



Teachers' Perspectives on Stimulation Strategies in Teaching Foreign Language to Young Learners: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe teachers' perspectives on stimulation strategies in teaching foreign language to young learners. The research focuses on how teachers implement various forms of stimulation through media, teaching methods, individualized support, as well as children's interests and experiences. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed, involving early childhood education teachers as the primary participants. Data were collected through interviews and observations, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that teachers apply stimulation strategies through the use of visual and concrete media as mediational tools, varied methods and activities as forms of dynamic scaffolding, individual support to address children's developmental needs, and the integration of children's interests and experiences as the foundation of learning. The study concludes that teachers' stimulation strategies are not merely technical actions, but pedagogical processes rooted in social interaction and gradual support.

Keywords: stimulation, young learners, foreign language, teacher strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language learning in early childhood has increasingly gained attention within Indonesia's educational development. This trend aligns with the demands of globalization, which require foreign language exposure from the earliest levels of schooling. Early childhood education, which spans from birth to six years of age, serves as the foundational stage of a child's overall development. It plays a crucial role because it establishes the basis for children's cognitive, social, emotional, and linguistic growth (Asti in Misno et al., 2025). At this stage, children possess a wide range of potentials and basic abilities that need to be developed optimally so they can express their thoughts accurately and communicate more effectively (Lismayani in Misno et al.).

At the early childhood stage, children are in the sensorimotor and preoperational phases of development, during which they are highly sensitive to environmental stimuli. In this phase, children or young learners naturally acquire language through daily experiences, social interactions, and multisensory stimulation. Safitri et al. (2022) found that learning vocabulary through varied and enjoyable activities in early childhood education settings can significantly enhance children's motivation and memory retention of foreign language vocabulary. In addition, the integration of multisensory or multimodal techniques, such as the use of images, audio, movement, songs, games, and storytelling has been shown to be effective in helping children understand new words and improve their vocabulary retention (Brilianti & Sugirin, 2024). Therefore, foreign language learning, is strongly influenced by how teachers design stimulation strategies that align with children's developmental characteristics.



However, field realities indicate that foreign language instruction for young learners continues to face challenges. Many teachers report difficulties in maintaining children's consistent engagement, especially when instruction is conducted conventionally, teacher-centered, or with limited stimulation variety. Children tend to become easily bored, lose focus, and struggle to sustain attention when lessons are delivered without engaging, sensory-rich activities. This aligns with Febriani et al. (2025), which show that vocabulary learning through traditional methods lacking varied stimulation results in lower success rates and suboptimal learning motivation. These challenges clearly highlight the importance of implementing diverse and well-planned stimulation strategies to sustain children's engagement in the learning process.

In this context, it is then important to explore how teachers design and implement stimulation strategies in teaching foreign language to young learners, not merely in terms of media or methods in isolation, but as an integrated pedagogical practice that considers social interaction, children's developmental needs, and responsive educational variations. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that children's cognitive and linguistic development occurs through social interaction, symbolic mediation (through language and tools), and scaffolding provided by teachers or peers within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). With appropriate mediation, children are able to achieve levels of competence they would not reach independently. Therefore, stimulation strategies in teaching are not simply as instructional aids but rather forms of socio-cognitive mediation that enable children to internalize language in meaningful ways.

This study, therefore, aims to examine teachers' perspectives on stimulation strategies in teaching foreign language to young learners, including media use, teaching methods, individualized support, and adaptations based on children's characteristics. The qualitative approach is expected to reveal actual classroom practices, teachers' interpretations, and the challenges and solutions encountered in early childhood settings. Thus, this study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions as a reference for teachers, early childhood education institutions, and curriculum designers in developing foreign language instruction that is more effective, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate for young learners.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the stimulation strategies implemented by teachers in teaching foreign language to young learners. The participants consisted of three teachers who had more than three years of experience teaching foreign language to young learners. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and classroom observations.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved transcription, coding, theme categorization, and interpretation. Data trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation and member checking with the participants. The study was conducted in the natural setting of daily classroom activities to ensure that the data accurately reflected the teachers' authentic instructional practices.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings on the stimulation strategies employed by teachers in teaching foreign language to young learners. The data were collected through in-depth interviews with three early childhood education teachers who had implemented various forms of stimulation to enhance children's learning responses, engagement, and



comprehension during lessons. The thematic analysis revealed that teachers developed stimulation strategies that were adaptive and contextual, aligning with children's developmental characteristics and classroom dynamics. The findings of this study are organized into four main categories, namely:

1. Stimulation Through Visual and Concrete Media

The first finding of this study indicates that teachers consistently used visual and concrete media as a primary strategy to stimulate young learners. These media ranged from picture cards to real objects tailored to the learning theme. It can be proven in the following extracts:

Teacher 1: Kadang saya kasih media seperti tadi, kartu... anak-anak lebih cepat tangkap kalau ada media.

