



## Teaching English To Young Learners In A Virtual Classroom: Lessons Learned From A Teacher's Perspective

Widya Anatasyah<sup>1</sup>, Yousef Bani Ahmad<sup>2</sup>, Abdul Kodir Al-Baekani<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang

Received: 19 Desember 2023

Revised: 02 Januari 2024

Accepted: 09 Januari 2024

### Abstract

*This research investigates the experiences of a seasoned teacher who specializes in teaching English to young learners through virtual means. Virtual learning has gained popularity due to its numerous benefits, and the teacher in question possesses a strong background in language and experience with virtual learning, even prior to the government's implementation of online learning policies during the pandemic. The study explores various lessons encountered by the teacher in her virtual classroom, including learning methodologies, maintaining motivation among young learners during distance learning, and addressing challenges and difficulties. Through comprehensive interviews with the teacher and corroborating evidence from other sources, this study demonstrates the value of teaching English to young learners through virtual means. Utilizing narrative inquiry as a research design, this study presents all significant findings in a narrative format. The results comprise eight key lessons for other language teachers to implement in their own classrooms, whether virtual or direct learning. These lessons include the teacher's motivation, choice of media, learning methodologies, learning objectives, learning activities for young learners, practical application of English in real life, and exploration of young learners' language skills during the learning process.*

**Keywords:** *Teacher's Perspective, Virtual Classroom, Online Teaching, Online Learning, English for Young Learners*

(\*) Corresponding Author: [1910631060204@student.unsika.ac.id](mailto:1910631060204@student.unsika.ac.id)

**How to Cite:** Anatasyah, W., Ahmad, Y. B., & Al-Baekani, A. K. (2024). Teaching English To Young Learners In A Virtual Classroom: Lessons Learned From A Teacher's Perspective. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10500350>.

## INTRODUCTION

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, governments worldwide have implemented virtual learning as a means of maintaining educational continuity while mitigating the spread of the virus. This form of education, commonly referred to as distance learning, has been employed across all levels of education, from early childhood to higher education. Clark & Mayer (2016) define virtual learning as an educational approach in which instruction is delivered via digital intermediaries, including laptops, cell phones, computers, tablets, and other electronic devices. Virtual learning has enabled students to continue their education despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, providing a flexible and accessible means of delivering instruction.

Despite the gradual return to pre-pandemic norms, including the resumption of face-to-face classroom activities in the education sector, virtual learning continues to be frequently utilized. This can be attributed to the numerous benefits associated with virtual learning, as identified by its users. According to literature collected by Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo (2020), these benefits

included increased flexibility for learners, who are able to learn from any location at any time. Additionally, virtual learning can result in savings of time, energy, and money, making it an effective and efficient option. With only a digital device and an internet connection, learners are able to study safely and comfortably from home without the need for travel.

However, for teachers of young learners, the implementation of learning presents both benefits and challenges. While there are numerous advantages to this approach, teachers also encounter obstacle in practice. One such challenge is the conduciveness of the learning environment, as online learning does not utilize a dedicated classroom space like traditional schooling (Huang, 2020). Instead, any room in the home may be repurposed as a learning space. However, not all spaces are equally conducive to learning, and disruptions at home can interfere with the focus of both teaching and learning.

In addition to the conduciveness of the learning environment, Best (2020) identified low students motivation as a significant challenge faced by teachers in the implementation of virtual learning. the maintenance of students motivation not only impacts students, but also has repercussions for teachers. A decrease in motivation can negatively affect students' self-confidence during the learning process. Nuñez (2021) found that teachers regularly develop engaging activities to encourage active students participation, despite students' lack of confidence and trust in online learning. Nevertheless, capturing students' attention through virtual instruction can be a demanding task for teachers.

Exploring the experiences of teachers in the context of online learning is crucial for gaining new insights and enabling teachers to effectively navigate the challenges and difficulties associated with this approach (Nuñez, 2021). It is conceivable that virtual learning will continue to be widely adopted by teachers even after the pandemic has subsided. Teaching, particularly the instruction of English to young learners whose first language is not English, present numerous challenges. Unlike adult learners, who typically possess longer attention spans, young learners are more easily distracted and may struggle to maintain focus (Musthafa, 2010). As a result, they often exhibit a propensity for movement and may engage in imaginative play even during instructional periods (Mutiah, Nakhriyah, et al., 2020).

