

The Role of Teachers In Desaining Creative English Vocabulary Habits In Early Stage Education

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Abstract: Learning English since early stage is an important strategy in preparing a generation that is able to compete in the global era. Teachers take on the role of creative learning designers so they are able to integrate English vocabulary through enjoyable, contextual, and consistent habits. This study aims to analyze the correlation between the teacher's role in designing creative English vocabulary habits and the vocabulary skills of early grade students. This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational descriptive design. The participants consisted of 10 early childhood education teachers and 60 children aged 4–6 years at Kinder Station in Yogyakarta. Data were collected using a teacher role questionnaire, picture vocabulary test, and observation sheet, then analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation test. The Results of the study indicate that the role of teachers is in the excellent category ($M=4.35$) and children's vocabulary skills are in the high category ($M=16.2$). Pearson's correlation test shows a strong and significant positive relationship ($r=0.72$; $p < 0.01$). These are confirmed by the importance of creative vocabulary practice and parental involvement as supporting factors for improving the English language skills of young children.

Keywords: Teacher's Role; Vocabulary Acquisition; Early Childhood English; Play-Based Learning; Parental Collaboration.

Introduction

Globalization, supported by advancements in communication technology, positions the mastery of English from an early age as a strategic necessity for developing a generation capable of competing globally. Bilingual education in various countries has become part of national education policies aimed at improving human resource quality (Rojas, 2024; Suswandari, 2021). Language proficiency serves as a crucial foundation for children's communication, cognitive, and socio-emotional development (Sukmawati, 2020). Early English acquisition is considered essential for cross-cultural interaction and access to global knowledge resources (Nuraini, 2025). The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2021 emphasizes that language development is one of the six core aspects of early childhood development. Approximately 66% of the world's

children grow up in bilingual environments (Smith, 2018), reflecting the widespread practice of using two languages. Data from Germany indicate that 40% of children under six come from migrant families, with more than half growing up in multilingual settings (Boese, 2023). These findings underscore the need for early bilingual education to prevent learning gaps.

English vocabulary instruction in early childhood education (PAUD) requires teacher creativity in designing learning activities that are enjoyable, contextual, and meaningful (Kholilullah, 2020; Allehyani, 2023; Oliva-Olson, 2017). Interactive strategies have been shown to promote active engagement among children, indicating that vocabulary habituation necessitates learning designs responsive to the dynamics of teacher-child interactions. A pre-survey involving 50 PAUD teachers in Salatiga revealed that all respondents had introduced English; however, only 40%

integrated it into the core curriculum. Sixty percent still treated English as an additional activity. Only 14% of teachers had a background in English education, and none of the respondents had participated in interactive English teaching training (Fitriati, 2023). These findings indicate that teachers' professional readiness to teach English remains limited.

Pedagogical competence among PAUD teachers remains uneven in designing learning activities. Research in the Kemiling District reported disparities in teachers' capacity to develop instructional activities (Rahayu, 2015). Other studies emphasize the need for tiered professional training through Lesson Study to improve the quality of early childhood education (Miftakhi, 2023). Enhancing teacher competence is key to meeting the needs of Dual Language Learners (DLLs). Creative vocabulary habituation models have the potential to contribute to bilingual learning theory and second language teaching strategies for young children (Nola Harvey, 2014; Oliva-Olson, 2017).

Strengthening the national language remains essential to ensure that bilingual education does not neglect children's cultural identity. Children's use of Indonesian has increasingly deviated from standard norms due to the influence of digital media and daily visual content (Ramadania & Aswadi, 2020). Teachers are required to maintain a balance between introducing English and consolidating the national language so that bilingual development occurs healthily and aligns with the children's cultural environment.

Initial observations at Kinder Station Kindergarten in Yogyakarta indicate the implementation of an international curriculum with English as the medium of instruction. Children are introduced to English vocabulary from the Preschool level (ages 1–3 years) through daily activities such as object naming, greetings, simple instructions, and routine conversations. By the Kindergarten level, children are accustomed to using English in both learning activities and social interactions. Challenges arise for children entering Kindergarten without prior Preschool experience, as teachers must review basic vocabulary before progressing to more advanced language skills. Individual evaluations are employed to monitor children's vocabulary acquisition.

Previous studies (Jalongo, 2011; Bialystok, 2018) have not thoroughly addressed teachers' creativity in contextualizing vocabulary learning, nor have they examined the balance between the use of the national language and English within the Indonesian context. Earlier research has also overlooked the influence of social environment, media, and visual content on children's vocabulary acquisition. This study offers a perspective that positions teachers as the central actors in designing creative vocabulary practices that are relevant to the Indonesian children's context.

