

Journey of language instruction: An autoethnographic study on teaching English to young learners in Indonesian home-schooling environments

Abdul Hamid Aly¹, Erfan Efendi^{2*}

¹Department of English Language Education, University of Pakuan, Bogor, Indonesia.

²Department of Management, University of Islam Malang, Malang, Indonesia.

*Corresponding author:

erfanefendi@unisma.ac.id

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Abstract

This autoethnographic study explores the dynamics of teaching English to two homeschool students, aged 6 and 13, within their home environment, focusing on personalized instructional strategies. The researcher, serving as both teacher and observer, examines the interplay of the students' unique learning styles, preferred teaching resources, and attention spans. Student A, a kinesthetic learner, benefits from interactive games and physical activities, while Student B, a visual learner, excels with structured lessons and visual aids. The use of diverse online resources, such as British Council and Duolingo, enhances engagement through gamification and multimedia elements. The study highlights the necessity of adaptable teaching methods to address varying attention spans, with Student A requiring frequent activity changes and Student B benefiting from periodic breaks during in-depth exploration. The findings underscore the effectiveness of tailored educational approaches in fostering student engagement and learning outcomes. By documenting and reflecting on these experiences, the study contributes to the broader field of educational research, advocating for the integration of personalized and technologically enriched teaching strategies in homeschooling settings. This research affirms the transformative potential of individualized instruction in nurturing academic growth and a lifelong love for learning.

Keywords: Autoethnography, homeschooling, English for Young Learners, personalized instruction, educational technology.

INTRODUCTION

The number of home-schooling students in Indonesia reached 828,065 in 2020, highlighting the significant presence of this educational approach in the country. Despite the substantial number of home-schooled students, research specifically focused on teachers' experiences and methods in teaching English Language Teaching (ELT) to these students remains scarce. This lack of research presents a gap in understanding how English is taught in home-schooling environments and the unique challenges and strategies involved. Existing studies on home-schooling in Indonesia have

largely concentrated on broader aspects or specific contexts. For instance, (Saputro et al., 2022) examined the teaching of English during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing insights into the adaptations and challenges educators faced during this unprecedented time. However, their study did not exclusively focus on home-schooled students, instead addressing the general landscape of English teaching during the pandemic. Similarly, other research, such as that by (Picauly et al., 2023), has focused more on the student aspect of home-schooling, exploring their experiences, outcomes, and educational needs. While these studies contribute valuable knowledge about the home-schooled student population, they do not delve deeply into the instructional strategies and experiences of teachers who work with these students, particularly in the context of ELT. Given the increasing prevalence of home-schooling in Indonesia, research that investigates the teacher's perspective in teaching English to home-schooled students is crucial. Such research could provide a comprehensive understanding of the teaching methodologies adapted for home-schooling, the challenges teachers face, and the effectiveness of different instructional strategies in fostering English language proficiency among home-schooled students. Furthermore, understanding the support systems available to teachers and students in home-schooling settings could offer deeper insights into the overall educational experience. This knowledge could inform the development of targeted professional development programs for teachers, the creation of specialized instructional resources, and the establishment of support networks to enhance the effectiveness of ELT in home-schooling contexts. By addressing this research gap, educators, policymakers, and researchers can work towards improving the quality of English education for home-schooled students in Indonesia. This, in turn, could ensure that these students receive a well-rounded and effective education, preparing them for future academic and professional success.