In order to effectively control and guide students behavior while instructing and mentoring young learners, particularly in the teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia, it is essential to know the teachers' profile. Turek (2013) found that understanding the profile of the teachers who instruct young learners in English is a critical factor. Teachers are also responsible for creating a comfortable and interactive learning environment that encourages exploration by young learners (Kusmaryati, 2020). In this case, Vygotsky (1978) theory posits that young learners acquire knowledge from their surroundings through interactions with adults within a social context, specifically within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). As teachers frequently interact with young learners, this can influence their learning processes and cognitive development, ultimately leading to the acquisition of new skills, such as proficiency in a new language like English.

In light of the fact that several previous studies have focused on the teachers' perspective in online learning only during the pandemic situation, like the challenges (Fahriany, Fitriani, et al., 2022; Nuñez, 2021; Huang, 2020) or strategy (Deni & Fahriany, 2020), and none of them have investigated the overall experiences of teachers who sustain virtual learning after the pandemic. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the specific perspective of an experienced teacher who has been teaching English virtually even before the pandemic era and continues to have a virtual classroom until now.

## METHODS

This article is a qualitative study that uses a narrative inquiry to explore the stories of an English teacher who teaches English for young learners through remote learning. Narrative inquiry combines storytelling and research, and uses stories as data or as a way to analyze and present data (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2013). The researcher used open-ended interviews as a research instrument. The interview was done through WhatsApp with an English teacher, Nadita (pseudonym), who was the main participant. The study aimed to get rich data from the teacher's perspective. She had experience in teaching English for young learners and had been using remote learning methods long before there was a pandemic.

Furthermore, the researcher conducted the interview by providing a list of 28 written questions that divided into seven sections (Tables 1 to table 7). Table 1 had basic questions about the participant's background, and the answers were included before the results and discussion section. As for the remaining questions, the participant could choose to answer in writing or using other features in the app. Then, the participant chose to use voice notes to answer all the questions.

**Table 1.** Background Information of the Participant

Name	Gender	Age	Linguistic Background	Educational Background	Length of English Teaching Online Experiences
Nadita	Female	23	Javanese Indonesian English Spanish	Undergraduate studies	4 years

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### *Results*

After the interview was completed and all the participant's answers were transcribed and analyzed, the following results were obtained:

**Table 2.** Teacher's Motivation and Feeling on Teaching English to Young Learners

No.	Questions	Results
-----	-----------	---------

<p>1. What motivated you to become an English teacher?</p>	<p>Because English is an international language that is spoken by most of the world's population, so by speaking English, we can communicate and build a network of friends with more people around the world. However, in Indonesia itself, English is still a foreign language where the frequency of its use is not as much as in other countries, such as in India and Malaysia. Therefore, I want to be an English teacher who can give my students knowledge and also practice English in their daily life.</p>
<p>2. Why choose to teach English to young learners?</p>	<p>Children are faster to accept any knowledge. So for English, where it needs to be learned regularly, and cannot be learned in just one or two weeks. So, they also have to have some kind of exposure to English, when learning English.</p>
<p>3. Do you feel happy and comfortable teaching English to young learners?</p>	<p>Yes, I feel comfortable when teaching English to children, because children are the age where they can learn things faster than adults. They are very good at mimicking, so when I teach them something, they can grasp it more quickly into their minds.</p>
<p>4. How do you feel about teaching English to children?</p>	<p>I feel happy, of course, but then I also feel patient. Because to teach something to children requires persistency. So that what we teach them does not pass easily and can really stick in their minds.</p>

Based on the results of the first part of the interview, Nadita described in detail about her motivation for teaching English, followed by a description of her feelings while teaching. The statement of Kusmaryati (2020) is in line for this section. She wrote in her research that the teacher's influence is really significant on students, because it can be seen from how the teacher intervenes in the learning and teaching process which can then have an impact on their learning achievement. Therefore, Nadita as the English teacher, during the remote learning, she made a strong effort to provide exposure to English as often as possible to the children so that the language becomes more familiar for them to hear and speak so that it can be directly applied in their daily lives. She also added in another statement that teaching young learners require perseverance from the teacher itself and should not give up easily. That way, the learning will be long-lasting in the childrens' memories because of the diligent and persistent teacher.

