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DESIGNING ENGLISH INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

By

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Abstract

This study aims to design an English course syllabus and instructional materials tailored for elementary school students at UPT SDN 4 Rijang Panua. The research combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to identify students' learning needs and preferences. A needs analysis revealed gaps in the current curriculum and instructional practices. The developed syllabus integrates engaging, age-appropriate materials that foster key language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—through interactive and task-based activities. By addressing the unique needs of young learners, the research provides practical guidelines for creating adaptable and effective instructional materials that support linguistic and cognitive development.

Keywords: English Course Syllabus, Needs Analysis, Instructional Material, Elementary School

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INTRODUCTION

English is one of the most widely used international languages, essential for communication in global contexts. Its role has transcended traditional linguistic boundaries to become a cornerstone of technological advancements, economic growth, and cross-cultural exchange. As a result, mastering English is not only a matter of prestige but also a practical necessity for individuals aiming to thrive in an interconnected world. Hutchinson and Waters (1987:6) note that globalization, along with rapid advancements in science and technology, has heightened the demand for English language proficiency. This demand is evident in educational systems worldwide, including in Indonesia, where English has been integrated into the national curriculum. The Indonesian government recognizes the importance of English in preparing students for global challenges and opportunities. Consequently, English is taught as a compulsory subject from junior high school to university levels and is increasingly being introduced in elementary schools. This reflects an understanding that early exposure to English lays a stronger foundation for language acquisition, as young learners are more receptive to new languages. However, despite these policies, a significant gap remains in the availability of structured and engaging instructional

materials tailored to the needs of elementary school students, particularly in rural areas. Addressing this gap is critical to enhancing the effectiveness of English teaching and learning in Indonesia.

Numerous studies have explored the development of English instructional materials to support effective teaching and learning. Ramasari, Triyogo, and Ardayati (2019) conducted a study on designing English reading materials for eleventh-grade students using the Educational Research and Development (R&D) model based on the 2013 Curriculum. Their research highlighted that systematically developed materials could enhance students' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and motivation to learn. Similarly, Maudy and Fauziyati (2019) investigated the development of English instructional materials for vocational school students, emphasizing the importance of aligning the materials with the scientific approach of the 2013 Curriculum to cater to specific learning contexts. Despite these contributions, the focus has predominantly been on older students and vocational education, leaving a research gap in the design of instructional materials for young learners in elementary schools. Additionally, prior studies have often centered on general English instruction, neglecting the specific cultural, cognitive, and developmental



needs of young learners. These gaps underscore the need for targeted research to design English syllabi and instructional materials that are specifically tailored to the unique needs of young learners in elementary school settings.

This study addresses the identified gaps by focusing on the design of English instructional materials specifically for first-grade students at UPT SDN 4 Rijang Panua, a rural elementary school in Indonesia. Unlike previous studies, which primarily emphasized general or vocational contexts, this research is distinguished by its emphasis on early childhood education. It integrates a needs-based approach that considers the developmental characteristics of young learners, ensuring that the materials are engaging, age-appropriate, and culturally relevant. Additionally, this research aligns with Indonesia's Independence Curriculum, which emphasizes flexibility, creativity, and student-centered learning. By contextualizing the instructional materials to meet both local and global needs, this study offers a novel approach that bridges theoretical insights with practical application. Another distinctive aspect of this study is its use of a modified version of Dick and Carey's systems approach, tailored to accommodate the specific educational context and constraints of UPT SDN 4 Rijang Panua. This ensures that the resulting instructional materials are not only theoretically sound but also practically applicable in real classroom settings.

This study seeks to answer two key research questions: (1) What are the specific learning and target needs of first-grade students at UPT SDN 4 Rijang Panua? and (2) How can these needs be translated into a well-structured English syllabus and instructional materials? To address these questions, this research employs a qualitative approach that includes classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student needs analyses. The modified version of Dick and Carey's systems approach serves as the methodological framework, allowing for a systematic and iterative process of material development. The research findings are expected to contribute significantly to the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) by providing a detailed framework for designing English instructional materials that are responsive to the specific needs of young learners in rural Indonesian schools. Moreover, the study has practical implications for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers, offering insights into how localized instructional materials can enhance English teaching and learning outcomes. By focusing on the unique characteristics of elementary school learners and aligning the materials with the Independence Curriculum, this research not only fills an important gap in the literature but also serves as a model for similar contexts in other regions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching English to young learners requires understanding their developmental characteristics and preferences. At the elementary level, students benefit from interactive and engaging learning processes that align with their cognitive and social development. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and scaffolding in facilitating learning, especially

language acquisition (Mercer & Howe, 2012). This theory supports the use of collaborative and interactive activities, such as storytelling and group games, to build students' language skills.

