

## English Teaching for Educators of *Sekolah Gajahwong*

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**Abstract:** Some years ago, society of Ledhok Timoho was a community of beggars, *pengamen*, and scavengers who did not know the importance of education. They were reluctant taking their children to school. *Advokasi Arus Bawah* (TABAAH) leads the changes; took the community to have a better future. It established a free school for the community. Sekolah Gajah Wong is a pre-school and kindergarten. It brings the children to a better life, gives them what the children deserve to have such as knowledge, joy, and happiness, so they do not have to do what they used to do; being beggars. The existence of the school leads them to have their rights as the human being, better life and better education. The school is totally free. The school bears the operational by themselves by doing many activities, such as producing and selling cookies, selling goat, plastic recycling, and open donation bazaar. One of the efforts to maintain the operational of the school is hiring volunteers to be the educators, but the education backgrounds of the volunteers are various. This becomes a problem, if they do not have background as teacher. In one hand, the school needs teachers. But in other hands, they can't hire a professional teacher. Therefore, the volunteer educators need to know method that is used during teaching activity. In this case, they need to do training how to teach and how to teach language to children. They are given Montessori teaching method, Total Physical Response Method, and Teaching English for young Learners. The activity is hoped can be a good chance for them to develop their ability in teaching, so that they can teach the student optimally.

**Keywords:** English Teaching; Educator; Sekolah Gajah Wong

### 1. Introduction

Gajahwong is a school for children around Gajahwong river. This school is totally free. It doesn't require any school tuition for each student. *Advokasi Arus Bawah* (TAABAH) established this school due to some reason. This organization tries to raise beggar, street singer and scavengers' living into a better life. People who live in the edge of the river are community of low economy people. They are beggars, street singers, and scavengers. Several years ago, they did not realize the important of education. They did not have an education background. They never thought that education was important. As result, they did the same to their children. They forbade their children from school. They thought it was better when they asked their children with them, accompany them went along the street so that the children were accustomed to do the same as their parent did. Based on that condition, TAABAH tries to change their mindset. At first, it was not easy to change people mindset. They had been in that condition for years. So, they thought that would be always their safest and best way to raise the children. The organization tried to convince them that education was really important. Education was the good weapon to overcome poverty. It is hoped that they will get their rights as the human being, and have a better future [1].

The existence of the school becomes the public attention for some latest years. The school profile has ever been broadcasted in some national television channel such as in Metro TV, CNN Indonesia, and Net TV. Some social organizations have also ever visited the school to give their charity. Although there are some people gave the school charity, but it is not enough because the school operational need is always required. To overcome the condition, the community tries to do some efforts. They cook and sell some biscuit, they make a small farm field, sell their vegetables, goats, and even they sell some charity given by some people. They use the result to buy the school need. They even reuse plastics, bottles, paper, newspaper, boxes, to be the school props. They cannot hire a professional teacher. The educators are only some volunteers who really want to teach children. They come from various education backgrounds. Most of them are students who study in Yogyakarta. They do not have background as a teacher for children. First problem arises when the educator who supposed to have experience and background as teacher for children do not have required background. They are only volunteers. They do not have proper ability in teaching. In this case, the teaching activity is delivered freely. It does not consider teaching rules.

The school profile has been interesting for some people to come and give their charity. Not only people from Indonesia, but also from some other countries, they come to see and give their hands to help. In one hand, this can be a good chance for the school to enhance the web. But in the other hands, it will be quite hard to do since most of the teacher has no ability in English. Moreover, the children cannot have a good interaction to the foreign people who come to see the school because they cannot understand what the foreigners speak about. So, in this case, English training is really needed for the educators to increase not only their ability in English but also their ability in teaching English for children.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Education**

Education is fundamental for every stage of life. It is written in Indonesia's regulation that every citizen of Indonesia has right to get education, and it will be funded by the country (UUD 45, verse 31). It is also written that “(5) *Setiap warga negara berhak mendapat kesempatan meningkatkan pendidikan sepanjang hayat*” (UU no.20.th 2003). The meaning is that every citizen has rights to get long life education. The government will be responsible to the citizen education. It is also can be said that education is something crucial so that the country tried to educate the citizen.