**Table 3.** Background Information of Teacher Does Remote Learning to Young Learners

No.	Questions	Results
1.	How long have you been teaching English for young learners by remote learning?	I have been teaching through remote learning even before the pandemic, because I have students from different cities. So, they need to be taught via online methods.
2.	What technology and media do you use to facilitate learning?	I usually conduct my classes through video conferencing, not just limited to Zoom, but also using Google Meet. Additionally, I use messaging apps like Line and WhatsApp, as well as educational platforms like Google Classroom and game-based learning tools like Quizziz and Kahoot. These tools have been very helpful in teaching English online.
3.	Are the teaching tools effective?	I could say that the tools I use are effective, as they greatly help me in conducting remote learning. Additionally, these tools have various features that facilitate interaction between students and teacher during online learning.
4.	What age do you teach English to children?	I teach English to children as young as 8 years old in the 2nd grade, and up to 12 years old in the 6th grade. I also have some students in junior high school.

From the interview, it is evident that Nadita had been teaching remotely even before the pandemic, to cater to students who were not in the same city as her. This required the use of technology to facilitate learning. The technology she used was similar to what many teachers used during the pandemic, such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Google Classroom. However, she also used game-based learning tools for children. She found these tools to be effective in facilitating learning and interaction with her students. Nadita teaches children aged 6 to 12 years old, which is the typical age range for EYL (English for Young Learners)

**Table 4.** Teacher's Learning Methods and Learning Objectives

No.	Questions	Results
1.	How do you determine the English skill level of your students to tailor your teaching to their needs?	I assess my students' English skill level by conducting a pre-test, specifically for speaking skills. I give them a conversation or ask them questions, which they have to answer to the best of their ability. Based on their responses, I can determine their level and decide on the most appropriate teaching method.

2. What teaching methods do you typically use to teach English to your students, and are they effective?	I tend to use thrilling and practical activities methods. Since children's cognitive abilities are not as developed as adults, they need to practice repeatedly for the knowledge to stick in their mind. To prevent them from getting overwhelmed, I try to make learning fun by giving enjoyable activities.
3. Do you usually tell the learning objectives to your students before starting a lesson?	Yes, I do share the learning objectives with my students, but since they are children, I convey them in an informal and implicit manner. I present them in a friendly and enjoyable way, using language that is easy for them to understand.
4. Do you find that the learning objectives you set are achievable, and do they motivate your students to learn? Please share your thoughts.	I do not set overly ambitious learning objectives. For example, a goal for one day could be for students to learn how to introduce themselves and others. The key is that, by the end of the lesson, they are able to achieve this goal. To me, this is a realistic and attainable objective.
5. What kind of learning activities do you usually implement to your students?	I mostly apply thrilling learning activities and physical activities. So they like activities that make them move, so that they can be more enthusiastic about learning.
6. Do you think the learning activities provided are in accordance with the learning objectives that have been presented?	Yes, the activities and learning objectives should be aligned to ensure that the goals can be achieved by the end of the lesson.

In this part of the interview, Nadita discusses how she assesses her students' abilities, sets learning objectives, and chooses teaching methods for young learners. Her approach aligns with Vygotsky's ZPD, where children learn through interaction with more knowledgeable individuals, in this case Nadita as their teacher, for example during a lesson on introducing themselves and others. She also communicates the learning objectives to her students, even though implicitly, so they know what to expect. Additionally, she sets objectives that are appropriate for her students' cognitive development and uses this as a basis for choosing her teaching methods. As a result, she chooses for thrilling and practical activities to provide a platform for exploration while keeping the learning fun and achieving the objectives.

**Table 5.** Teacher's Challenges and Difficulties

No.	Questions	Results
-----	-----------	---------

<p>1. What challenges do you encounter when teaching English to young learners?</p>	<p>The challenge I face is keeping the children motivated. Unlike adult learners, who have a clear purpose for learning English, children may not have a strong motivation to learn. This can sometimes result in them feeling disinterested and not focusing on the lesson.</p>
<p>2. Did you encounter any difficulties while teaching English to young learners?</p>	<p>Of course. While teaching children, it is important to have backup plans for activities. As a teacher, I often have to think a lot like, “What kind of activities should I give to my students?” So, sometimes I run out of ideas for classroom activities.</p>
<p>3. How did you overcome those difficulties and challenges? Please share your thoughts.</p>	<p>To overcome those challenge and difficulties, I give a lot of enjoyable activities that can engage the children and make learning English fun and easy to understand. It is important not to make English seem difficult, as this can discourage them from learning.</p>