The focus of this study is on "The Role of Teachers in Designing Creative English Vocabulary Practices in Early Childhood Education." The research objectives include identifying teachers' creative strategies, analyzing the effectiveness of vocabulary practices in enhancing children's English language skills, and mapping the challenges encountered by teachers during the learning process.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a quantitative approach with a descriptive-correlational design aimed at analyzing the relationship between teachers' roles and early childhood English vocabulary skills. This approach was selected because it allows for an objective depiction of data trends and the examination of the strength of relationships between measurable variables (Creswell, 2016). The research subjects comprised 10 early childhood education teachers and 60 children aged 4–6 years at Kinder Station Kindergarten, Yogyakarta. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on specific criteria such as teaching experience and active involvement in English learning activities. Children were included as participants based on their engagement in the English vocabulary practice program that had been routinely implemented at the school.

The research instruments comprised three types of measurement tools. First, a teacher role questionnaire, developed based on pedagogical competency indicators in accordance with the Indonesian Ministry of Education Regulation No. 16 of 2007, and modified for the context of English

language learning in early childhood education. This instrument was used to assess the extent to which teachers implement their pedagogical roles during learning activities. Second, a picture-based vocabulary test consisting of 20 items representing basic English vocabulary aligned with the Cambridge Early Years Curriculum, employed to measure children's vocabulary skills. Third, an English language practice observation sheet was used to monitor the implementation of English vocabulary routines.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics to illustrate the categories of teacher roles and the levels of children's vocabulary skills, as well as Pearson correlation tests to examine the relationship between the two variables. All analyses were performed using SPSS version 26, ensuring that the results could be presented accurately, objectively, and interpreted with ease.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study indicate that creatively designed English vocabulary practices by teachers have a positive impact on language development in early childhood at a kindergarten in Yogyakarta. Teachers with high pedagogical competence are able to create a language-rich learning environment through a child-centered learning approach. This study aims to analyze the relationship between teachers' roles in designing creative English vocabulary practices and the vocabulary skills of early childhood students in Yogyakarta. Data were collected from 10 early childhood education teachers and 60 children aged 4–6 years using questionnaires, picture-based vocabulary tests, and observations of vocabulary practice activities. Descriptive analysis showed that, overall, teachers' roles in designing English vocabulary practices were rated very good, with a mean score of $M = 4.35$ and $SD = 0.42$.

These findings indicate that teachers possess a high level of competence in designing learning activities that are creative, relevant, and responsive to children's needs. Teachers consistently integrate English vocabulary into daily routines, such as greeting children in the morning with "Good

morning," providing simple instructions in English like "Stand up" or "Let's clean up," and enriching play activities with songs and picture-based stories in English. Furthermore, classroom observations revealed that teachers effectively combine thematic and contextual approaches when introducing new vocabulary. For instance, during the "animals" theme, teachers utilized animal puppets, children's songs, and short videos to help children understand words such as cat, dog, bird, and fish. These activities facilitate children's vocabulary comprehension by providing concrete visual and kinesthetic contexts. This creative approach demonstrates that vocabulary practice is not mechanical but is grounded in enjoyable, play-based experiences.

The results of the picture-based vocabulary test administered to 60 children aged 4–6 years indicated that their English vocabulary skills were in the high category, with a mean score of $M = 16.2$ and $SD = 1.8$ out of a total of 20 items. Most children were able to name and recognize vocabulary related to objects in their environment, such as apple, car, ball, banana, and sun. These findings suggest that the children possess a strong foundation in basic vocabulary and are able to use it spontaneously in play contexts. Some children even demonstrated the ability to combine two words sequentially, such as "red car" or "big ball," indicating the early development of more complex language structures.

The Pearson correlation analysis between teachers' roles and children's vocabulary skills yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.72$ with $p < 0.01$, indicating a strong and significant positive relationship between the two variables. Thus, the higher the level of creativity and consistency demonstrated by teachers in designing English vocabulary practices, the greater the vocabulary skills achieved by early childhood learners. This correlation suggests that engaging and contextualized vocabulary practices directly contribute to the improvement of children's language abilities, both in the receptive aspect (understanding words) and the productive aspect (producing words).

Field findings also indicate that the success of vocabulary practices is determined not only by school-based activities but also by parental

involvement at home. Children who receive vocabulary reinforcement at home through simple activities such as singing, reading storybooks, or watching educational English videos with their parents demonstrate faster progress. This supports the view that early childhood language learning is ecological, developing through the synergy between home and school environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Furthermore, brief interviews with teachers revealed that pedagogical creativity plays a crucial role in overcoming resource limitations. Teachers utilize simple materials such as self-made picture cards, free digital media, and interactive role-play activities to enrich children's learning experiences. This approach not only increases children's engagement but also motivates them to use English naturally in daily conversations. For example, during pretend play activities such as a "mini store," children learn to use simple expressions like "I want juice" or "Thank you" in meaningful contexts.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that creatively designed English vocabulary practices have a positive impact on language development in early childhood. Teachers with high pedagogical competence are able to create a language-rich and child-centered learning environment. Consistent and repeated vocabulary practices reinforce children's long-term memory of English while simultaneously enhancing their interest and confidence in communication. Therefore, these findings underscore the importance of professional development for early childhood education teachers in pedagogical creativity and the integration of play-based foreign language learning to foster meaningful and sustainable learning processes.