The importance of the education is not deniable. People have been understood that education will affect people's lives. Having a good education will open many opportunities in their lives. When they have education, it will open their mind about everything in this world. It will stimulate them to know further or to study more about something. When people are able to do many things, they will be able to face the world better and even they will be needed by the others. So, it will open many opportunities in their lives to make their lives better. Unfortunately, there were still some people near Gajahwong River who did not realize it. It then becomes an urge condition to overcome. They have to realize that actually they also have rights to get education, to get human right, in order to increase their lives quality.

### **2.2. Teaching**

Teaching obviously is a skill that is needed by teacher. Everyone can be a teacher, but not everyone can teach their students well. Teacher has rules that they should do during the teaching-learning activities in the class. There are also some methods that should be used to conduct the class activity. Conducting a class activity without ability of teaching may lead to certain understanding. Students will not

learn maximally because the teacher cannot provide a best preparation for the learning.

According to Pianta [2] teachers are greater sources of what students learn. Students will take their teacher as the sources of the learning activity. But, teacher characteristics such as degrees, experience, qualifications, and test performance do not predict student achievement very well, if at all. Teachers take a crucial place in forming students' knowledge. So, teacher skill should be upgraded. Effective professional development can be accomplished through the following way. The training and support experiences offered to teachers to help improving students learning. It must be replicable and embedded in systems of incentives, management, and evaluation that enable high levels of participation and fidelity. Pianta also says that best practices such as courses, workshops, and coaching must directly produce the skills and measure the student outcomes, achievement, or intended result.

According to that explanation, teachers' teaching skill can be improved through some practices such as course, workshop, coaching. It is really important because teacher will be a great source for student in learning. Teacher ability will take a great place in affecting the learning result. Teacher and students interaction will stimulate students critical thinking that will lead to new knowledge.

In this case, Sekolah Gajahwong's teachers or educators' skill can be improved through some workshop or training. The training is hoped can improve their ability and students' learning achievements significantly.

### **2.3. English for children**

The ability of speaking English has become a required urgent ability in this globalization era. Children in *Sekolah Gajah Wong* are accustomed to have interaction with English native speaker. Some foreigners visit their school to see and to give them charity. In such occasion,

the students and the educators are hoped to have a good communication with the native speakers. The speaking English ability is also needed for their future. There will be many chance in the future require the ability. Based on the reasons above, the students need to learn English. As the starting point of the English learning, they will study English introduction. They will learn some starting vocabularies such as words around school and house.

English can be taught to children as the early education because according to Piaget [3] during 2-7 years old children learn language concept. During the age, childrens' languages make rapid progress. It is in line with Hashemi's statement. He intends to teach English to children for some reasons. He says that the first foreign language that is taught to children at very early stage of schooling is English language. It has main goal that teaching English in the early years of schooling is to give young learners motivation to be ready and have self confident in learning English at higher levels of education [4].

According to Lauglin, most people assume that children learn a foreign language like the way they learn their mother tongue in the context of teaching. In acquiring and learning a foreign language, children are potential and even more quickly than those who are learning the foreign language after puberty [5].

This learning process will be effective when they use gesture and body language [6]. A method that suitable for children is Total Physical Response (TPR), because students will explore words using their physical movements. This method is developed by James Asher in 1977. This method gives children a happy learning experience. They will hear command or instruction in English. And then, they give respond with their body and physical activities.

In the case of Sekolah Gajahwong, teacher needs to know the method of TPR. The method is suitable to teach language to children. Applying the method, students

will have a great experience of learning. They will be free to move responding to their teacher. Besides TPR, the teachers also need to learn Montessori for language. In TPR, students are asked to respond what they listen and see with their body language because children typically like to move and explore their environment. In line with the reason that children like to explore their environment, it will be good if the teachers are introduced with Montessori language method to be applied in their classes.

Dr. Montessori in Standing [7] says that language is the most difficult part for children to achieve. She also explains more that there is a certain period which is sensitive for language. It begins from birth to 6 years old. If the children are not able to learn the concept of language during the period, they will never be able to learn language [8]. The period is important, so it should be sure that the period is not missed. The activity to maximize the period can also be helped by doing some Montessori lesson in the classroom. Using this method, students are asked to see, touch, listen, speak, and feel. All of the sensory will be used to learn. They can explore everything around them while they do the activity. In this way, while they are learning, they are also exploring happily. When they study words “apple”, for example, they will see the realia of the fruit, touch the apple, touch the letter “A” as the first letter of the words, feel the texture, hear the sound, and utter the word. So, they are experiencing multi-sensory learning. It becomes an enjoyable activity for them.