In this section, Nadita discusses the challenges and difficulties she encountered while instructing young learner. She highlights the issue of fluctuating motivation among her students, which impacted their ability to focus on learning English. Additionally, she was required to think creatively and responsively in order to develop engaging lesson plans and contingency strategies, as young learners are prone to boredom and loss of interest. However, as an experienced teacher, she as well-equipped to address these challenges, one approach she employed was to consistently reinforce the notion that learning English can be both easy and enjoyable. To this end, she ensured that her lessons included engaging activities designed to stimulate her students’ enthusiasm for learning.

**Table 6.** Teacher’s Wishes and Strength

No.	Questions	Results
1.	Do you have any expectations for your students to achieve proficiency in specific English skills?	I hope my students not only have a theoretical understanding of English, but also be able to put their knowledge into practice. I want them to be able to use English properly and effectively, and can be useful for them and their surroundings.

<p>2. What do you think are your strengths as an English teacher, whether it be through your teaching style, methods, or other factors?</p>	<p>I have an extensive network both in Indonesia and overseas. For my students, I sometimes organize special classes where I invite my international friends to be guest speakers. In these classes, students have the opportunity to learn about new cultures directly from native speakers. This allows them to not only improve their language skills, but also gain knowledge about the culture, values, norms, and unique aspects of countries around the world.</p>
---	---

Based on the aforementioned statements, Nadita aspires for her students to utilize the English language skills she impacts as tool for two-way communication in their daily lives, thereby benefiting both themselves and their communities. To this end, she demonstrates the advantages of English proficiency by highlighting her own experiences building relationships with individuals from diverse global backgrounds. Her specialized classes provide students with opportunities to practice their English skills and learn about other cultures. Nadita's distinctive approach distinguishes her from other language instructors.

**Table 7.** Students' Situation during Remote Learning

No.	Questions	Results
1.	How is your students' learning situation through remote learning?	As a teacher, monitoring students' learning situation can be challenging when teaching remotely. That is why it is important for parents to be involved and for me to coordinate with them. With their help, we can create conducive learning environment and ensure that the children stay focused.
2.	Do you think your students are comfortable with the learning methods and activities you apply?	<i>Alhamdulillah</i> , my students are comfortable with my teaching methods. They are able to learn well and understand the material I present.

<p>3. How do your students behave during class?</p>	<p>As children, my students are naturally active and have a hard time sitting still for long periods. I think this is normal and as long as they are able to follow the lesson, it is not a problem. I allow them to move around, jump, or even lie down during class. The important thing is that they understand the material. At their age, it is natural for them to be active and I do not want to restrict them.</p>
---	--

In the interview, Nadita shared that it can be difficult to control young learners during remote learning. That is why it is important for teacher to work closely with parents to ensure that learning runs smoothly. Despite this challenge, she is grateful that remote learning has not affected her students' comfort or ability to learn. She understands that children are naturally active at this age and allows them the freedom to move around during class. This is in line with research by Kusmaryati (2020), who found that seven out of 37 schools reported that the problem they faced in teaching English was that the children were very active and busy with themselves. Therefore, as long as the children are still able to listen and understand the material, this is not necessarily problem.

### **Discussion**

As revealed in the results section, the researcher discovered a wealth of insights from analyzing the interview data on teaching English for Young Learners (EYL) from the perspective of distance learning teachers. In our ever-evolving world, where technology has become an integral part of our daily lives, especially after the successful adjustment period following the pandemic, Nadita's experiences teaching with the aid of technology are highly relevant for EYL teachers, whether teaching face-to-face or online. She shared her approach to managing student engagement during remote learning, emphasizing that selecting appropriate teaching methods and objectives need not be daunting. By aligning with students' cognitive development and prioritizing practical thinking, desired outcomes can be achieved. Additionally, understanding the unique characteristics of one's students, particularly their age, is crucial in tailoring lessons to suit their needs. This allows teachers to provide age-appropriate instruction for both young and adult learners.