Additionally, the concept of task-based learning has gained significant attention in English language teaching (Ellis, 2003). This approach focuses on using meaningful tasks to foster practical language use and communication skills. It aligns with the need to make learning English relevant and enjoyable for young learners, especially in settings where English is a foreign language.

Total Physical Response (TPR), developed by Asher (2005), is another critical concept. TPR involves learning through physical activities, such as acting out commands, which helps students internalize language structures before producing them. This method is particularly effective for elementary students, as it caters to their energy levels and need for active learning experiences.

Several studies highlight the importance of developing age-appropriate materials for teaching English in elementary schools. Brewster et al. (2003) emphasized the role of visual and interactive content in keeping young learners engaged. Materials such as flashcards, storybooks, and multimedia resources have proven to be effective in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and comprehension.

Research by Pinter (2017) suggested that integrating songs and storytelling into English lessons significantly improves listening and speaking skills. These activities make learning enjoyable and relatable, encouraging students to participate actively. Similarly, Sukamerta (2013) found that Indonesian students often struggle with English due to the lack of engaging materials tailored to their local context. His study called for a localized approach to syllabus design that incorporates cultural elements familiar to students.

Other studies, such as those by Ellis (2003) and Harmer (2007), have advocated for communicative and task-based approaches in teaching English. These approaches prioritize practical language use through activities like role-playing and collaborative projects, enabling students to apply their skills in real-life contexts.

Moreover, modern studies have shown the potential of technology in English language instruction. Alqahtani (2015) demonstrated that digital tools, such as educational apps and interactive whiteboards, enhance vocabulary retention and learner engagement. This finding underscores the need to integrate technology into instructional materials for elementary learners.

This research builds on the above concepts and findings to design a syllabus and instructional materials tailored to elementary school students. The framework integrates Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, TPR, and task-based learning approaches, ensuring that the materials are interactive, engaging, and contextually relevant. Additionally, insights from previous studies on visual and multimedia resources inform the development of content that meets the cognitive and linguistic needs of young learners. By combining these theoretical and practical perspectives, the research aims to address the gaps in existing instructional practices and provide a

model for effective English language teaching in elementary schools.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology in this study uses the Research and Development (R&D) approach. This method was chosen because the purpose of this study is to design and produce English learning materials for eighth grade students that are effective and appropriate to the educational environment. The R&D approach allows researchers not only to develop new materials based on a structured needs analysis but also to test the effectiveness of these materials in a real classroom environment, ensuring their relevance and applicability for wider use (Borg, 2003; Sugiyono, 2017). The research procedure follows a modified version of the systems approach model originally proposed by Dick & Carey (1996), with adjustments made to suit the context of this study. The stages of the research include: (a) Needs Analysis, which is conducted to collect data on students' learning needs; (b) Planning, where learning materials are designed based on the results of the needs analysis, ensuring alignment with educational objectives; (c) Developing Materials, which involves creating interesting and relevant materials that combine reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities; (d) Expert Judgement, where materials are evaluated by English language teaching experts to ensure their suitability and effectiveness; and (e) Revising, where feedback from experts was used to refine the materials before finalizing them for classroom implementation.

Data analysis in this study was conducted in two stages. First, data from the needs analysis questionnaire were analyzed by calculating the percentage of each response, using descriptive statistics to summarize student preference trends. The analysis formula proposed by Suharto was applied, where the percentage for each option was calculated based on the frequency of responses. Second, the expert assessment and student-teacher acceptance questionnaires were analyzed using a Likert scale to measure the relevance and effectiveness of the materials. Responses were converted into descriptive categories (e.g., "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree") to assess the acceptability of the learning materials. Statistical applications were used to calculate the level of acceptability, and the materials were considered "acceptable" if they achieved a score between 3.00 and 4.00, indicating high relevance and effectiveness for classroom use. This process ensures that the developed materials meet the standards required for implementation.

FINDINGS

The data highlights the different preferences of students in learning English across a range of areas. When it comes to learning, all students (100%) prefer learning through pictures and stories, suggesting that these tools are universally effective. The majority (64.3%) prefer watching movies, while 35.7% do not, and 71.4% prefer singing, although 28.6% are less likely to do so. In terms of procedures, listening to the teacher is unanimously supported (100%), suggesting its importance in the learning process.