### 3. Data and Methodology

#### 3.1. Data

Data were taken during the orientation session and the questionnaire session. The orientation session proves that Sekolah Gajahwong is an independent school. It raises the operational need themselves. They sell cookies, plant and sell vegetables, do goat farming and sell the goat milk. They do not have much money to buy something new. So, they use garbage

around them, reuse plastics, reuse boxes, and many other things to be the school property to support the school activity. Even they cannot hire professional teachers/educators. The teachers are volunteers from various backgrounds. As long as they want to teach in the school, they are welcome. They are:

Tabel 1. Educator Background

No.	Educator Name	Education Background
1.	Neneng Hanifah M.	Islamic Religion
2.	Firnanda Hesti	International Relation
3.	Dianna F.	Islamic Religion
4.	Crestanti W.	Geography

Based on the data above, it can be seen that there was no one of them has an education background as teacher for children. The first teacher, Neneng is a students of Islamic University in Jogjakarta, majoring *tafsir* Qur’an (commentary on Holy Quran). The second is Firnanda. She has graduated from International Relation. She has fluent in English. She has never been a teacher for children before, but she has been experienced in the school for years. The third is Crestanti. She has graduated from Geography department. She also has never taught children before. The last is Diana. She graduated from Islamic department. They do not have any education background of teaching children before they become volunteers in Sekolah Gajahwong. In this case, it is necessary to give the teachers information or training on some methods that are essential and needed to teach children, especially teaching English.

#### 3.2. Method and Setting of the Activity

There were some methods of doing the community engagement; the orientation, giving questionnaire, and the training.

##### 3.2.1. Orientation

The orientation was a discussion session with some educators of the school. During this activity, related information about the school was gathered; such as the

school condition, problems they have, the need of English training, kind of English training is needed, the school schedule, the students and educators, the regulations, and many other.

### 3.2.2. Questionnaire

In this session, teachers were asked to fill a questionnaire. It was to know the background of the educators including name, birth date, education background, teaching experiences, and problem they face during the teaching-learning activities. That information are gathered as the consideration to make a plan on what kind of training is needed, the time and the place of the training.

### 3.2.3. English Training

The training was held in 3 days sections:

1. Training for teaching language to children.

In this section the educators learned Montessori Language method. They learned what Montessori is, the concept of the method, the method application in classroom activity, the preparation of the class, the usage of realia and props they can choose, and management of the class. During this session they also practiced creating props for the class; save clay for children. They also practice how to conduct the class.

2. Training for teaching English for Young Learners.

In section 2, the teachers learned the theory of teaching language to children by Piaget, Krashen, and Vygotsky. They learned Piaget's cognitive development; assimilation and accommodation. They also discussed on Vygotsky's language concern; child's worlds and Zone Proximal Development (ZPD). In the last session of the second section, they talked about Krashen's 5 second language hypothesis.