(Sometimes I use media like before, picture cards... the children understand more quickly when media are provided)

Teacher 3: Kalau media biasanya, kita mungkin sesuai temanya. Kayak, bulan Oktober kemarin itu, kan anak-anak belajar tentang budaya Makassar. Terus, di situ buat satu contoh kapal phinisi. Jadi anak-anak diarahkan untuk buat, diberi sediakan kardus, slib tembak, tusuk sate, sama alat warna biar dihias.

(We usually adjust the media to the theme. For example, last October the children learned about Makassar culture. So, we made a model of a phinisi boat. The children were guided to create it using cardboard, glue guns, skewers, and coloring tools so they could decorate it)

From the extracts above, it is evident that teacher 1 emphasized that children grasp vocabulary more quickly when visual media are used. This is reinforced by explanation of teacher 3, who described how she created Phinisi boat model using real materials so that the children could observe its shape and components. She noted that such activities were highly effective in capturing children's interest and encouraging participation. These findings show that teachers perceive visual media not merely as supporting tools but as intentional stimulation strategies designed to provide concrete, engaging, and easily understandable learning experiences for young learners.

The use of concrete and visual media aligns with the cognitive developmental stage of early childhood, in which children are still in the phase of concrete thinking and require tangible stimuli that can be seen, touched, and directly observed. This finding is supported by Novitasari et al. (2023), who reported that digital and visual media enhance preschool children's engagement, interest, and comprehension in learning. Teachers in their study noted that children were more focused and responsive when lessons incorporated pictures, animations, or other visual representations compared to purely verbal explanations. In line with this, Nurilmy (2024) found that the use of flashcards among children aged 4–5 years demonstrated a significant improvement in expressive language skills. Children were not only able to name words but also use them in more varied contexts after consistent exposure to visual media. This supports the statements from Teachers 1 and 3, who highlighted that concrete media help children link words to real objects more effectively. Furthermore, Udayanti (2021) found that illustrated posters in English instruction significantly improved vocabulary comprehension and learning motivation. Children were better able to recall words when presented with attractive images. This finding reinforces teacher 3's explanation that she intentionally selected theme-related media to help children see the connection between images and the learning material. In this sense, visual and concrete media do not merely serve as stimulation tools but also create visual scaffolding that strengthens symbolic connections between visual representations and vocabulary.



In summary, visual and concrete media play a crucial role as stimulation strategies in teaching foreign language to young learners. These media help bridge the young learner cognitive limitations in understanding abstract concepts, strengthen vocabulary acquisition through multisensory experiences, and enhance children's motivation and active participation during learning activities.

2. Variation of Methods and Activities

The second finding shows that teachers actively employ a variation of methods and activities in teaching foreign language, rather than relying on a single approach. This can be seen in the following extract:

Teacher 1: Kegiatannya juga macam-macam, seperti menggambar, menempel, mencocok bentuk, main sensorik pakai biji-bijian, atau membuat alat permainan sederhana dari botol. Jadi anak-anak tetap bisa belajar sambil bermain, tapi tetap sesuai tema pembelajaran.

(The activities are also varied, such as drawing, pasting, matching shapes, doing sensory play with grains, or creating simple toys from bottles. This way, the children can keep learning while playing, but still according to the learning theme)

Teacher 2: Tantangannya itu luar biasa, dengan karakter yang berbeda-beda... dari segi kemampuannya anak-anak. Ada yang bisa, ada yang kurang, ada yang tidak bisa... Saya kasih kadang-kadang materi lain yang khusus. Misalnya number, saya tulis dulu 1–5... dia tidak sama dengan yang lain yang 1–10. Pokoknya dia tidak boleh banyak dulu.

