

STRATEGIES OF TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS: A CASE STUDY AT LOVELY BEE MONTESSORI PRESCHOOL

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Abstract

This study investigates the teaching strategies employed by teachers at Lovely Bee Montessori Preschool in teaching English to young learners and examines how these strategies are implemented during different stages of classroom instruction. Using a qualitative case study design, the research involved two preschool teachers and one principal from Lovely Bee Montessori Preschool Branch 4, Araya, Malang. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that teachers consistently applied structured teaching strategies across the opening, learning, and closing stages of lessons. In the opening stage, song and movement activities, questioning, and modeling were used to engage learners and prepare them for learning. During the main learning process, teachers employed modeling and demonstration, hands-on activities, repetition, and visual or gestural support to facilitate language comprehension and participation. In the closing stage, question & answer activities and vocabulary repetition were used to reinforce learning outcomes. The study concludes that structured Montessori-based teaching strategies effectively support young learners' English acquisition and classroom engagement, highlighting the importance of developmentally appropriate and interactive instructional practices in early childhood EFL education.

Keywords: Teaching Strategies, Young Learners, Montessori Preschool, EFL

INTRODUCTION

English has become an important language in education and global communication. As a result, many schools in Indonesia introduce English from an early age. Young learners require learning activities that are engaging and appropriate to their developmental characteristics because they learn best through meaningful and enjoyable experiences (Lucas, 2023). Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in selecting and implementing teaching strategies that support children's participation and understanding during English lessons.

Many preschools in Indonesia apply the Montessori approach, which emphasizes hands-on learning, independence, and the use of concrete materials. In Montessori classrooms, teachers guide children through real life activities and direct experiences that support language learning (Lillard, 2017). Since preschool children have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, effective teaching strategies are needed to help them understand instructions, participate in activities, and develop basic English skills.

Previous studies have examined teaching strategies in Montessori-based English classrooms. For example, Apriliana et al. (2024) found that teachers commonly use modeling, repetition, and hands-on activities to support young learners' English development. However, existing studies have mainly focused on general teaching strategies and have provided limited discussion of how teachers apply strategies across different lesson stages, namely the opening, main learning process, and closing activities. This gap indicates the need for further research on teaching practices throughout the entire lesson.

Based on this gap, this study addresses the following research question: *How do preschool teachers at Lovely Bee Montessori Preschool apply teaching strategies during the*

opening, main learning process, and closing stages of English lessons? Accordingly, the study aims to describe the teaching strategies employed in each lesson stage. The findings are expected to contribute to the field of teaching English to young learners by providing a clearer understanding of structured teaching practices in Montessori preschool settings and serving as a reference for teachers and future researchers.

METHODS

Research Design

This study used a qualitative case study design. A qualitative approach helps the researcher understand real experiences, behaviors, and meanings in a natural context (Creswell, 2014). The case study design was chosen because the focus is on one specific case: the teaching strategies used by preschool teachers at Lovely Bee Montessori School to teach English using the Montessori method. This approach allows an in-depth understanding of how teachers guide young learners during the opening, main learning process, and closing of English lessons.

Setting and Participant

The research was conducted at Lovely Bee Montessori Preschool, Branch 4, Araya, Malang. The participants consisted of two preschool teachers and one school principal who were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in English instruction and their knowledge of the school's Montessori-based learning practices. The teachers had one and six years of teaching experience respectively, while the principal provided information regarding the school context and educational programs.

Data Collection

Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The researcher conducted three observation sessions in the preschool classroom to examine the implementation of teaching strategies during English lessons. In addition, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the two preschool teachers and the school principal to obtain deeper insights into instructional practices and the learning context.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the steps of Braun and Clarke (2006). First, all observation notes and interview transcripts were read repeatedly to gain familiarity with the data. Important words, phrases, and actions related to teaching strategies in opening, main activities, and closing were highlighted. Second, similar ideas were grouped into codes. Third, these codes were organized into themes representing strategies used by preschool teachers to guide children in learning English. This thematic analysis allowed the researcher to describe patterns in teaching strategies and explore how these strategies supported student engagement and learning.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study used member checking as the main strategy. After the data were collected and analyzed, the researcher shared the interview summaries and interpretations with the participants to confirm their accuracy. This process helped ensure that the data truly represented the participants' experiences and perspectives about how they applied teaching strategies during the opening, main learning activities, and

closing in English lessons for preschool children. Through member checking, the credibility and accuracy of the findings were strengthened (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Strategies in the Opening Stage

Three strategies were identified in the opening stage: song and movement, questioning, and modeling. Song and movement activities were used to help children transition from free play to learning activities and to increase their attention and engagement. Teachers also used simple questions related to daily routines and previous learning experiences to activate children's prior knowledge. In addition, modeling was applied by demonstrating expected responses and classroom behaviors before asking children to perform them independently.

