

## LEARNING AND TEACHING ENGLISH FOR CHILDREN AT 'OXFORD COURSE INDONESIA' (OCI) MADIUN

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### ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini dilaksanakan untuk meneliti pembelajaran dan pengajaran bahasa Inggris anak di 'Oxford Course Indonesia' (OCI) Madiun. Hal tersebut bertujuan untuk menggambarkan pendapat dan strategi yang dipakai para pengajar dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris anak; dan harapan dan pendapat para siswa dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris tersebut. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan perekam suara, daftar observasi, panduan wawancara, dan catatan lapangan. Dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris anak tersebut, para pengajar menerapkan kegiatan pengajaran yang sama, yaitu pre-teaching, whilst teaching, dan post teaching. Para pengajar memberikan dan menerapkan materi, media, dan teknik pengajaran yang bervariasi. Media yang dipakai, antara lain benda, gambar, flash cards, dan tape. Sedangkan teknik yang diterapkan meliputi menerjemahkan, drill, permainan, menyanyikan lagu, dan mendengarkan dan menceritakan cerita. Para siswa secara umum menyatakan bahwa mereka sangat menyukai bahasa Inggris. Rasa senang dan harapan yang besar untuk dapat berbicara bahasa Inggris dengan lancar membuat mereka menikmati pengajaran bahasa Inggris anak ini.*

**Kata kunci :** *English learning-teaching process, teaching strategy, English for children, English course.*

### A. Background

Teaching English to children, as young learners, successfully is not an easy matter to do; it should cover some points. First, the children should be made comfortable in an English class. Then, teachers should also know what the children can or will learn. Thus, teachers, in teaching children, cannot treat them the same way as they treat older learners since children have not yet developed their cognitive skills and self-discipline that enable them to understand the teachers' information. They rely more on intuitive acquisition, which in its turn relies on a large volu-

me of comprehensible input than there is time in lessons.

Supporting the teaching of English for children, Richard and Rodgers (2001: 452) suggest that if the language educators want to solve the problem of language teaching they might focus attention almost exclusively on teaching method. Then, the method is related to the use of media and the materials that are going to be presented in the classroom. The use of some media can support the teaching of English for children. The media will attract the students' attention and help the students to focus their attention to the



material presented. Those media can be cutout pictures, flash cards, video, series of picture to tell stories, and so forth.

Nowadays, English is taught to the elementary school students and even to kindergarten students. Fortunately, our government gives good response to this phenomenon wisely. In 1992, as Suyanto (2001: 8) states, it releases an official policy, that is the Decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture to support the teaching of English as a foreign language at the elementary level as a local subject. On the basis of the decree, some elementary schools begin to add extra lessons of English to the fourth grade students.

Teaching English at schools and at courses is quite different in some ways. These different situations may affect students' willingness in learning a language. Commonly, at schools, students are demanded to be formal and more strict; while, at courses students are more relaxed. Students at formal schools seem to learn English to get good marks, and it does not happen to those who learn English at non-formal courses. The teachers of the courses, who are commonly called instructors, are warmer and friendlier to the students so that the students feel free to learn English and enjoy the subject.

The study was conducted at 'Oxford Course Indonesia' (OCI) Madiun. OCI Madiun was chosen as the subject of the study because it was the oldest English private course in Madiun. It was built in 1981, and the director of the course informed that at that time there were no English courses in Madiun. The information was validated by the data gained from the Department of National Education Madiun, which mentioned that in 1981, OCI Madiun was the only formal or certified English course

established in Madiun. Besides, eighteen of twenty-five people being asked argued that OCI Madiun had good quality in producing better graduates than the other courses. It was proven that the students of OCI Madiun always became one of the winners of some English contests conducted by other English courses and some institutions in Madiun.

Next, OCI Madiun showed special classroom management. The teachers of OCI Madiun had good rapport to the students. They were close to the students and knew the students' names one by one. Knowing the students' names would make the students feel that their teachers paid attentions to them. Then, the English for children at OCI Madiun was conducted in small classes; there were only 10 to 12 students in one class. The small class enabled the teachers to make contact with the students; it made the students easy to ask for and receive individual attention. The class that was not big allowed the students to have nice learning situation where they were easily walking around and changing pairs. Additionally, the seating arrangement in the classroom facilitated the students to enjoy the learning activities. They sat in a semicircle seating arrangement during the discussions or lectures, or they stood up and walked around as they played games or applied the role-play while learning.

