

## HUMANISM APPROACH IN CHILDREN EDUCATION: A LOOK INTO HUMANE PERSPECTIVE OF TEACHING ENGLISH TO CHILDREN

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**Abstract:** Recently language teaching has been influenced by number of approaches. In case of teaching children, there are many approaches which can be implemented according to the children needs. This paper is a library research which attempts to explain teaching English for children viewed from humanism theory. The humanism theory or approach is very crucial in teaching children. Humanism theory sees a human connection is vital matter to young learners education and makes them to self-actualize in their learning process. It builds emotional relationship between teachers and students and student-centered teaching. In conclusion, whatever methodology adopted by the teacher to suit the needs of children, a teacher with a humanistic approach will make them learn to remember, to understand, to think and to learn.

*Keywords: Humanism, Children Education, Teaching English*

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### A. INTRODUCTION

English is taught as a foreign language in Indonesia. It is currently considered as a necessity. Because of that, many people want to learn English as early as possible. English also has been taught before the children or young learners enter kindergarten even before preschool. The process of teaching and learning English in each level is different from kindergarten until university. They are all depended on the different characteristics of toddler, children, teenager and adult. Those differences also will make the strategy of teaching different. Young learners are children between the ages of about 5 years old to 12 years old (Rixon, 1999), while others may have different opinion. In other words young learners are those who spent years in primary stage before transition to secondary stage.

Teaching English to young learners will be very different compared to teaching intermediate or advance learners. Age plays important role in what and how to teach. According to Fauziati (2010: 89) teaching young learners required both social and cognitive development. It means that teaching young learners use more physical activities and have interaction with the social environment. Beside that the primacy of affective and emotional factors can affect the learning process (Nunan, 1991 :234). These believes are derived from humanistic approach. It believes that the successful learning of children will be achieved if they have right attitudes, interest and motivation. In conclusion, it can be said that humanistic technique involves every aspects, including

children's feeling, emotion, linguistic knowledge, cognitive, behavioral skill and social environment. The following paper will explore more about the humanism theory and its relationship with teaching children.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study adopted the library research related to the view of humanism approach and teaching English for young learners. The researcher sees that there is big connection of the succeed of learning English if educators adopted the humanistic approach in teaching students in lower level.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **The Nature of Humanism**

According to Cambridge Learners' Dictionary, literally, humanism is a belief system based on human needs and values and not in God or religion. It is originally a psychological term which emphasizes the importance of inner world of human being and places the individual thoughts, feeling and emotions at the forefront of all human developments (Fauziati, 2009:41). The humanism movement begin in 15th century in Europe to protest against the church close minded religious dogma. Meanwhile in mid-1950 humanism was emerged as a means to against behaviorism. The basic belief of humanism is that every person has worth and rational thought. It sees a human being as a whole person who are not only has physics and cognition but also feeling and emotion.

The important figures of humanism are Erikson, Stevick, Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers These three figures have their own interpretation of humanism. According to Fauziati (2009 :43) Erikson claimed that "human psychological development not only depends on predetermined maturational stages, but on the challenge's which are set by society at particular times in their lives". It means that the people's maturity happened not only because of its natural process but also by the events happened in someone's life". Meanwhile Stevick in Fauziati (2009) stated that learning is an emotional experience in which the feelings/intention to learn will be success or failure factors. The third figure is Abraham Maslow. He is famous with his theory of deficiency needs. It is related with human psychological and biological needs. The last figure is Carl Roger who believed that human beings have natural potential in learning, but it all depends on their personal preference and their active participation.

All those ideas are all related with humanism. The general ideas from this approach is that the emotional factor or affective presuppose the cognitive factor. Before learners can think about something, they must want to think about it (Hutchinson, 1989 : 47). This is learning cycle of the relationship between cognitive and emotional aspect of children.

Based on this cycle, it can be described that the success or failure of children learning is influenced by their cognitive as well as their affective or emotion. According to Fauziati (2014 :44) the principle of human behavior is their ability to adapt in the direction which enhance their existence. They needs non-threatening environment o learn. Meanwhile Roger in Fauziati (2014: 51) stated that human has the following qualities:

a) Openness to experience

It means being able to accept reality including someone's feeling.

b) Existential living

In this case, human should lives in the here and now. They should live not looking at the yesterday or future.

c) Organismic trusting

Here, we should trust ourselves about what feels right and what comes natural

d) Experiential freedom

Human needs to feel the freedom for adding their experience. In spite of be given freedom. Human should take the risk and responsibility by themselves.

e) Creativity

If we feel free and responsible, we can be more creative and have more participation in this world.