Excerpt 2:

“We usually begin with a praying song, followed by the school’s theme song. This routine has been established as an opening strategy to signal the start of learning activities. It helps the children transition from free or informal activities to a more focused learning environment.” (PT2, Interview, February 2026)

Teachers also used simple questions such as "How are you today?" and "What day is it today?" to encourage children's participation and connect the lesson with their daily experiences. In addition, modeling was frequently observed when teachers demonstrated expected responses and classroom behaviors before asking children to perform them independently.

Excerpt 2:

“We usually give simple instructions and show them first. We also use gestures so the children can understand what they need to do before they follow.” (PT2, Interview, February 2026)

These findings indicate that the opening stage was designed to establish classroom routines and prepare children for learning activities. Through song and movement, questioning, and modeling, teachers encouraged children to become more attentive and actively participate in the lesson. These strategies also helped children transition from free activities to a more structured learning environment.

Teaching Strategies in the Main Learning Process

The findings identified four main strategies during the learning process: modeling and demonstration, hands-on learning, repetition, and gesture and visual support. Teachers regularly demonstrated activities before children practiced them independently. Learning activities involved direct interaction with Montessori materials, allowing children to experience English through meaningful tasks.

Excerpt 1:

“In Montessori, we do not talk too much or tell children what they must do all the time. Children observe, and usually we just show them. For English learning, we introduce language through activities and materials. For example, we say ‘this is

letter A', then children trace the letter. From there, they start to know the vocabulary or sounds in English. After that, we see whether they understand or not, and at the end, we ask them to recall, such as 'Can you show me?' So, the language is repeated through activities, not only through explanation." (PT1, Interview, February 2026)

Hands-on learning was evident in activities such as tracing letters, dry pouring, gardening, and using sensorial materials. During these activities, children did not only listen to the teacher but also touched, moved, and used materials directly. For example, children practiced tracing letters, using bead stairs, solving puzzles, and working with gardening tools. Through these activities, children learned English while participating in the task. This finding shows that hands-on learning helped children understand English through direct experience rather than explanation alone.

Excerpt 1:

"Usually, we help children by repeating the activity again and again. In our learning process, repetition is very important. Even though the topic may change every week, within the same week, we still repeat the same activities. For example, in Montessori practical life activities, children may do dry pouring on Tuesday and then do it again on Thursday. This gives children another chance to try. If they had difficulties before, they usually understand better after repeating the activity." (PT1, Interview, February 2026)

Another strategy involved the use of gestures and visual support. Teachers frequently used gestures, body movements, visual materials, and real objects to help children understand English instructions. Instead of relying only on verbal explanations, teachers supported children's understanding through actions and visual references. Teachers often demonstrated actions while giving instructions and pointed to objects while introducing vocabulary or classroom expressions. Visual materials such as table manners templates and real classroom objects were also used to support children's understanding of English. These findings suggest that English learning in the Montessori classroom was closely connected to concrete experiences, repeated exposure, and multimodal support.

Teaching Strategies in the Closing Stage

The findings showed that teachers used question-and-answer activities and vocabulary repetition during the closing stage. Teachers asked simple questions related to the lesson and encouraged children to recall previously learned vocabulary before leaving the classroom. The questions were usually related to letters, numbers, colors, or classroom objects that had been introduced during the lesson. Teachers often used flashcards or pointed to classroom objects while asking children to answer individually.

Vocabulary repetition was also observed at the end of the lesson. Teachers reviewed key vocabulary by saying the words first and asking children to repeat them together or individually. This activity was carried out using Letterland cards, number cards, and other learning materials used during the lesson. Through these review activities, children had opportunities to revisit the vocabulary they had learned before the lesson ended. These findings indicate that the closing stage functioned as an opportunity for review and reinforcement, allowing children to recall and practice the English vocabulary introduced during the lesson..