## **B. Some Relevant Theories**

According to Finocchiaro (1964: 4), childhood is the best period for acquiring a native or near native pronunciation because the speech organs of children are still flexible, so that it is easy for them to learn the sound system of the foreign language. Finocchiaro (1964: 6)



proposes that the ability to understand, speak, read, and write cannot be acquired in two or three years sequence in secondary schools. By this reason, it can be said that the longer the time is available, the better the children can acquire the foreign language so that the sooner children start to learn the language, the more time they will get to learn it.

Next, in having a nice learning and teaching processes at a classroom, there are some supporting factors. Teachers and students are important factors in determining the success or failure of the teaching and learning process. Anderson (1989) asserts that the teachers' roles cannot be replaced by machines no matter how advanced the era of modern technology is. In accordance, no matter what qualified the teachers are if the students do not have interest, motivation, and curiosity in learning, the outcome of the teaching is never complete. They are the ones who have objectives in learning, they are the ones who have to accomplish all materials as suggested in the curriculum, and they are the ones who will be evaluated to measure their achievement.

Teaching techniques, instructional material and media, and evaluation system are the other factors to support the learning and teaching processes. Techniques consist of the things a teacher carries out in the classroom to enable the process of teaching and learning to run smoothly. It refers to certain tactics or strategies that are used to achieve the objectives of teaching. While instructional material refers to the things teacher uses in the classroom to support the process of teaching and learning, such as textbooks, pictures, charts, realia, and technological aids like audiotapes, video, and computers

(Brown, 2001: 138). Textbook is the most obvious and most common supporting material for language instruction. It is the easiest material to have and to follow as the basis of language teaching.

Media help teachers to manage instruction effectively. Instructional media are other tools in supporting the teaching and learning process. Davies (1981: 193) proposes the contributions of instructional media for the process of the teaching and learning. In addition, evaluation is concerned to give feedback indicating students' progress and problems in order to plan the next appropriate learning activities, and is aimed to get information on students' achievement. The evaluation then is used to attempt to measure and to summarise what students have learned.

## **C. Research Methodology**

### **1. Research Design**

This research is said to be descriptive qualitative because it uses the researcher as the key instrument that mostly concerns with the process rather than the outcomes. Additionally, the research concerns with utterances or words rather than numbers as the data analysis, one natural setting, inductive data analysis, and natural description.

The study was, firstly, aimed to describe the teachers' opinions about the teaching of English for children program at 'Oxford Course Indonesia' (OCI) Madiun. Secondly, it described the strategies used by the teachers in the teaching of English for children at OCI Madiun. Thus, it also aimed to describe the students' wants and opinions in learning English for children offered by OCI Madiun.

### **2. Research Subjects**

The subjects of this study were the teachers and the students who joined



the English for children program offered in the course. There were 24 students and 5 teachers selected as the subjects. Actually, there were five classes of the *Beginner I* level at OCI Madiun; however, only two of those classes were taken as the subject to be interviewed, each class consisted of twelve students.

### 3. Data of the Study

The data of the study were the description of all what the teachers did in their classroom, the interaction between the teacher and his/her students, and the students' responses during the learning and teaching process. Thus, those data were gained by observing, recording, and reporting on the field notes. Interviewing the teachers and the students was done to get the data needed.

In line with the data collected, they were grouped in accordance with the research questions. The data concerning the teachers' opinions about the teaching of English for children program and the strategies (teaching material, media, technique, and evaluation) used by the teachers were drawn from the teachers. The data concerning the students' wants and opinions were drawn from the students.

### 4. Research Instruments

The key instrument of the study was the researcher herself. It can be called the human instrument (Bogden and Biklen, 1982). During the observation, the researcher acted solely as an observer. The researcher sat at the back while she observed and took notes on the events that occurred in the classroom.