Humanism believes that the nature of human is the tendency the develop their own potential using method which can help them to enhance their quality. Humanism is related with learning, in this case is learning language. As it mentioned before that learning language is affected by how students feel about themselves. It is supported by Moskowitz in Richard and Rodgers (1986) who said humanistic techniques engage the whole person, including the emotions and feelings as well as linguistic knowledge and behavioural skills. Terrell (1982) added "affective humanistic activities explore the students" values, ideas, opinions, goals and feelings as well as their experiences".

Humanism in language teaching has an implication that that is not in education/teaching but focus more on learning. Fauziati said that humanism believes than learning how to learn is more important than being taught by the teacher. That is why the facilitator is needed. Teacher is perceived a facilitator orn an empathetic helping agent in the learning process and not as a threat.

### **Characteristic of children**

In teaching children, teachers have to know each characteristic of the children in order to achieve goals optimally. There are several characteristics of young learners. Different age will also show some distinct characteristic. Based on Fauziati (2010: 92), there are three characteristics of children:

a) The children like to play

It is natural for children to like doing something which is related to playing. Beside that they also have natural musical taste. This characteristic of children can be used as a strategy to teach them using something they like.

b) Children talk about current situation

Unlike adult who think something in the future, worrying something which has not been happened, children tend to say something which happened here and now. So, it is important for the teachers, to not ask them something abstract which happened in the past or future.

c) Children understand meaning better when they have seen some objects associated with it.

This characteristic explains how children like pictures or images rather than words. The teacher should explain something related to reality.

A Humanistic approach can be freely adopted in teaching children. However, there are some consideration which should be taken. The reason is that children has different thinking in learning something. They have their own characteristic. Humanism focuses on development of the children self-concept. The main goal of humanism in teaching children is to get self-actualization. When a child feels good and confident about himself/herself, it shows a positive beginning. Only when a learner's self-esteem is raised, he/she realizes his/her responsibilities in the learning process. This is called child centred. If it is applied in teaching language it will accelerate the children self-development since they have motivation to learn. They will be easily solve problems in

life situations, have good reasoning capabilities and are self-developed with free-will and co-operation.

Teaching children using humanism approach must consider many aspect. It includes the quality of teacher in teaching children. According to Wang in Fauziati (2009:47-48) there are some quality which should be had by teacher to be a humanistic teacher. Below are the explanation in relation with teaching children.

- a) Capable of developing “the whole person” of the students intelectually as well as emotionally.

In teaching children, the teacher must able to teach them both intelectually and emotionally. The children is expected to not only be smart but they have good attitude and emotion. In this case, teacher must encourage children to communicate openly an empathically. By doing so, children will feel close to the teacher. When close relationship is achieved, the learning process can be constructed on a stronger foundation.

- b) Have a genuine trust and acceptance of the students as worthy, valuable, individuals, and help them to build up positive self concept.

Children have different ability. There are some who good in certain thing while the others are not. It is a task of the teacher to convince the children that they are worthy and valuable to their own. For example teacher can praise in even a little efforts which children do. Eventhough they failed in doing something, teacher do not allowed to bring them down. Teacher should always be supportive to their every efforts. If children has conceived themselves to be successful/ doing good, they will try their best to prove it and keep their self concept in their mind. Thus they will become better and better and can construct advantageous cycle.

- c) Teachers should be real facilitators of learning and focus more on how to learn than what to learn.

Teacher who teach children is considered to be good teacher when they know both the academic topic/method and the psychological learning process and atmosphere. To be able to do this, teacher have to know the students needs. After also knowing the athmosphere, teacher can decide how to handle it. Whether they will create good athmosphere by applying some methods or using some media.

Thus in applying humanism approach in teaching children, teacher should not only research on how to teach well, but also should research on how they can learn well. In order to achieve that, children should be given chance to develop themselves freely with our guidance.

Regarding the development in science and technology, teacher can make use of it to create an activities which can build the good emotion or feeling of children. This is in line with Terrell (1982) who said that “affective humanistic activities explore the students’ values, ideas, opinions, goals and feelings as well as their experiences”. With modern technology teacher can make the material teaching resource colorful and interesting. This will be helpful for learning and in this way both of learning and teaching process will be interesting. Thus they can obtain a strong realization, and it also can lead the student to resolve the nature of things and the inner relation. This will be more helpful for the student to develop freely.

According to Johnson (2014 :4) in learning language, children are not asked to talk about things that are not important to them or a part of their lives or experiences. The reason of children learn language is suitable with the humanism approach which emphasizes on students feeling or emotion and let them learn by themselves. The children learn language because:

- a) Children are encouraged to talk about things that make sense and are of interest to them.
- b) Teachers encourage and expect them to learn differently and at different rates.
- c) Teachers encourage their attempts and successful approximations.
- d) Teachers encourage their creativity and humor.