In addition, Nadita emphasized the importance of making English learning fun for young learners, whose world still revolves around playing. By instilling in them the idea that learning English can be as enjoyable as playing, EYL teachers can keep their students engaged although through virtual learning. To achieve this, teachers must have a wealth of ideas and backup plans for fun yet educational activities. Providing real-life examples of the benefits of learning English, such as arranging special classes for children to practice their language skills with native speakers, can also help maintain their interest. A key takeaway for educators is that language learning involves more than just theoretical knowledge; it also requires the ability to apply language skills in real-life situations. Language teachers can play an instrumental role in this process, acting as friends and

mentors to EYL students as they learn to communicate in English in their daily lives.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, virtual classrooms can be an effective way for young children to learn, provided that teachers, students, and parents work together as a cohesive team. From the teacher's perspective, several key points should be emphasized: (1) Teachers must possess a strong motivation to teach and a sense of fun, so that their positive energy can be transmitted to their students; (2) The selection of media and technology should be tailored to the specific needs of the teaching environment; (3) Learning methods should be chosen based on the cognitive abilities of the students being taught; (4) Learning objectives should be realistic and achievable for both students and teachers; (5) Children should be encouraged to view English learning as fun by incorporating enjoyable activities into lessons; (6) Instruction should focus not only on theoretical understanding but also on practical application in real life; (7) Teachers should be aware of their students' characteristics, including their age and level of understanding, in order to tailor lessons to their needs; and finally, (8) Students should be given opportunities to explore their own abilities, particularly in language, through frequent communication and discussion even though they are learning virtually.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Concerning the research, authorship, and publication of this paper, the authors reported no potential conflicts of interest.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*Alhamdulillahirobbil'alamiin.* I would like to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to Allah SWT., for His blessings and guidance that have enabled me to complete this article. I am also deeply indebted to my family, who have always supported and encouraged me in all my endeavors. I would like to extend my appreciation to Mr. Yousef Bani Ahmad, M.Hum., and Mr. Abdul Kodir Al-Baekani, M.Pd., for their invaluable support and supervision throughout this article. Furthermore, I am grateful to all of my best friends who have always been there for me and generously offered their advice and assistance. Special thanks goes to *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan*, without whose help this article would never have come into existence. Finally, I would like to thank the readers. Hopefully this article can be useful for all of you.

## REFERENCES

- Barkhuizen, G., Benson, P., & Chik, A. (2013). *Narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research*. Routledge.
- Best, J. (2020, March 12). *3P Learning Better Ways to Learn*. Retrieved August 03, 2023, from 3P Learning: <https://www.3plearning.com/blog/5-common-pitfalls-distance-teaching-avoid/?distance-teaching-avoid%2F>
- Clark, R. C., & Mayer, R. E. (2016). *E-learning and the science of instruction: Proven guidelines for consumers and designers of multimedia learning*. John Wiley & Sons.

- Deni, R., & Fahriany, F. (2020). Teachers' Perspective on Strategy for Teaching English Vocabulary to Young Learners. *Vision: Journal for Language and Foreign Language Learning*, 9(1), 48-61.
- Fahriany, F., Fitriani, F., Farhan, L., Husna, N., Hidayat, D. N., & Mahlil, M. (2022). Teachers' Challenges in Teaching Online English to Young Learners: A Case Study in Pandemic Era. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 6(4), 5533-5541.
- Ferri, F., Grifoni, P., & Guzzo, T. (2020). Online learning and emergency remote teaching: Opportunities and challenges in emergency situations. *Societies*, 10(4), 86.
- Huang, J. (2020). Successes and challenges: Online teaching and learning of chemistry in higher education in China in the time of COVID-19. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 97(9), 2810-2814.
- Kusmaryati, S. E. (2020). Teachers' Perspectives of Teaching English to Young Learners (A Descriptive Study at Primary Schools in Kudus). *ELT Worldwide: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 7(2), 94-103.
- Musthafa, B. (2010). Teaching English to young learners in Indonesia: Essential requirements. *Educationist*, 4(2), 120-125.
- Mutiah, S. D., Nakhriyah, M., HR, N. H., Hidayat, D. N., & Hamid, F. (2020). The Readiness of Teaching English to Young Learners in Indonesia. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 1370-1387.
- Nuñez, J. L. (2021). Going online! Teachers' encountered personal challenges in teaching in the new normal: a qualitative inquiry. *Journal of Teacher Education and Research*, 16(2), 11-14.
- Turek, A. (2013). Engaging young learners in L2 research. *Language Studies Working Papers, University of Reading*, 5, 32-40.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.