The researcher collected and analysed as well as interpreted the data collected. To answer the first problem, related to the teachers' opinions about the teaching of English for children program, the researcher used an interview guide. Then for the second

objective, that was to describe the teachers' teaching strategies, observation checklist, field notes, and interview guides were utilized. Finally, another interview guide was used to collect data related to the students' wants and opinions to learn English.

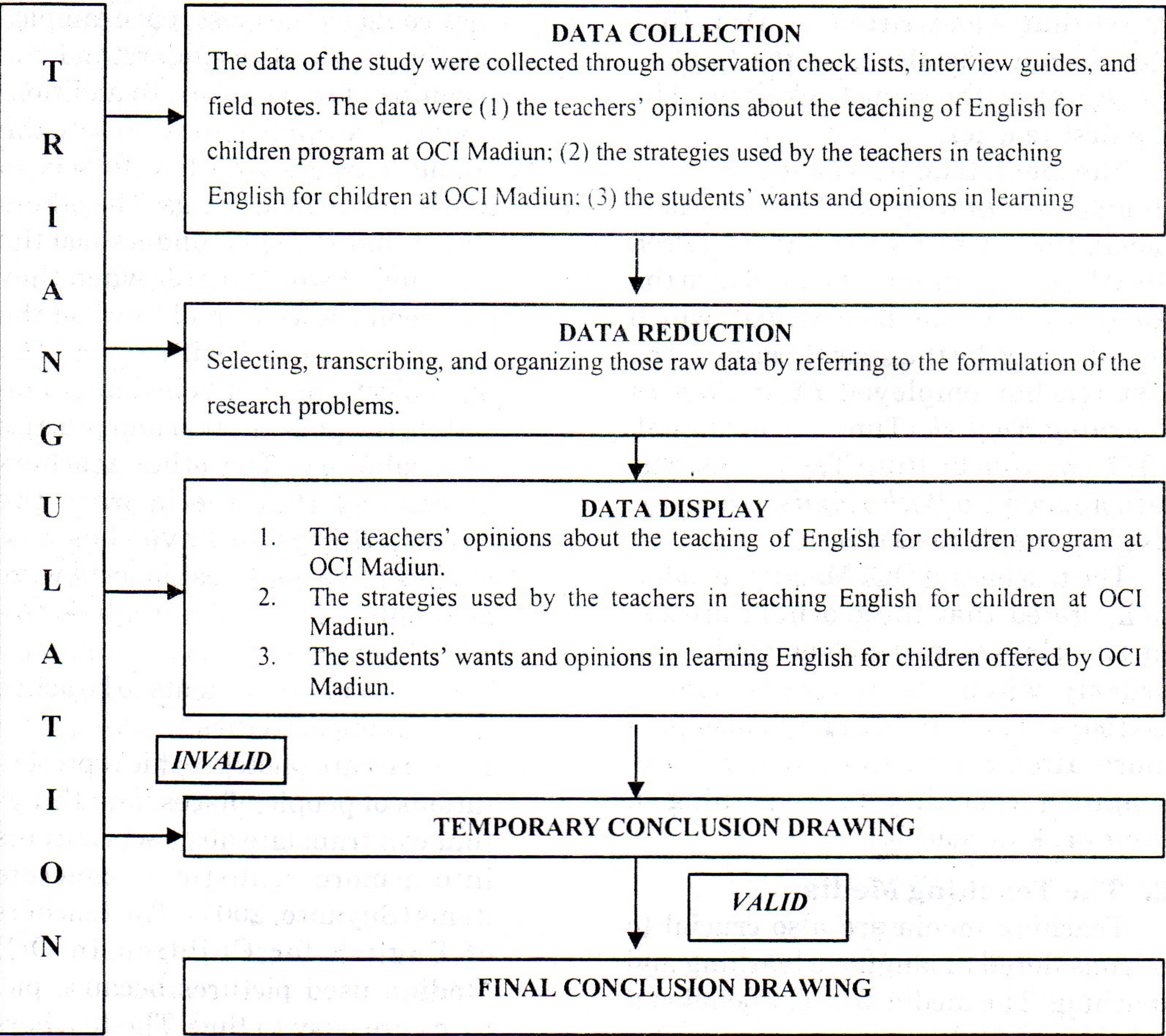
### 5. Data Collection

The study applied a number of data collection techniques, like observation, interview, and recording. The observation was conducted for two months, from 3 January to 28 February 2004, in which the interaction between the teacher and his/her students in the English for Children Program occurred. Most of the data were recorded and the rest were kept in the field notes. The data from the observation, recording, interview, and fieldnotes were then analyzed. The collected data were then stated in the form of words rather than numbers.

