

# PROMOTING SOCIAL SKILLS AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IN TEACHING PRAGMATICS IN EFL CLASSROOM WITH PLAYFUL RHYMES

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**Abstract.** Teaching English to young learners has played a pivotal role in building basic language competence. In the EYL classroom, teachers never teach pragmatically sensitive English in that they assume this is hard to teach young learners. Yet, they need it to get social practices. Though using nursery rhyme as a fun way of learning English has been discussed repeatedly in the EYL literature, English teachers rarely use them contextually. Thus, the presenter wishes to present how to teach English using playful nursery rhyme. The presentation begins addressing a conceptual framework of Teaching English for Young Learners pragmatically. In this section, the presenter will provide the attendees with the nature of Teaching English for Young Learners together with the rationale for implementing Pragmatics. In the second session, the presenter will flesh out steps for teaching students by using nursery rhyme as a booster of the students' language development. The practical ideas of using nursery rhyme as social practices among students will be presented in this section. The presenter argues that nursery rhyme is able to build the social skills and promote personal development in today's global world; thereby young learners can easily pragmatically sensitive English within the remit of their ability.

## 1. Introduction

Indonesian students have learned English since they were in kindergarten. The students also got much English materials from the teacher. Yet, the result is far from the expectations. The students still have many problems when they get start communicating with other people especially foreigners. Although they know a lot about grammar / structure, but they do not know how to use it in the real encounter. They only got the inputs to be learned or acquired in the classroom. It happens because the teachers rarely teach them pragmatically sensitive English. The teachers' knowledge about teaching English pragmatics or language in action are still low. Thus, the students only know about the theory of English without implementing it practically. From this situation, the teachers play an essential role during the teaching learning. They have to create contextual situation in which it provides the students with many opportunities in using English.

Dealing with the problems above, it is necessary to make a strong foundation of basic English in the students early age. Teaching English as a foreign language for young learners has been developed recently, especially in Indonesia. For each level for formal education, English has existed in the curriculum. In the elementary school, it has been set as a local content curriculum. The implication of having local content curriculum is introducing English as a foreign language. It is expected that they will be ready to use English for daily communication. To reach this level, nowadays, play group and kindergarten students are required to learn English. They are introduced with basic English which is suitable with their age.

Teaching English for young learners needs the teachers' creativity in feeding them with various inputs. The input may come from the situations which have been created by the teachers. Without being creative in teaching English for young learners, the students will not acquire the target language successfully. It happens because they only get the input of learning English only from the teachers. The exposures of using English are limited only in the classroom. Sometimes, when teachers give the materials from Commercial textbooks, it is not sufficient to provide them with many social practices. Therefore, to achieve successful communication using English, the English teachers should find ways of letting them acquire and use the target language very actively.

Young learners need to be engaged socially in the real practice. They need to acquire all the inputs provided by the context situation and successfully involve in having communication actively with other people. Teaching them pragmatically sensitive English will equip them with chances to have exposures in using the target language. As the result, young learners automatically will use English in their daily life.

Teaching pragmatics to young learners can be done through the concept of language in actions. Teachers have to create contextual activities which is suitable with the students' early age. One of some ways that can be deployed by the teachers is teaching English through playful nursery rhymes. Although nursery rhymes has been discussed repeatedly, but the English teachers rarely use it contextually. The young learners need situations in which they will play with the target language. Yet, many people realize that teaching them in a very formal situations or in a conventional way is not very effective. They will absorb the language easily if the teaching learning process is carried out in a fun and attractive way. Therefore, it is expected that the young learners' language competence can be built step by step.

## **2. Teaching pragmatically sensitive English**

Pragmatics has different point of view about language. Language can be seen from different discourse, both written and spoken. Based on this social definition, pragmatic competence can then be defined as knowledge of how to use language to achieve goals in language interaction, or rather, competence of language interaction in a sociocultural context (Kasper, 1997, as cited in [1]). Then, it is clear that the interlocutors need to consider about context, and content so that they run a very smooth communication.