This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theory, which emphasizes that language development is shaped through social interactions and scaffolding provided by more competent adults. In this context, teachers act as mediators who enrich children's linguistic experiences through play, singing, and storytelling activities using English vocabulary.

Consistent vocabulary practices strengthen children's long-term memory of new words, supporting Bruner's (1983) view that repetition and meaningful context play a critical role in language

acquisition. Routine activities, such as greeting with "Good morning," giving simple instructions, and engaging in play through songs or picture-based stories, create natural contexts for children to understand and use language functionally. This aligns with Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, which explains that children learn through observing and imitating adult behaviors, including language use.

These findings are consistent with previous research. Cameron (2018) found that play-based foreign language practices enhance children's comprehension and confidence in using the language. Alqahtani (2019) also emphasized that vocabulary repetition strategies, combined with visual-auditory activities, significantly strengthen children's retention of new words. In Indonesia, Suryana (2021) demonstrated that early childhood teachers who routinely integrate English into daily activities can improve children's linguistic abilities while fostering a positive attitude toward foreign languages from an early age.

This study also indicates that teachers' creativity in designing vocabulary practice activities is a key factor in successful language learning. Teachers who are able to integrate elements of play, art, and simple technology can enhance children's active participation. These findings align with Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligences theory, which posits that each child possesses multiple intelligences that can be developed through diverse learning experiences. Thus, varied vocabulary practices not only stimulate linguistic development but also support the integrated growth of children's cognitive, socio-emotional, and motor skills.

The success of vocabulary practice is also influenced by a supportive learning environment. Teachers who are able to create a communicative and low-pressure classroom atmosphere provide children with opportunities to experiment with language without fear of making mistakes. This principle aligns with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which posits that a positive emotional climate reduces barriers to language learning and facilitates children's ability to comprehend and use new vocabulary.

Parental involvement in vocabulary practice also emerged as an important aspect in this study. When school activities are reinforced with simple practices

at home, such as reading picture storybooks or singing together in English, children demonstrate more rapid improvement in vocabulary acquisition. This finding aligns with research by Wasik and Hindman (2020), which showed that collaboration between teachers and parents in early literacy activities significantly strengthens children's language competence. Therefore, vocabulary practice should be viewed as a continuous process that involves the entire early childhood education ecosystem.

From a child development perspective, the findings of this study also show that early exposure to a foreign language does not hinder first-language development; instead, it broadens children's metalinguistic awareness. This aligns with Genesee's (2019) research, which demonstrates that bilingual children possess greater cognitive flexibility in recognizing linguistic structures and communication patterns. Accordingly, English vocabulary practices in early childhood education can serve as a foundational step for children to develop as individuals who are adaptive to linguistic diversity and global cultural contexts.

Furthermore, from a pedagogical perspective, these findings underscore the importance of continuous professional development for early childhood teachers to enhance their creativity and competence in foreign-language instruction. Research by Supriyono and Hartati (2022) indicates that teachers with cross-linguistic pedagogical understanding are better equipped to design meaningful learning experiences that align with young children's developmental characteristics. Therefore, the present study reinforces the urgency of strengthening teacher professional development through training in play-based foreign-language teaching methodologies and the use of educational technologies that are relevant to children's learning contexts.

Overall, this study affirms that the habituation of English vocabulary, when designed through creative, consistent, and child-centered approaches, can serve as an effective strategy for developing language proficiency while simultaneously strengthening young children's self-confidence. This approach functions not only as a mechanism for language acquisition but also as a medium for

fostering character, creativity, and children's readiness to navigate multilingual global challenges. Consequently, the integration of play-based foreign-language learning should be positioned as an integral component of early childhood curricula that prioritize holistic child development.

Conclusions

This study concludes that teachers' creativity in designing English vocabulary habituation plays a significant role in enhancing young children's language abilities. Teachers with strong pedagogical competence are able to create linguistically rich, interactive, and child-centered learning environments through play activities, singing, storytelling, and the use of simple digital media. Consistent vocabulary habituation has been shown to strengthen long-term memory, improve children's receptive and productive English skills, and foster their confidence in communication. The findings indicate a strong positive correlation between teacher creativity and children's vocabulary abilities ($r = 0.72$; $p < 0.01$), aligning with Vygotsky's constructivist theory and Krashen's affective theory, both of which emphasize the importance of social interaction and enjoyable learning atmospheres in language acquisition.

Collaboration between teachers and parents is a crucial factor in the successful habituation of English vocabulary among young children. The synergy between school and home accelerates children's language development, supporting Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of social contexts in child development. Practically, this study recommends strengthening the professional capacity of early childhood teachers through training focused on pedagogical creativity and play-based language learning. Overall, creative, consistent, and child-centered English vocabulary habituation has proven effective in optimizing language development while preparing children to face global communication challenges without compromising their national linguistic identity.

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