### 6. Data Analysis

Analysing the data on the study was done by adapting the procedure suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984: 23), who confirmed that the procedures of analysing data are *data collection*, *data reduction*, *data display*, and *data verification or conclusion*. For having clear understanding about the process of the data analysis, the following figure shows the procedure. It can be seen that after collecting the data through observation checklist, interview guides, and field notes, the researcher selected, transcribed, and organised those raw data by referring to the formulation of the research problems in the study, then, the data were displayed in the form of narrative texts. After a conclusion was drawn and said to be valid, then, the research problems were answered. However, if it was not valid, the researcher repeated the process.





A Modified Version of the Data Analysis (Interactive Model) from Miles & Huberman (1984: 23)

**D. Findings And Discussions**

**1. The Teaching Material**

Teaching material plays an important role in any educational program. Several kinds of English books were carefully selected based on the objectives of the English teaching and the students’ interests. It seemed that those five teachers who were responsible for the teaching of English for children at OCI Madiun had a book as the main handbook in their teaching, entitled *New Standard English Readers for Elementary School (Book I up to Book VIII)*. It was published by Children’s Book Publisher (1983), written by

Dorothy PS. Lee, M.A and Lee Hai Ming, B.A.

However, those teachers used the supplementary books to support the main handbook by considering the students’ needs, interest, ability, and levels. The first teacher used *English for Pre Beginner—Book I up to Book VI* (Oxford Graventa, 2000), written by Dr. Bambang Marsono, MA., M.Sc. Then, the second teacher used *English for Elementary School* (Gramedia Indonesia, 2002), which was written by Florentina Ernawati and Elisabeth Ida Purwanti. Afterwards, the third teacher utilized *Go With English* (Yudhistira,



2002) that was written by Dra. Rita Kurniawan. She also used the *English for Beginner*, the same book as used by the first teacher.

The next teacher used *Learning English for Indonesia* (Times Educational, 1977), which was written by Prof. JB. Alter. In addition, she used also the *English for Elementary School*, which was also used by the second teacher. The last teacher employed *First Step in Learning English* (Times Educational, 1977), written by Ruth Taylor, BA. She also applied *Go With English* that was used by the third teacher.

The teachers of OCI Madiun, in addition, stated that the teaching process in the classroom ran smoothly and orderly when the teachers used a textbook. Then, the students also paid more attention to the teachers' presentation when they had something on their desk to read.

## 2. The Teaching Media

Teaching media are also crucial to be considered in language learning and teaching. The media are very beneficial to attract students' attention and to deliver information; and are helpful for the teachers of young learners to facilitate their teaching as well. The teachers of OCI Madiun applied four types of media, they were realia or real objects, pictures, flash cards, and tape recorder. The following description represents the teaching media.

**a. Realia or real objects**, according to Heinich (1992: 94), are the visual instructional aids most closely associated with a direct purposeful learning experience. The teachers of English for children at OCI Madiun used real objects under some considerations. Three of them mentioned that real objects were profitable to teach vocabulary and color, because

they could be the most real examples for the children to understand the meaning of some words. In addition, realia were applied to stimulate the young learners who like to see, to touch, and to hold things. The others added that students understood the meaning of words better when they had been shown or had touched the objects associated with them. The real objects, in their belief, might facilitate the presentation and practice of vocabulary. The other teachers mentioned that realia were the easiest things to have; besides, models of various real objects were available widely. The realia were useful not only to teach vocabulary but also to invite students to be active in speaking activities.