(The challenges are extraordinary, especially with the children's different characteristics and abilities. Some can do it, some struggle, and some cannot do it at all... Sometimes I give different materials specifically for certain children. For example, with numbers, I first write 1–5 for them, not like the others who learn 1–10. They just shouldn't be given too much at once)

Teacher 3: Kalau besok pelajarannya sama, metodenya mungkin saya ubah.

(If tomorrow's lesson is the same, I might change the method)

The first extract illustrates how the teacher intentionally designs highly varied activities to sustain children's interest and ensure that the learning process remains meaningful. This statement highlights that the variation of methods is not merely an enrichment of activities but a stimulation strategy deliberately structured so that thematic learning can continue through play-based approaches. A similar pattern is shown by teachers 2 and 3, who demonstrate flexibility in planning instructional activities by modifying the method even when the lesson content remains the same. Together, these extracts reflect the teachers' understanding that young learners require multisensory, concrete, and creative activities to more easily grasp foreign language concepts. Such variation is implemented to maintain children's engagement, prevent boredom, and adapt to classroom dynamics, thereby enabling more responsive and effective learning experiences.

The importance of method flexibility and diverse activities such as role-play and educational games is further emphasized in early childhood language instruction. Hamdi et al. (2025) found that implementing play-based learning (PBL) in foreign vocabulary instruction, particularly English, at the kindergarten level successfully promoted active participation, contextual vocabulary use, and social interaction among peers. Winarti & Fitri (2022) also demonstrated that role-play effectively enhanced vocabulary skills following a short intervention. These findings support the idea that varied methods are not merely for entertainment or superficial variation, but function as scaffolding, providing contextualized



experiences that allow children to learn language within social and playful situations rather than relying solely on traditional methods such as memorization or drills.

Overall, these findings indicate that teachers possess strong pedagogical awareness in adapting instructional strategies to children's developmental stages, characteristics, and individual needs. This adaptation extends beyond cognitive and linguistic aspects to encompass social, emotional, sensorimotor, and motivational dimensions that form the foundation of early learning. Through flexible and responsive approaches, foreign language learning becomes not only enjoyable but also more meaningful, relevant to learners lived experiences, and capable of sustaining their engagement throughout the learning process.

3. Individual Support and Personalized Attention

The third finding reveals that the teachers provide individual support to each child and adjust their instructional approaches based on the specific needs and characteristics of their learners. This approach emerges as a response to the dynamic nature of the classroom, which consists of children with diverse abilities, emotional states, and levels of learning readiness. The teachers recognize that not all children can learn at the same pace, therefore, personal interaction becomes an essential component of the stimulation strategies used in teaching foreign language learning. This is reflected in the following statements:

Teacher 3: Biasanya saya panggil satu per satu... temannya juga membantu.

(I usually call them one by one... and their friends also help)

Teacher 1: Tantangan yang paling sering itu kalau anak tidak mau mengikuti pembelajaran...

Jadi kami biarkan mereka menenangkan diri dulu. Kalau sudah agak tenang, baru kami ajak pelan-pelan kembali ke kegiatan. Tidak bisa dipaksa, harus sabar... setiap anak punya suasana hati dan tingkat kesiapan belajar yang berbeda-beda.

(The most frequent challenge is when a child refuses to participate in the learning... So, we let them calm down first. Once they are more relaxed, we gently invite them to rejoin the session. They cannot be forced; we have to be patient... each child has a different mood and level of readiness to learn)

The first excerpt illustrates how the teacher provides individualized guidance by calling children one by one to ensure whether or not they understand the instructions and to still engaged in the learning activities. This approach shows that the teacher not only serves as a facilitator but also as a supportive companion who creates a safe and reassuring learning environment. Peer involvement further reinforces this dynamic by fostering a collaborative atmosphere and encouraging children to feel more confident in participating.

The second excerpt highlights the teacher's ability to respond to the diverse emotional conditions of young learners, including those who are unfocused, unwilling to participate, or experiencing fluctuations in mood. Instead of insisting that the child immediately follow the activity, the teacher allows time for the child to calm down before gently guiding them back to the learning session. This approach reflects a deep understanding of early childhood developmental principles, particularly the importance of emotional regulation and learning readiness. It also demonstrates the teacher's adaptive capacity in addressing individual needs, including those of children with special needs or behavioral challenges that resemble ADHD.

