficacy of the flipped classroom implementation, teachers ought to conduct a content review before students participate in core learning activities (Danker, 2015).

Several procedures are essential for successfully implementing flipped classroom to enhance young learners' English vocabulary (Anwar, 2017). They are: On students' personal computers, it must be ensured that learning-related software such as Windows Movie Maker and similar programs have been installed; The teacher writes scripts based on the topics that young learners are most interested in, and then the scripts are read from the beginning to end; in addition, some supporting materials must be prepared in making videos to support the narrative conveyed by the teacher, such as pictures, clips, illustrations, instrumental music, and quoted words; finally, the recorded script and all supporting materials are combined into a vlog. Young learners watch the video at home and elsewhere in order to comprehend the material's messages and answer questions; at the subsequent meeting, students respond to questions posed in the video while the instructor guides and respond enthusiastically and interactively. Thus, interactive and creative class presentations foster a lively and comfortable classroom environment that encourages students to elaborate on the video's vocabulary. This strategy will automatically expand the young learner's English vocabulary (Anwar, 2017).

### **Animated e-books in increasing EFL young learners' literacy skills**

EFL teachers use animated electronic books as an alternative learning medium to improve young literacy' literacy (Hans, 2018; Yomaki et al., 2023). Animated e-books are e-books that can be easily downloaded from the internet and utilized by users without incurring shipping costs or requiring a lengthy delivery process (Yoon, 2013). Teachers can utilize e-books to introduce young learners to a variety of literature and the imaginative pleasures of the reading process (Setyantoko et al., 2023; Wepner et al., 2000). An empirical study by Yoon (2013) demonstrates that e-books become study companions and frequently used learning media by young students, particularly in supplemental English classes. Moreover, e-books have a positive impact on English language learning. As they can improve reading comprehension and expand the vocabulary of young learners, young learners are impressed with the multimedia features of e-books. In addition, animated e-books have the potential to increase reader engagement (Moody, 2010), increase students' attention, and permit independent text review (Wepner et al., 2000). Picture books have a high value for children classified as beginning readers as they have difficulty reading. Since these elements help children appreciate and enjoy the book (Jalongo et al., 2002). Moody (2010) noted that when selecting and utilizing e-storybooks in the school environment, teachers should recognize particular strategies, such as selecting child development storybooks that constrain multimedia attributes completely irrelevant to the story, pairing adult guidance with e-storybooks, and controlling distracting features embedded in e-storybooks.

Based on young learners' positive attitudes toward multimedia features of e-books, where the function of these features can build awareness of young learners' learning, animated e-books become alternative media that are recommended for use in language learning by the Indonesian EFL teachers, particularly in improving young learners' English literacy skills.

### **Multimodal e-book to develop EFL young learner's reading skill**

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers is currently implementing multimodal e-books to teach young students. Through the utilization of multi-model e-books, young learners have the chance to learn in a variety of formats. The use of diverse modalities in learning resources positively affects students (Gellevij et al., 2002). Essentially, multimodal e-books are intended to meet the educational needs of children in the age group three to twelve, and they were created 15 years ago.

Teachers can implement multimodal e-books, such as incorporating visual content (images, videos, and animations) through electronic children's books; to activate various features, young learners touch the screen of an electronic device with their finger on the e-book application. Touching the screen to activate features activates the child's psychomotor function, allowing visual and kinesthetic learning. Young learners can use audio features to listen to the narration, music, and correct pronunciation. Thus, young learners can better comprehend the meaning of stories, and children who are already proficient readers benefit from improved reading comprehension (Morgan, 2013). Using technology through multimodal features in instruction enables students to perceive content in various formats and accommodates diverse learning styles (visual, kinesthetic, auditory) (Sankey et al., 2010).

## **CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING VARIOUS DIGITAL-BASED LEARNING STRATEGIES INTO VARIOUS GOALS FOR YOUNG LEARNERS**

### **Challenges of implementing digital folklore to EFL young learner**

Incorporating digital folklore into EFL instruction for young learners presents a number of obstacles, particularly in the selection of folklore content. As is well-known, the content of Indonesian folklore tends to be negative, so it is suspected that it will have a negative impact on the mindset of young learners, who lack the capacity to screen the information they consume. This is the dilemma faced by the teacher, so the task of the teacher is to filter folklore suitable for young learners. In addition, according to (Yoedo & Mustofa, 2022). Some teachers consider not using folklore in teaching because there is no Indonesian folklore in the English version. Therefore, the teacher believes that Indonesian folklore should be taught in Indonesian classes, as well as myths that contradict religious beliefs, such as Sangkuriang is a puppy or Roro Jonggrang temple was founded with the help of the devil.

### **Challenges of implementing flipped classroom to EFL young learners**

Integrating learning strategies into a digital classroom is a challenging process. The challenge encountered when implementing the flipped classroom strategy is that it does not perfectly accommodate all students. Principally, the implementation of this strategy is hindered by the fact that each student must have access to his own device. Students from low-income families, who may not have adequate access to internet technology and electronic devices, are ultimately negatively affected by this issue. Furthermore, Another obstacle are faced by the EFL teachers are they struggle to create high quality learning picture and video. It is due to the majority of EFL teachers in Indonesia are digital immigrants who require time to comprehend and implement learning technology fully. Harmonies with Embi & Panah (2014), some teachers believe that creating high-quality EFL learning videos is the greatest challenge in flipped classrooms and that the video-making process is lengthy.

### **Challenges of implementing animated e-books to EFL young learner**

While e-book animation has advantages, there are a number of issues that EFL teachers in Indonesia must be aware of. EFL teachers must recognize that e-books can be used as a supplement to classroom instruction to improve young learner literacy. so that young learners continue to prioritize the use of printed book media. Because printed books play a significant role in promoting reading since childhood.

Furthermore, EFL teachers must anticipate the misuse of electronic books. If the teacher selects an electronic story book that distracts children, the young learners' understanding of the story content will suffer. As a result, electronic story books must take into account the stages of child development and limit digital tools that are unrelated to stories (Moody, 2010).

### **Challenges of implementing multimodal e-books to EFL young learner**

Even though many benefits support multimodal e-books, multimodal e-books are inseparable from several drawbacks that teachers must address to achieve learning objectives. According to Leftever-Davis and Pearman (2005), young learners are not



motivated to use critical thinking strategies when they use e-books that teachers do not properly monitor. For instance, when pronouncing words, students always rely on e-books and never attempt to decode the words independently. It affects the low development of literacy skills among children. In addition, children become dependent on e-books, which encourages them to take risks, but they tend to rely on e-guides. As a result, a teacher must be aware of the use of multimodal e-books by integrating them with other learning strategies in order for students to gain literacy-related educational benefits. No matter how well-designed the electronics are for developing children's skills, if the teacher is not competent, they cannot provide significant benefits (King-Sears & Evmenova, 2007).

## CONCLUSION

In order to achieve learning goals such as strengthening language skills and critical thinking skills in children, a knowledgeable strategy is required. Teachers use a variety of digital-based strategies, for instance; animated e-books, flipped classrooms, and digital folklore strategies. However, before attempting to implement these various strategies, the teacher must first realize the age development of his students in complexity. Additionally, the teacher must be adaptable and aware of the constraints of incorporating digital-based strategies in order to plan out thoughtfully and recognize a solution that addresses the issue. Furthermore, multiple different digital-based strategies will not be able to have a major impact on increasing young learner language skills except if the teacher has the ability to use them. In addition, when implementing the invention learning strategy, contribution from school principals and councils is required. Whereas supporting materials such as software and hardware will be able to facilitate the achievement of curriculum-planned learning objectives.

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