**b. Pictures** are photographic representations of people, places, and things that can translate abstract concepts into a more realistic or concrete items (Suyanto, 2001). The teachers of English for Children in OCI Madiun used pictures because pictures are easy to find. The teachers found various and colorful pictures from old magazines or newspapers, posters, and calendars. In addition, the pictures were simple to use and inexpensive. Besides, pictures could be used in many ways at all levels in teaching English for children. Meanwhile, some other teachers stated that pictures would last long. The pictures were used not only once on a certain time but also on the next and other times. Besides, they added that pictures are very effective to arise students' interest especially in brainstorming. The students would easily grasp the teacher's questions and enthusiastically answer those questions.



c. **Flash cards** are used to introduce, practice, or review some vocabulary items and structures (Suyanto, 2001). For the teaching of language to young learners, flash cards were usually made by using pictures and individual words. Being asked the reason of using flash cards, all of the teachers of OCI Madiun asserted that flash cards are effective to review the students' mastery of vocabulary items. Some of them added that flash cards were quite interesting in terms of its performance. Students usually liked to learn by using flash cards since they were interested in the unique form of the flash cards. Then, this interesting media were effectively used by the teacher to get the students' interest; besides, to arouse their attention in learning English. In addition, some teachers said that it would be much better when the flash cards used were made as clear as possible. In this case, those cards were in an appropriate size and were colorful so that the students were attracted to the cards.

d. **Tape recorder** is an audio medium that is used in teaching English for children at OCI Madiun. The recorded materials, as suggested by Suyanto (2001), are good to develop the learners' listening skill. The teachers of OCI Madiun mentioned that the tape recorder was commonly used in facilitating the listening skills. Besides, it was efficient in making an active English class in which the students were given chances to listen to songs; then, they will repeat and learn the songs. Some of the teachers added that a tape recorder was beneficial also to comfort the students in doing their tasks.

The teachers of OCI Madiun already used the teaching media such as books, audio and video equipments, posters, pictures, and games. Selecting media is important to assist the students in focusing their attention to the material being learnt.

### 3. The Teaching Technique

The teaching technique can also be said as the way of teaching that is chosen by the teacher in order to conduct an efficient learning and teaching process. By using those chosen ways, a teacher wants to create a smooth learning and teaching situation to enable the students to be active in learning so that they will be able to achieve the objective of the learning. Besides, the teaching technique is defined as the way in which a content or topic is presented in the instructional environment.

Then, based on the classroom observation, the most commonly used techniques were translation, imperative drills, playing games, singing songs, and telling or reading stories. All of those teachers stated that the choosing of techniques is based on the topic that would be presented, the students' ability, and the time available. One of the teachers asserted that the choosing of teaching techniques was appropriate for a certain topic. The techniques were tools to enable the learning and teaching process to be conducted properly. Those techniques would be discussed in the following.

a. **Translation** has already been common for teaching a foreign language since years ago as the way of teaching in which the teacher directly translates the target language into the first language and vice versa. In addition, translation,



according to Cook (in Johnson, 2001: 278), has been dismissed by almost all twentieth-century theories and methodologies. However, it is useful in some teaching contexts. Translation is effectively used as a technique in learning to understand the foreign language texts, and also to communicate the language orally and in writing. In using translation techniques, the teachers of OCI Madiun utilized one of the seven components of CTL that is inquiry. Along this component, the students were able to find something by themselves. In its application, the teacher, firstly, gave examples and the students observed. They showed their attention to the teacher's explanations. Then, when the teacher invited the students to answer her questions, the students directly guessed the answers. After having two or more students to answer the questions, the teacher concluded. After all, the teacher repeated the students' answers and showed the students the correct ones.