Those points in pragmatic competence will affect each other when the interlocutors involve in a communication. From this situation, the students have to learn pragmatic competence so that they are able to involve in a communication effectively. Brock and Nagasaka [2] further examines pragmatic incompetence in the L2, producing inappropriate use of expression and inaccurate interpretations may cause unsuccessful communications. It is clear that this situation can lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication. The worst thing happen when the interlocutors (native speaker) have different perception that L2 speaker is ignore and impolite to them. Thus, it can be inferred that pragmatic competence will equip the students with appropriate language use, and interpret meaning delivered by the interlocutors contextually (Desalles,1998 in [2])

In the classroom, the teachers lead the students in order to be cooperative during the communication. Based on The Cooperative Principles [3] the teachers will direct the students to be true (Maxim of Quality), to be informative (Maxim of Quantity), to be relevant (Maxim of relevance), and to be clear (Maxim of manner). In many language expressions, it seems that someone disobey the rule of the Cooperative Principles. Yet, it is a way to be cooperative with our interlocutors. Of course, in the teaching learning process, the teachers are going to teach them of how to socially interact and communicate with other people. When the teacher ask the the students "Do you know where the marker is?" , the students' response will be " Near the board". Based on the Maxim of Relevance, the students' response is not relevant to the questions. The teacher's question is categorized as a closed question. It requires yes and no answer. In fact, the students just give a complete answer by showing exact place of the marker. In this communication, the student looks vey helpful by giving cooperative answer to the teachers so that it can avoid misunderstanding in a communication. Step by step, the

teachers direct the students in order to socially build pragmatic competence, thus, the communication run very smoothly.

The concept of Speech act in the communication reveals possibly meaning behind utterances. When someone produces utterances in a specific contextual situation, he/she has locutionary force, illocutionary force and perlocutionary force (Austin, 1962, as cited in [4]). In comprehending this concept, the English teachers provide contextual situation in which direct them to understand meaning behind utterances. For instance, when one of the students say “I am thirsty”, her friends will offer her a bottle of water. It is clear that, in fact, the students understand the implicit message given by her friend. And as the consequences, this student is not thirsty anymore.

Politeness strategy in a communication becomes so crucial. It makes the communication run smoothly. It refers to an effort to make our interlocutors comfortable with feeling. None is trying to make others get offended. They make an effort to safe other’s face. In the classroom, when the teacher invites the students to have role play, they will be directed to use utterances in which it will make our interlocutor has a negative feeling. When others want to ask somebody else to clean the toys, they can use this expression “Would you please clean the toys”. The politeness strategy would create a good learning community in a classroom. Furthermore, the students will learn how to communicate with other people in different contextual situation.

It is vivid that language plays a pivotal role in building the young learners basic English competence. the teacher’s creativity in providing them different contextual situation will successfully direct them into a smooth communication. The contextual situations means to whom they talk to, place, time, theme and situation. Therefore, the material in the classroom is directed in order that the students will learn English by doing something attractive in the classroom.

### **3. The Importance of Nursery Rhyme**

Teaching English for young learners is not easy to do. They need to assure that the young learners learn English effectively. They have to assist them manipulate new thing they just learned so that they are able to use it in the real encounter. It needs the teachers’ creativity to provide activities in which the students are stimulated to use the target language in a fun way.

One way of learning by doing is giving them nursery rhyme. Nursery rhyme is usually short, has rhyme, poetic, tales, and chanted by adults. It is becoming a part of young learners life. When they sing nursery rhymes, they use their linguistic and musical challenges that can trigger their cognitive development through pleasant social interactions mediated by adults and peers (Gauthier & Lejeune, 2008, as cited in [5]). From this point, it is clear that the teachers’ activities in the classroom are affecting what the young learners got, and whether or not the young learners basic English competence is developed.