Discussions

The findings of this study show that English teachers at Lovely Bee Montessori Preschool used structured teaching strategies during the opening, learning process, and closing stages of the lesson. These strategies were used to help children get ready to learn, stay involved during activities, and remember what they had learned. Overall, the teaching process was structured but still child-centered, where teachers support children through routines, repetition, movement, and hands-on activities.

It should be noted that the findings of this study are based on classroom observations conducted over three days. Therefore, the strategies described in this study reflect only the teaching practices observed during that period and may not represent all strategies used by the teachers in other lessons or situations.

In the opening stage, the findings showed that teachers used song and movement, questioning, and modeling. Song and movement were used to create a fun atmosphere and help children move from play time to learning time. Questioning was used to help children recall simple knowledge related to their daily life or previous lessons. Modeling was used when teachers showed examples before asking children to respond or follow instructions.

These strategies are important because young learners usually need time to adjust before learning starts. Songs and movement help children focus and feel comfortable, while questioning helps activate their memory. Modeling is also important because children at this age learn better by observing first. Similar findings were reported by Febyawati et al. (2021), who found that Montessori teachers use songs, simple questions, and modeling to support children's spoken English. Kai Jian & Syahtia Pane (2020) also found that teachers connect learning with children's daily experiences and use simple language to help understanding.

During the learning process, the findings showed that teachers used modeling and demonstration, hands-on learning, repetition, and gesture and visual support. Teachers first showed examples before children tried the activities by themselves. Children learned English through direct activities using Montessori materials such as tracing letters and sensory tasks. Repetition was used many times to help children remember vocabulary and instructions. Teachers also used gestures, body language, and visual materials to help children understand meaning, especially when verbal explanation was not enough.

These findings show that English learning in this classroom is based on experience and practice rather than explanation only. Children learn by doing, seeing, and repeating, which makes English easier to understand. Repetition is important because young learners need more than one exposure before they can remember new words. Gesture and visual support also help children connect language with real meaning in the classroom.

This is in line with Apriliana et al. (2024), who found that Montessori teachers use modeling, repetition, and hands-on activities to support children's English learning. The classroom practices observed in this study are also consistent with Montessori theory, which emphasizes learning through concrete experiences and active engagement with learning materials. According to Montessori, children learn most effectively when they interact directly with their environment and participate in meaningful activities. The use of modeling, repetition, and hands-on activities observed in this study reflects these Montessori principles and supports children's English language development.

In the closing stage, the findings showed that teachers used question and answer activities and vocabulary repetition. Children were asked simple questions about what they had learned, and they repeated vocabulary with the teacher before going home. This helped children recall and strengthen their understanding of English words.

This stage is important because it helps children review what they learned during the lesson. Even though it looks simple, repetition and review help children remember vocabulary better and build confidence in using English. This finding is also supported by Apriliana et al. (2024), who stated that repetition and review activities help young learners retain vocabulary and improve learning outcomes.

Overall, the findings show that English teaching in this Montessori preschool is structured, consistent, and supportive of children's learning needs. Teachers use song and movement, questioning, modeling, hands-on activities, repetition, and visual support across all stages of the lesson. However, since this study was based on a limited observation period of three days, the findings should be understood as an initial representation of classroom practices rather than a complete picture of all teaching strategies used. These strategies are in line with previous studies and Montessori principles, which emphasize learning through experience, repetition, and independence.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that English teachers at Lovely Bee Montessori Preschool use structured teaching strategies in three stages of learning: opening, main activities, and closing. These strategies help children to be ready to learn, stay involved during the lesson, and remember what they have learned in a simple and natural way.

In the opening stage, teachers use song and movement, questioning, and modeling. These activities help children focus, feel comfortable, and prepare for learning English. Children also become more active because they are invited to respond and follow simple examples from the teacher.

During the main activities, teachers use modeling and demonstration, hands-on learning, repetition, and gesture or visual support. These strategies help children learn English through direct experience. Children learn by seeing, doing, and repeating activities using Montessori materials, which makes English easier to understand and remember. Gestures and visual support also help children understand meaning even when they are still new to English.

In the closing stage, teachers use question and answer activities and vocabulary repetition. These activities help children review the lesson, recall vocabulary, and strengthen their memory before the class ends.

However, the findings of this study are based on classroom observations conducted over three days. Therefore, the results only represent the teaching strategies observed during that period and may not show all strategies used by the teachers in other lessons or situations. Overall, the study concludes that structured and consistent teaching strategies in a Montessori preschool classroom support children's English learning by helping them learn step by step through routine, repetition, and hands-on experiences.

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