- b. **Imperative drills** are adopted from Total Physical Response (TPR) method and they are the major classroom activity in TPR. They are typically used to elicit physical actions and activity on the part of the learners (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 76). Additionally, drills are supposed to train the learners to talk by helping them master the basic structural patterns of the language. Applying the drills, the teachers require the students to respond physically (or nonverbally) to the drills that are given by the teachers. The imperative drills are a single word, such as "*Walk!*", "*Run!*", "*Knock!*" and so forth; or words in

chunk as well, for instance, "*Point at your nose!*", "*Knock on the door!*", "*Close your book!*", etc. The imperative drills are effective in some different ways. First of all, it reduces the students' anxiety and monotony. It means that the students do not expect to speak or to give respond verbally. They are allowed to give respond physically and they start to speak when they want to. Second, as stated by Richards and Rodgers (2001) the teacher's voice, actions, and gestures are sufficient basis for classroom activities so that the lesson does not require the use of material; in the sense that the teacher used the objects available in the classroom such as book, pen, broom, whiteboard, and table. Finally, the students were involved directly in the classroom activities. The drills enabled the students to understand more toward the materials that had been given and also to be more active and creative since they do what is being taught.

- c. **Playing games** seems to be effective since it creates good and interesting atmosphere in a foreign language classroom; in the sense that the students enjoyed the presentation because they themselves were involved in expressing their feeling through communication among the other students and the teacher. The students of OCI Madiun were very pleased to join the game. They were encouraged to practice the new English words unconsciously because by applying this activity in the classroom, the teacher had made the students happy. Supplementing regular learning and teaching process by a variety of game activities arouse the students' motivation.



Those who usually were unresponsive, shy, and passive suddenly become active and competitive participants. They also wanted to show their competency and confidence in communicating the foreign language. In addition, game reduces the boredom during the learning and teaching process since it allows the students to be more relaxed and actively participated in the activity.

- d. **Singing songs** was not always used in every meeting but most the teachers of OCI Madiun used the technique in a certain material or just to wake the students up. All of the teachers stated that the use of songs was quite effective in some materials. It was supported by the opinion of Suyanto (2001), in her teaching material in *Teaching English to Young Learners*. She states that teachers use songs to teach children the English sounds, to reinforce vocabulary, or to have fun. The teachers of OCI Madiun had a lot of experiences in involving song and music in foreign language teaching. The song and music gave good effects to both the teachers and the students. The teachers would teach English with fun and the students were happy to be involved in a cheerful and enjoyable English class.
- e. **Telling or reading stories** is another technique used by the teachers of OCI Madiun. Brown (2001) states that stories play a key role in the language development of children and are a constant source of enjoyment. This technique was not always used in every meeting but the teachers used the technique sometimes in a certain material. All of the teachers stated that telling and/or reading stories were quite

helpful in some materials. One of the teachers said that this technique was usually used when his students were being bored and they had no spirit to join his class. Additionally, the teacher mentioned that this activity was also useful in encouraging the students' listening skill as well as their fantasy.

#### 4. Test

The teacher needs to give a test to his/her students not only at the end of the study term but also after each presentation. It is a crucial thing to do in learning and teaching language, and it is not easy. The test will give important information to the teacher whether his/ her students have achieved the objectives of the learning and teaching activity. In addition, it will also explain the students' strengths and weaknesses. Besides, it enables the teacher to arrange the plan instruction accordingly, and made it easy to estimate the efficiency of the teaching strategies they applied.

All of the teachers of English also conducted this sort of test. After being interviewed, the first teacher stated that she always gave a test at the end of her meeting. The test was useful to give feedback and to know the students' progress. After conducting the test, she intended to know whether her students enjoyed her teaching or not. Afterward, she always tried to discuss the result of the test with her students.

The second teacher mentioned that he conducted the test at the end of each unit. He added that the test was significant to give information on the students' achievement on every unit being taught. He wanted to know whether his students understand the material that he had taught and they



had completed the test he had given or not. He always discusses the correct answers of the test with his students. Doing this, he expected that his students would know how to correct their mistakes.

The third teacher also gave a test at the end of each unit. She viewed that a test was aimed to get information on the students' achievements. She wished to know that her students understood the whole unit she had presented. However, the teacher did not discuss the test result; she invited the students to get more information on the difficulties they had found in the test and she would explain more about it.

The fourth teacher also conducted the classroom test at the end of one unit. The test, then, was always discussed together with her students so that they understood the correct answers of the test; and they would be able to correct the mistakes by themselves next time. She got the test to check the students' improvements in their learning. She wanted the test to help her to know the students' enthusiasm on her teaching. Then, the last teacher carried out the test at the end of each meeting of her English class. She needed to know the students' improvement in the material just explained; besides, the test would let her know the effectiveness of her teaching. When she found that her teaching was not effective, she tried another way of teaching English to make the students enjoy her teaching in order to improve their learning.