There are abundant of English nursery rhymes. The nursery rhymes like “One two buckle my shoe”, “Humty Dumpty “, “Rain – rain go away” are the example of rhymed expressions. These nursery rhymes, associated with the action (body movement), lead the young learners to be involved in the language activities. If the sprit of play and imagination is encouraged, then teachers and learners are more open to new and different opportunities, to trying new routes and paths less well travelled (Fisher and William, 2004 in [6]). Thus, the students’ active involvement in the playful nursery rhyme results deep engagements in acquiring the target language easily.

Playful nursery rhymes is widely recognized as a fun activities with joyful step. The English teachers play an important role in how to make them involve in the language activities. The young learners, generally, need to be trusted, valued, feel safe, and able to take risks as readers, writers, speakers and listeners and not be critiqued for so doing [6]. Without considering those aspects, the young learners in the classroom will be reluctant in following all activities. Then, the process of acquiring the target language will not be optimized.

#### **4. Playful Nursery Rhymes to Nurture Young Learners' Social Practices**

Playful nursery rhymes are successful mediating tool in triggering the young learners basic English competence. They create learning community in which provide them with abundant social practices. They acquire the target language easily since the teachers equip them with many chances to actualize, manipulate, and play the target language. The followings are some examples of how nursery rhymes can be used to teach young learners pragmatic competence, so that they are able to use it in the real communication.

##### *4.1 Playful Nursery Rhyme 1*

#### **To Market, To Market**

To market, to market, to buy a big cake,  
Walk around, Shop around jiggety-bake.  
To market, to market, to buy a cute dog,  
Walk around, Shop around, jiggety-jog.  
To market, to market, to buy a big drum,  
Home again, home again, market is done.  
(Taken from <http://littlebabybum.com>)

This playful nursery rhyme can be carried out in a very fun way. The teacher as a model, gives example of singing the rhyme. While she is singing the rhyme, she acts out to be someone who does shopping. By holding a basket, she buys the cake, a dog, and a big drum. Then she puts them in the basket. When she holds the thing she buys, actually, she tries to manipulate the things so that the students know and learn the English vocabulary. Based on this nursery rhyme, the young learners are provided with chances of singing this nursery rhyme together with holding the things they buy at market. The teacher can provide visual illustration of a market in form of pictures and video to help them understand the situation. The teacher also facilitates them of how to express their feeling using English. In this situation, the students are equipped with chances to use English contextually. Furthermore, the teacher can ask the questions like “Where do you go?”, or “What do you buy?”. These questions are aimed at giving context, assessing the students learning outcomes and having corrective feedback [7]. By guiding them with the questions, step by step they learn about the structure of the sentences. In harmony with the structure of the sentences, the teachers also introduce them with new vocabularies to support the language content. From this situation, it is clear that the students' basic language competence is constructed socially.

##### *4.2 Playful Nursery Rhyme 2*

#### **Itsy-Bitsy Spider**

The incy-wincy spider  
Climbed up the water spout  
Down came the rain  
And washed the spider out  
Out came the sun

And dried up all the rain  
And the incy-wincy spider  
Climbed up the spout again

(Taken from <https://www.songsforteaching.com/nurseryrhymes/itsybitsyspider.php>)