Learning English is crucial as it enables students to access information from around the world, providing them with a wealth of knowledge and resources. Early exposure to English leads to better language acquisition and proficiency, as young learners can more easily absorb grammar and pronunciation. This early start enhances cognitive development, improves problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and builds a strong foundation for future learning. Furthermore, English proficiency opens up more educational and career opportunities, as it is often a key requirement in many fields. For home-schooled students in Indonesia, prioritizing early English education can ensure they are well-prepared for future academic and professional success. Teaching English for young learners is crucial due to the significant benefits of early language acquisition (LA). Introducing English instruction at a young age enhances pronunciation, comprehension, and communicative competence. Early exposure to English language learning establishes a vigorous foundation for future linguistic proficiency, academic achievement, and cognitive development, facilitating the acquisition of additional languages in later stages of life. (Hrdá, 2017). In addition, (Nunan, 2016) articulates that "achieving high-level mastery of a foreign language is ideal to begin studying before puberty". Research shows that the brain's plasticity, which assists in language acquisition, is significantly higher during childhood. Starting early makes it easier to attain fluency and a native-like accent compared to those who start learning a language later in life. Furthermore, (Cahyati and Madya, 2019) argue that teaching English to young learners offers remarkable benefits, particularly in enhancing their socialization process. Engaging in an English learning program assists children develop essential communication skills through interactive and collaborative activities. This early exposure to English not only boosts their language proficiency but also introduces them to diverse cultures and perspectives. As a result, children become more open-minded and empathetic, which are crucial traits for effective social interaction and personal development.

In contrast to the previous perspectives, (Farzaneh and Movahed, 2015) argue that Children's experiences and familiarity with English sounds and vocabulary may lead to some negative consequences for the learning and development of their first language (L1). This early exposure can cause language interference, where elements of the second language (L2/English) can disrupt the natural

acquisition of L1. Furthermore, (Bland, 2015) stated that “Young learners may experience a decline in proficiency in their native language as they become more fluent in English, which can lead to potential confusion between their first language (L1) and second language (L2)”. It can obstruct cognitive and linguistic development, affecting their mastery of both languages. There are also some arguments why it might be disadvantageous to teach young learners a second language during childhood, including language interference (mixing languages), developing a foreign accent, and requiring additional effort from children. Cultural inconsistencies can also occur, potentially causing confusion or a sense of disconnect. Therefore, the best time to start learning a second language should be carefully considered to balance these factors with the benefits of early exposure to a new language. Moreover, some children may lack the willingness to learn a second language. Therefore, it could potentially be unwise (Farzaneh and Movahed, 2015).

Regarding the advantages and disadvantages associated with teaching English to young learners, most of scholars advocates the cognitive benefits of bilingualism and enhanced language acquisition abilities in early childhood. They argue that starting early will benefit children’s fluency and pronunciation, while fostering cultural awareness and global communication skills. However, critics against potential drawbacks such as interference with native language development and increased academic demands. Nevertheless, the weight of scholarly opinion tends to endorse early English education as beneficial for overall linguistic and cognitive development in young learners (Nunan, 2016; Zhang, 2022).

Concerning on the significance of teaching English to young learners, significant scholarly attention has been dedicated to investigating the pedagogical intricacies of teaching English to young learners, spanning a wide array of methodologies, challenges, and effective strategies (Wulandari et al., 2020). Research in this domain has accurately examined diverse instructional approaches tailored to children’s developmental stages and linguistic capabilities. Methodologies explored include communicative language teaching, immersive language environments, and task-based learning, each designed to foster linguistic proficiency and fluency in young learners. Furthermore, studies have clarified the challenges educators face, such as maintaining engagement, adapting to diverse learning styles, and addressing cultural and linguistic diversity within classroom settings. Effective strategies identified through research encompass the integration of multimedia tools, storytelling, gamification, and differentiated instruction, aimed at enhancing learning outcomes and fostering a positive language learning environment. This comprehensive focus highlights the importance of tailored educational practices that support young learners in acquiring English proficiency effectively and confidently (The English Teacher Of Fergana Polytechnic Institute, Fergana, Uzbekistan & Ilmiddinovich, 2020). However, a notable gap exists in the literature concerning English language instruction specifically within the context of homeschooling environments. Given the rising popularity of homeschooling globally, understanding how to effectively teach English in such settings becomes increasingly significant. This research aims to explore the unique dynamics and challenges inherent in homeschooling environments, specifically from the perspective of teachers who teach English to young homeschooling students. By investigating this under-researched area, the study seeks to uncover tailored approaches, best practices, and potential obstacles in teaching English to young learners in homeschooling settings. Ultimately, the findings of this research will provide noteworthy insights for other homeschooling teachers teaching English to young learners, enhancing our understanding of language education and offering valuable guidance for educators, policymakers, and parents involved in homeschooling initiatives worldwide. The choice to pursue this study is inspired by the work of (Ryan, 2012). Through this autoethnographic inquiry, the researcher aimed to uncover nuanced insights and understand the unique challenges and dynamics inherent in teaching English to homeschooled students. Ultimately, the study sought to address the central question: "What are the experiences of a researcher teaching English to young learners in the context of homeschooling context?"