Writing English words is preferred by 92.9%, while only 7.1% dislike it. Playing French in front of the class was rated highly by 85.7%, while 14.3% felt less comfortable, and reading stories in English was rated highly by 78.6%, with 21.4% not liking the activity. However, repeating words after the teacher received mixed responses, with 57.1% liking it and 42.9% not liking it.

Regarding the teacher's role, all students (100%) rated the teacher highly as an information provider and guide, while most rated the teacher as a guide (92.9%), monitor (92.9%), and give feedback (85.7%). When it came to the learner's role, 85.7% preferred to be an active learner, although 71.4% also preferred to be a passive learner, indicating a mix of preferences in terms of level of involvement. When considering the context, studying in class was preferred by everyone (100%), while studying in the library was enjoyed by 85.7%, with 14.3% not wanting to do so. Group activities were very popular (92.9%), followed by pair activities (71.4%), but whole-class activities were less popular, with only 64.3% liking and 35.7% disliking this method.

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DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that students at UPT SDN 4 Rijang Panua have learning needs that include the development of speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills in English language learning. Based on the results of the analysis, students feel that speaking skills require more attention because of the importance of practical communication in academic contexts and everyday life. This is consistent with the research of Maria Ramasari et al.



(2019), which shows that speaking skills are a top priority in the context of language learning in Indonesia.

Visual-based learning activities, such as the use of pictures and stories, are the main choice of students. This finding supports the view that learning that is relevant to the real world and uses a contextual approach is more interesting for students, as proposed by Brown (2001). Teachers need to prioritize approaches that are responsive to students' specific needs to improve learning outcomes.

Students at UPT SDN 4 Rijang Panua showed a preference for learning methods that involve creative media, such as pictures, films, and songs. Most students also enjoyed interactive activities, including reading stories and role-playing. This preference reflects the importance of activity-based learning methods that actively engage students and support holistic learning.

On the other hand, challenges arise in some activities such as role-playing, where a small number of students feel uncomfortable. This indicates the need for additional guidance and support to increase students' confidence in activities that require courage, such as role-playing in front of the class. By utilizing the scaffolding approach, students can be guided gradually until they feel more confident to participate in the activity.

The results of the study indicate that students' preferences for learning media, such as songs and films, can be integrated into the development of teaching materials. By using this media, learning becomes more interesting and relevant to students' needs. Previous research by Ainurvely Gehandiastie Maudy and Endang Fauziyati (2019) showed that the use of multimedia helps maintain student engagement and creates a more dynamic learning experience. Therefore, the teaching materials developed for these students are adjusted to the needs to increase learning effectiveness.

This study supports previous research that shows the importance of contextual and interactive learning materials. For example, Wulandari (2021) stated that task-based learning involving individual and group activities can encourage student engagement and develop their collaborative skills. The teaching materials designed in this study provide a balance between individual tasks and group discussions, ensuring that students get a varied learning experience according to their learning styles.

The materials designed based on this study show adaptation to students' needs and preferences. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding students' individual learning styles and creating activities that are interesting and appropriate to their abilities. These teaching materials not only support language skill acquisition but also build students' confidence to actively participate in learning.

This study provides an important contribution to the development of student-centered English teaching materials. By integrating creative media, diverse activities, and a task-based learning approach, the materials developed are able to answer the learning needs of students at UPT SDN 4 Rijang Panua. This development

model can be used as a reference for the development of teaching materials in other elementary schools that have similar needs.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to design an English course syllabus and instructional materials tailored to the needs of elementary school students at UPT SDN 4 Rijang Panua. The findings reveal that young learners exhibit a strong preference for interactive and engaging methods of learning, such as using pictures and storytelling, which were favored by 100% of the students. Multimedia inputs like movies and songs were also popular, though their acceptance varied among students. The data emphasizes the importance of incorporating teacher-centered guidance, as all students rated the teacher's role as a facilitator, instructor, and information provider highly. Additionally, collaborative learning activities, such as group tasks, were more appealing compared to whole-class activities, suggesting a preference for smaller, interactive settings.

The developed syllabus and materials addressed these preferences by integrating a variety of visual aids, interactive activities, and multimedia resources. These materials emphasized skill development in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, while fostering both active and passive learning approaches to accommodate diverse learner needs. The expert evaluation confirmed the materials' alignment with the students' needs and recommended refinements to enhance visual consistency and vocabulary focus, ensuring the materials are effective and engaging for young learners.

Overall, this research provides a structured framework for designing English instructional materials that support elementary students' cognitive and linguistic development, motivating them to learn English effectively.

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