

## TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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**Annotation:** *The article examines the challenging and intricate nature of teaching English to young students. The study begins by discussing the difficulties that young learners face in the classroom before making the case that primary school teachers' confidence and effectiveness may be adversely harmed by the low regard that primary education gives to teaching languages. The widely held misconception that teaching English to young learners is a straightforward process needing neither highly developed language skills nor a thorough understanding of educational affordances and pedagogy is challenged.*

**Keywords:** *Teaching English to young learners, teacher education, teacher educators, creative teacher talk, children 's literature, quality input.*

### INTRODUCTION

The relevance and strength of children's literature will be discussed in this context (see, for instance, Bland, 2018, G. Ellis, 2018, Mouro, 2016, and Narani Kova, 2016). Despite this, it appears that there are challenges and barriers to incorporating children's literature into teacher education. In this essay, the terms "teacher education" (TEd) and "teacher training" are used interchangeably. TEd refers to university-based pre-service teacher preparation, whereas teacher training includes activities like school-based mentorship of student teachers during the practicum. The goal of many policies created globally is to increase the language resources of primary-school students (Enever, 2018). However, as noted by Emery (2012), Rich (2018), and Rixon (2017), among others, the policies on TEYL are frequently overly straightforward and fail to recognize the complexity of teaching English to children. I present research from applied linguistics and subject pedagogy to support my claim that policymakers should pay closer attention to the crucial role of the teacher in early language learning, the importance of high-quality input, and the burden on teachers, students, and their chances of success when the complexity of English for Young Learners (EYL) is underestimated. The age bracket from around six to twelve, which is one in which child development advances quickly, is the center of my attention in this article. On the one hand, I've had six-year-olds ask out loud if the puppet I'm using to convey a tale is somehow alive. However, without the language-related educational opportunities of English lessons, twelve-year-olds are already independently learning more English outside of school than inside of it in some contexts, frequently by watching subtitled movies (Lindgren & Muoz, 2013) and spending hours playing English-language video games (Sundqvist & Wikström, 2015). The lines between English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as an extra or second language (L2) have already blurred as a result of the significant amount of out-of-school English in such circumstances (Graddol, 2006, p. 110).

#### **The Challenges of Teaching Young Learners**

When working with young learners (YLS), the teacher's role is crucial. In an ideal scenario, the instructor serves as a role model for language and intercultural awareness, as well

as for reading, learning, and – most importantly – modeling the language that is to be learnt. In contrast to the often more learner-centered approach of elementary education, Wilden and Porsch contend that "the teacher is very much at the center of the FL classroom" (2017, p. 20). As they have not yet developed a language repertoire in English, secure general learning strategies, or typically the opportunity and maturity for responsible learner autonomy, young language learners are highly dependent on the teacher. The TEYL researchers advise emphasizing "learning literacy" in order to support novice learners (G. Ellis & Ibrahim, 2015; G. Ellis, 2018, p. 97), which can help to prevent the potentially turbulent effects of youngsters who are overly challenged, distracted, and unsettled. According to Nguyen (2017, p. 65), "classroom management is a challenge in a primary English class," and Zein (2018, p. 164) claims that "misbehavior such as lack of respect and rudeness as well as attention seeking in the EYL classroom" are topics that are not frequently covered in research, though see Kuloheri (2016). Maintaining discipline is a major issue among instructors of young learners, as demonstrated by Copland, Garton, and Burns in a comprehensive survey involving respondents from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America (2014, pp. 746-747). Another reason why teachers of YLs should have the advantage of intensive training to learn to use English flexibly is so that they can verbalize as many actions and learning processes as they can in the classroom management scenarios that are repetitive and involve YLs, such as setting up tasks, handing out materials, or providing feedback. There is no longer any question that, in order to promote what Jim Cummins refers to as the "linguistic, intellectual, and cultural capital" of the kids in our classrooms, their plurilingual identities must be acknowledged and celebrated (2014, p. 2). Researchers Cutrim Schmid and Schmidt suggest "creating and supporting positive attitudes towards pupils' home languages [... and] integrating migrant children's knowledge background into school activities" while looking at plurilingual children who are learning English as a third language (2017, p. 49). However, there is evidence that many mainstream TEYL classrooms have a strong propensity to overuse the language of the majority. According to Deters-Philipp's survey of teachers in German primary schools, routines and management in the classroom are mostly conducted in German in this setting. However, she also argues that in Germany, only 20 to 30% of current EYL teachers have had the opportunity to study English at the tertiary level (2018, p. 21).

### CONCLUSION

The objectives of ambitious TEYL curricula are currently distinctly challenging to [end of page 96] realize given the restrictions on early language teaching, the extremely constrained time available, the limited opportunities for pre-service TEd and in-service CPD, and teachers' consequent lack of awareness of (or access to) motivating resources like high-quality picture books. The TEYL research emphasizes the importance and difficulty of the teacher's job. The low status of TEYL prevents the opportunities that practicing instructors of YLs require in order to expand their pedagogical subject knowledge and skill set. Additionally, it is common for university teacher educators and school mentors to lack TEYL expertise. Teachers have a crucial role in fostering students' intercultural and linguistic awareness by serving as role models for reading, studying, and speaking the language they are teaching.



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