These findings align with Muir et al. (2024), who reported that when teachers receive professional training focused on supporting preschoolers' self-regulation and executive functioning, children show significant improvements in emotional control, attention, and behavioral regulation. Furthermore, Pyle et al. (2022) demonstrated that teachers who provide emotional support, instructional guidance, and flexible classroom structures are more effective in fostering children's self-regulation and sustained engagement. Similarly, Mufalakhah & Ichsan (2024) also found that concrete strategies, such as helping children



calm down during emotional escalation, modeling appropriate ways to manage feelings, and reinforcing positive behaviors. It plays a crucial role in strengthening young children's emotional regulation. These studies collectively highlight that responsive, individualized interventions are essential for supporting early childhood emotional development, especially in classrooms where children present diverse characteristics and learning needs.

Thus, individualized support is not merely an expression of emotional care but an effective pedagogical strategy for enhancing young children's engagement and language development. By recognizing differences in each child's needs, learning pace, and emotional readiness, teachers can create foreign language learning experiences that are more inclusive, adaptive, and developmentally appropriate. This approach not only benefits children who face specific challenges but also ensures that every learner receives stimulation aligned with their developmental abilities and learning requirements.

4. Utilizing Children's Interests and Experiences

The last findings indicate that teachers draw upon children's out-of-school learning experiences, particularly their habits of watching educational or entertainment videos, as a foundation for designing further stimulation in English language learning. This is shown in the following extracts:

Teacher 3: Alisa kadang belajar sendiri dari tontonannya...

(Alisa sometimes learns on her own from the videos she watches)

Teacher 1: Bahasa Inggris kita ajarkan ke semua, dari KB sampai TKB, tapi tingkat kesulitannya beda... Anak KB/TPA hanya menyebutkan kata-kata dasar ... banyak anak cepat menangkap karena sering nonton YouTube di rumah.

(We teach English to all levels, from playgroup to kindergarten, but the level of difficulty is different... Children in playgroup only learn basic words... Many of them grasp the vocabulary quickly because they often watch YouTube at home)

From extract above, teacher 3 indicated that some children receive foreign language exposure independently through digital media. Likewise, teacher 1 acknowledged that she considers children's out-of-school learning experiences (such as watching YouTube) and connects these experiences with their progress in class. These statements highlight the teachers' recognition of a link between children's digital media exposure and their ability to comprehend the vocabulary introduced during lessons.

This finding is consistent with Ilham et al. (2023), who confirmed that home-based multimedia exposure, such as the use of YouTube and interactive videos, contributes to vocabulary acquisition among preschool children. Furthermore, teachers who are aware of this exposure can connect classroom material with children's viewing experiences to reinforce the transfer of learning.

Thus, leveraging children's interests and experiences serves as an effective stimulation strategy because it enhances their intrinsic motivation to participate, enables teachers to adjust the level of difficulty and type of support (scaffolding) based on children's prior knowledge, and facilitates the integration of classroom content with children's everyday contexts, an important step for internalizing vocabulary and promoting more authentic language use. This practice aligns with child-centered approaches that position children's experiences as the foundation for instructional planning and as practical sources of information for designing further learning stimulation.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the stimulation strategies employed by early childhood teachers in foreign language classroom are adaptive, responsive, and developmentally oriented. Across



the four key findings, it is evident that teachers adjust their instructional approaches based on children's cognitive and socio-emotional needs, as well as their learning experiences both at school and at home.

First, teachers rely on the use of visual and concrete media as the primary form of stimulation because it effectively helps children recognize vocabulary more quickly. Visual media and real objects enable children to connect words with meaning through multisensory experiences. Second, teachers incorporate a variety of methods and activities, such as demonstrations until motor-based tasks, to maintain children's attention and accommodate diverse learning styles. This variation serves as an important strategy to prevent boredom and enhance comprehension. Third, individualized support is provided as a response to children's emotional needs and learning readiness. This approach helps create a stable and secure learning environment, which ultimately contributes to greater engagement during foreign language lessons. Fourth, teachers draw upon children's interests and personal experiences, including their exposure to language through videos at home, as a basis for planning subsequent activities. This strategy demonstrates how instruction can become more contextualized and closely aligned with children's everyday lives.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the quality of early childhood foreign language learning strongly depends on teachers' ability to integrate concrete media, varied methods, individualized attention, and children's interests. This approach not only makes stimulation linguistically effective but also supports children's holistic development.

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