All of those five teachers gave similar ways in evaluating their students, by giving quizzes dealing with the topics that had been discussed. However, they also conducted the authentic assessments. In this case, they applied the oral questions, gave assignments, and read

aloud. The oral questions were used to check the students' comprehension on the subject taught. The assignments were used to explore the students' understanding on the material, in which they were expected to complete some written questions containing the language skills and components that were done in class or at home. Meanwhile, reading a text aloud was used to evaluate the students' mastery of pronunciation, stress, and intonation.

### **5. The Students' Wants and Opinions in Learning English**

The following is about the students' wants and opinions in learning English for Children Program at OCI Madiun. Concerning the children's likes or dislikes on English, in general they gave very pleasing answers. Most of the students said that they liked to watch English films, no matter it was cartoon or some other ones. Actually, they did not completely understand what they had listened from the films; however, they tried to guess what the actors said by watching their actions. Meanwhile, four of them mentioned that they disliked watching the English films. They said that it was quite difficult to understand the conversations of the foreigners in the films because they are too fast to be followed.

In relation to the students' wants in learning English, the common reasons that made them join OCI Madiun was because of their willingness to be able to speak English fluently; besides, they wanted to have a lot of English knowledge for instance in writing, vocabulary items, structures, etc. Therefore, almost all of them stated that they joined OCI Madiun on the bases of their own desires. No one forced them to join the course. However, two of the students



said that their parents asked them to join the course since they always got bad marks in English at school.

Dealing with the students' opinions in the learning of English, more than half of them said that English was an enjoyable subject, in which they easily received the material given by the teacher. They also mentioned that the teacher was always patient to teach them, because sometimes they were naughty and make a lot of noises in class.

Concerning the teaching material applied by the teachers, some students stated that they liked realia, because the real objects perfectly gave examples about the things they discussed. Meanwhile, some of them said that they liked to listen to music. The other students mentioned that pictures were their favourite; they were various, colourful, and interesting and made the teachers' explanation clearer. In the test, the students mentioned that it was better to give the test at the end of every meeting, since they did not forget yet the material being tested. However, they did not feel that the test was hard, and that their teacher gave them enough time to complete the test.

The students' wants are valuable points to the course generally and to the teachers specifically. The students' wants will be their motivations in learning language. Almost all of the students who joined the English for Children Program at OCI Madiun had good motivation. Only two of them were asked by their parents to join the course because the parents wanted their children to be able to speak English well. The rest joined the course based on their willingness. The students of OCI Madiun were not afraid in making mistakes and very active in all of the classes;

they were eager in giving responses and questions.

Finally, it can be seen from the observation that both the teachers and the students had good relations and interactions during the learning and teaching processes at OCI Madiun. It is hoped that the nice learning and teaching process will give better learning results for the students.

### **E. Conclusions**

Concerning the results of the findings and discussions of the study, it can be concluded that the learning and teaching English for children at 'Oxford Course Indonesia' (OCI) Madiun is completed with proper teaching syllabus, materials, media, the classroom tests, and the qualified teaching staffs. In addition, the students who are motivated to learn English join the class happily, so that they feel easier to receive the material transferred by the teachers.

As noted in the findings, the common teaching media applied in the English course are realia or real objects, pictures, flash cards, and tape recorder. In making the learning and teaching process run efficiently, the teachers employ some teaching techniques, such as translation, imperative drills, playing games, singing songs, and telling or reading stories. Then, in the test, the teachers always give assignments to the students to do either in the class or at home. The good point is that the teachers always discuss the assignments that are completed at the course; unluckily, the assignments that are finished at home are not always discussed.

In accordance with the students' wants and opinions, the students are highly motivated to join the English



course. Most of the students like to learn English because the English class is not monotonous like the other subjects. Additionally, the students do

not join the course in pressure because they wish to be able to speak English fluently and to have more knowledge in English.

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