Teacher who use children’ natural interests, will get their teaching becomes much easier and much more enjoyable. Therefore the teacher’s task is not to teach the students how to learn, but to offer learning methods, and the students learn by themselves. The teacher should not live as “teacher” but a “facilitator”. By doing so, teacher can temper the psychological intense atmosphere.

According to Roger in Jingna (2012: 35) despite of the ability of children to think/view freely about something, the teacher should not leave them alone. Teacher should treat their ideas/ thoughts with sympathy and establish emotional communication with

them. To apply the theory to teaching approach, there are some basic steps to be followed:

- a) Teacher must find out the learning motivation of students and decide the content material of language learning by themselves. If the children do not have the motivation to learn, they will learn nothing. Teacher can guide them to arrange the learning activity based on their learning needs.
- b) The students master their own learning approach. The teacher's important task is to teach them how to get the approach to obtain knowledge.
- c) Let the students evaluate themselves

In self-evaluation students will not compare with other students but only with themselves. Using marks to measure the student's learning achievements will make the higher mark students feel proud and the lower mark students feel shameful. By using self-evaluation can make the students know how he learned and whether they have achieved their aims, and how to make progress.

### **Classroom Activities in Teaching Children**

Based on the children characteristics and theory of humanism, teacher can prepare the classroom activities which are in line with those. There are several classroom activities which can be done in teaching English using songs, nursery rhymes, pictures and games. This activities is expected to build the emotions of the children so that they have motivation to learn something (language).

- a) Songs

The use of the song in teaching children make the teaching learning process is more fun. Music helps children to feel free, happy and motivated. If the their emotional factor is good, it help them enhances language skills, by singing song, children learn language appreciation, vocabulary and rhyme (Shipley, 1998). The song should have been familiar with the children culture. For Example:

*Twinkle, twinkle, little star*

*How I wonder what you are*

*Up above the world so high*

*Like a diamond in the sky*

*Twinkle, twinkle little star*

*How I wonder what you are*

*When the blazing sun is gone  
When he nothing shines upon  
Then you show your little light  
Twinkle, twinkle, all the night  
Twinkle, twinkle, little star  
How I wonder what you are*

b) Nursery Rhymes

According to <http://dictionary.reference.com/> accessed on 18 September 2015, Nursery rhymes are a short, simple poem or song for very young children. Below is the example of nursery rhymes.

*Two Little Lady Birds  
Two little ladybirds sitting on a wall  
One named Peter one named Paul  
Fly away Peter fly away Paul  
Come back Peter come back Paul.*

c) Pictures

As we know that children tend to like pictures, so it is one advantage to teach using pictures. However there are some points which have to keep in minds like what grammar or vocabulary that can be taught related to the pictures. Beside that the pictures should be readable to whole class, attractive, and entertaining. There are some advantages of using pictures as media to teach. For instance to introduce new vocabulary, teach grammar, tell story etc (Endang Fauziati, 2010: 97).

d) Games

"Games are highly motivating because they are amusing and interesting. They can be used to give practice in all language skills and be used to practice many types of communication." (Ersoz, 2000). It explains that games can be applied to teaching English. Endang Fauziati (2010: 97-103) describe some games which can be used in teaching learning language.

1. Cat and Dog

The game can be used to for their listening skill by asking them to go over to the cat or the dog

2. Games of Observation and Memory

The games can be very useful for vocabulary practice. Several games related are Game, Picture observation, and memory momentum

3. Writing Games

Games which can be used to practice writing skill are jumble words, word accusations, description group, cultural charades, holiday fun, and telling tales.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Based on the description of humanism and its relation to teaching children, we may conclude that children or learners have their own thought or views in learning something. This means that they learn optimally through something which makes them comfortable. The students have to feel not bothered in teaching learning environment. Therefore, when children learning something in any subjects they need to be actively involve. To be active or not to shy, they need to get close first. If this principle is extended to EFL setting, it means that children language classess need to be active. The students learn independently and the teacher is just a supporter. The students need to be engaged in activities of which they are comfortable enough, they have good feeling. Classroom activities should be creatively made to offer opportunities to children in order for them to learn by their own. Humanism teaching theory emphasizes on self-actualization, significant learning, emotional relationship between teachers and students and student-centered teaching. So, whatever is the methodology adopted by the teacher to suit the needs of children, a teacher with a humanistic approach will make them learn to remember, to understand, to think and to learn.

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