3. Training on how to apply Total Physical Response in classroom.

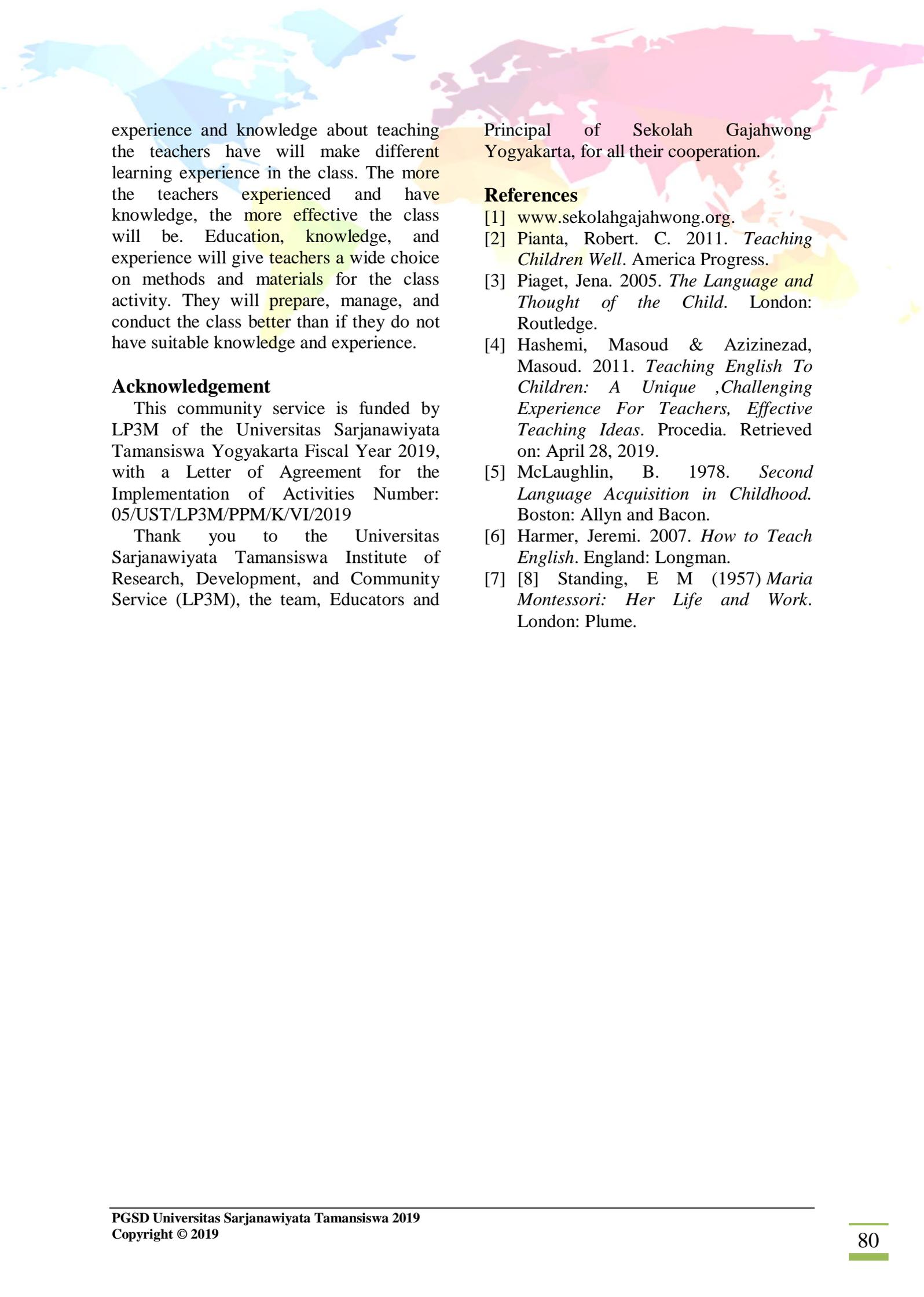
The last day of the training, teachers studied Total Physical Response. They discussed on the method, the procedures, the usage, the TPR class management, and the application in the classroom. The last activity was training of applying TPR in the class activity.

## 4. Result and Discussion

The activity shows a significant result. The teachers were all enthusiastically joined the activity. They were really curious about the materials given. Some of them said that they had ever taught the students using realia, they asked them to see the object, to touch, to feel, to listen and to utter the object's name just like the Montessori Method, but they do not know the concept and the aims of the activity. They did it just because they were accustomed to. In TPR application, they said that they had also sometimes done such activity, but they did not know that it was a language teaching method. They did not do it for some specific and educated purposed and it was not based on certain method. Understanding the method, they become more confident and ready to manage the classroom activity. They are able to make a good preparation and lesson plan related to the teaching method. Good preparation will enhance the scope of teaching-learning activity maximally. The training is hoped can be a good way to improve teachers' skill in teaching. As result, it will give students better learning experience and achievements.

## 5. Conclusion

Teachers or educators play a significant role in teaching-learning activity. They also become a great source of learning for the students. Students tend to see and learn from their teachers. What the teacher will give during the learning activity will affect the students' achievements. The education background of the teachers may affect the learning activity effectiveness. Different



experience and knowledge about teaching the teachers have will make different learning experience in the class. The more the teachers experienced and have knowledge, the more effective the class will be. Education, knowledge, and experience will give teachers a wide choice on methods and materials for the class activity. They will prepare, manage, and conduct the class better than if they do not have suitable knowledge and experience.

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