For this nursery rhyme, the teacher can attract the students to be actively involved in language activities. Preparation needs to be done so that the learners enjoy the activities. Since the topic is about spider, the teacher brings some flannel cloths, scissors, markers and glue. The teacher can start the activities by grouping them into several community learnings. Then, the teacher sings the nursery rhyme, and shows the action (verb) mentioned in the rhyme. The students imitate what they see and hear from the model. When the students see and hear, then they use their hand to manipulate mediating tools, in fact they build their comprehension [8]. After singing the rhyme together, the students are ready to make their own description of the rhyme. Using the flannel cloths, they start making the pattern, then cut the cloths (assisted by the teacher). They can make spiders (incy, wincy), water spout, drops of rain, cloud and the sun. The teacher needs to walk around the group and observe what they have done so far. In doing this, the teacher needs to assist them to use the target language constructively. When one student does not bring a pencil, then another student is going to lend him one. The expression that can be used to respond this situation could be *“lend me your pencil”* or *“Could I borrow your pencil please?”*. In order to be polite in a communication, the appropriate context and content are needed. The teacher needs to teach them responding the situation pragmatically by using polite expression. Beside that, questioning technique in digging the students understanding about the content of nursery rhyme needs to be done. Arousing the questions during the activities has three purposes. [9] explain that teachers’ questions are for cognitive/intellectual reasons (concerning with subject matter), emotional / social reasons, and for managerial reasons (to make the students on track). To conclude, facilitating the students with various language activities, especially in experiencing new thing by themselves, will make them easily comprehend the context and the content of a communication.

### **Playful Nursery Rhyme 3**

#### **Here’s a ball for baby**

Here’s a ball for baby  
Big and soft and round.  
Here’s baby’s hammer,  
See how he can pound.  
Here is a baby’s music,  
Clapping, clapping, so.  
Here are baby’s soldiers,  
Standing in a row.  
Here’s a big umbrella,  
To keep our baby dry.  
Here is baby’s cradle,  
To rock-a-baby-bye.

(Taken from: <https://kcls.org/content/here-is-a-ball-for-baby/>)

The nursery rhyme “Here’s the ball for baby” provides joyful language activities. Providing chances to get playful environment contribute to experiencing new things. Since the rhyme is very attractive, the teacher can let his students to manipulate the new vocabularies. Giving model in playing the rhyme enthusiastically will be imitated by the students cheerfully. Because the rhyme contains

many action words, the students will be happy in experiencing movements. It makes them understand about the new vocabularies since they practice it directly in the classroom. The teacher also bring media like a soft and round ball, umbrella and a hammer, and as the result, it will ease them memorize the new things. After reciting the rhyme and demonstrating the movements, the teacher can ask the students to make a rebus poster in group. Merriam Webster defines it as a poster which represents words or syllables by pictures of objects, or by symbols whose names resemble the intended words or syllables in sound. The teacher may provide many pictures which are related to the content of the rhyme. Then, the teacher divides the students into groups. After that, asking the students to make a rebus poster is a pleasurable thing to do. They can rewrite, and read over the lyric with the members. Various activities (talking, playing, reading, writing, drawing, and reciting) are done in order to keep their enthusiasm in learning target language [10]. From these various activities, they can negotiate with their friend, which pictures they are going to use or draw. Letting the students interact and communicate among group members will arouse their self awareness of exposing smooth communication.

## 5. Conclusion

Teaching English for young learners is obviously formidable. The teachers' creativity is badly needed in facilitating them to get actively engage in language activities. Planned and various activities lead them to produce utterances and use the target language based on context situation. [10] notes that the most important thing to do in the classroom is that the teacher need to work on planning lesson and able to choose appropriate materials for children. All the efforts done by the teacher are paid when they see the students are successfully involve in a communication using English. Besides, in order to produce successful communication, the students need to be equipped with social practices (pragmatic competence). Social practices which are needed by the students can be obtained through playful nursery rhyme. The nursery rhyme is usually short, rhymed, and reflects the social life. Due to its reflection of the real life, the students' basic language competence is trained by performing English language activities. The students do not only focus on singing the nursery rhyme, but also actualizing movement which represents the action of the lyric. They are also stimulated with the visual images (pictures or videos), and try to manipulate actively using English. Manipulating all media in classroom language activities make them experience new things. Integrating nursery rhyme, body movement, the students' basic language competence, context and content may result linguistically fruitful environment in which the students are equipped with abundant vocabularies. It also promotes the students' personal development because they are provided with the chance of using English with their peers, the new input are successfully stored in their long-term memory, and therefore, they are able to use English in the real situation effectively.

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