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Research Design

Previously serving as a lecturer in universities, the researcher's current role as an autoethnographer involves teaching English to children within a homeschooling environment, a situation both challenging and intriguing. This shift provides the researcher with an opportunity to explore new experiences in teaching and delve deeper into the dynamics of homeschool education. This study employs the autoethnographic method. Autoethnography involves a researcher delving into a personally significant topic within the broader social context. This method blends personal narrative with ethnographic inquiry to explore how individual stories reflect and contribute to larger cultural understandings and social dynamics (Anderson–Levitt, 2022). An autoethnography is a form of qualitative research where the author reflects deeply on their personal experiences to explore a specific cultural phenomenon. It delves into how an individual's identity and experiences are shaped through interactions within socio-cultural contexts. This methodological approach emphasizes personal reflection and narrative to uncover insights into broader cultural themes.

According to (Lapidus et al., 2013), autoethnography focuses on recounting one's learning experiences, struggles, solutions, failures, and successes within a specific socio-cultural context. It allows the author to not only understand their own experiences better but also to provide readers with an immersive journey into a particular aspect of human existence. (Ricci, 2003) argues that autoethnography offers readers a transformative experience by bridging personal narratives with broader socio-cultural insights. Through intimate reflections on their own experiences, authors illuminate universal themes, inviting readers to empathize with diverse perspectives. This emotional engagement facilitates a deeper understanding of human complexities and societal dynamics. Moreover, autoethnographies serve as educational tools, imparting valuable lessons and prompting readers to reflect critically on cultural norms and personal growth. This interactive process encourages readers to co-create meaning alongside the author, fostering a collaborative exploration of identity, community, and societal change. By challenging established narratives and highlighting marginalized voices, autoethnography not only enriches academic discourse but also promotes empathy, social awareness, and transformative learning experiences.

(Ellis, 2004) defines autoethnography as an approach to systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno). This methodological framework involves introspectively examining individual narratives within broader cultural contexts, aiming to elucidate how personal experiences shape and are shaped by cultural dynamics. (Lapidus et al., 2013) added that by intertwining personal reflections with cultural analysis, autoethnography facilitates a deeper exploration of identity formation, social interactions, and the complexities of lived experiences. Through this process, authors not only document their own stories but also contribute to a richer understanding of societal norms, values, and power structures. Thus, autoethnography serves as a transformative tool for both self-reflection and scholarly inquiry, offering insights into the intricate interplay between personal lives and cultural environments.

(Ellis et al., 2011) assert that autoethnography blends elements of autobiography, where authors reflect on their personal past, and ethnography, which involves studying cultural practices. This method aims to create rich, evocative, and detailed descriptions of lived experiences. By integrating personal narrative with cultural analysis, autoethnography not only seeks to document individual stories but also to illuminate broader societal dynamics and cultural contexts. This approach emphasizes the aesthetic and qualitative aspects of storytelling, inviting readers to engage deeply with the subjective experiences of the author while gaining insights into larger cultural phenomena. Thus, autoethnography serves as a methodological bridge between personal reflection and scholarly investigation, offering nuanced perspectives on the complexities of human identity and cultural interaction.

Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

Throughout the researcher's engagement in the classroom with young learners, a research diary was meticulously maintained. According to (Fancourt et al., 2022), a research diary serves as a comprehensive record of the research process, accompanied by reflective commentary. Over a span of four months, comprising one class-hour per week, autoethnographic accounts were crafted. The researcher documented personal emotions and insights regarding classroom teaching, revisiting and annotating these entries daily. This diary constituted the primary dataset for the study.

Reliability, validity, and generalizability are critical considerations in qualitative research. (Ellis et al., 2011) discuss these concerns in the context of ensuring the credibility, coherence, and applicability of findings. In qualitative inquiry, reliability pertains to the author's credibility, necessitating sufficient factual substantiation from personal experiences to engender belief in the narrative's authenticity. Validity concerns the portrayal of verisimilitude, where the narrative evokes a sense of believability and resonance with readers, inviting them into the subjective world of the author. Finally, generalizability in autoethnography is achieved through the reader's comparative reflections on similarities and differences between their own experiences and those presented, thereby extending insights to broader contexts (Ellis et al., 2011).

To enhance the reliability and validity of his autoethnographic study, the researcher solicited feedback from a professor experienced in teaching "Teaching English to Young Learners I and II" courses. This collaborative process involved sharing journal entries and their analyses, ensuring that the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the teaching experiences were rigorously reviewed and validated within the academic community.

Subject of the research

The subject of this research focuses on the unique dynamics and challenges inherent in homeschooling environments, specifically in the context of teaching English to young learners. The study examines these dynamics from the perspective of teachers and aims to uncover tailored approaches, best practices, and potential obstacles.

In this research, there are two primary subjects referred to as Student A and Student B. These students represent young learners in a homeschooling environment who are being taught English. The investigation into their experiences, learning processes, and interactions with their teachers provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of homeschooling practices and the specific challenges faced in teaching English to young learners in such settings.

Student A

Student A is a six-year-old boy who exhibits a strong preference for playing rather than studying. His personality is lively and energetic, characterized by his love for talking and constant movement. This high level of activity presents a challenge for traditional teaching methods such as using textbooks or simply watching educational videos, which do not capture his interest or sustain his attention. To effectively teach Student A, the teacher must adopt a creative and dynamic approach. Recognizing his need for physical engagement, the teacher integrates learning with physical activities and games. For instance, language lessons might involve interactive games that require him to move around, such as scavenger hunts for vocabulary words or action-based storytelling where he can act out parts of the story. These methods not only cater to his kinesthetic learning style but also make the learning process enjoyable and effective. By aligning teaching strategies with Student A's natural tendencies, the teacher can foster a more conducive learning environment, ensuring that the student remains engaged and motivated while acquiring new language skills.

Student B	<p>Student B Student B is a young learner who finds it easier to learn from texts, videos, and websites like British Council or Cambridge Learn English. He responds well to these resources and also enjoys learning through educational games. His ability to learn quickly and his cooperative nature make him an easier student to teach. Student B excels in listening and reading, demonstrating strong comprehension skills in these areas. However, he dislikes handwriting but can effectively arrange sentences and type text on a laptop. Despite having the ability to speak English, he lacks confidence in speaking, which poses a challenge for his overall language development. As a result, one of the teacher's primary focuses is to improve Student B's speaking skills. This may involve creating a supportive and encouraging environment where he feels comfortable practicing spoken English, using activities that gradually build his confidence, such as role-playing, conversational exercises, and presentations. By addressing this specific area, the teacher aims to help Student B become a more well-rounded and confident English speaker.</p>
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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

The researcher (autoethnographer) is examining the teaching conditions and experiences while teaching English to two homeschooled students in their home. The researcher serves as both the teacher and the observer, reflecting on their teaching practices, interactions, and the unique dynamics of the homeschooling environment. The participants include a 6-year-old child at an early stage of formal education and a 13-year-old adolescent with more advanced educational needs and experience. Each student receives individualized attention from the teacher in one-on-one instruction sessions conducted twice a week for each student, providing a consistent yet flexible schedule that supports ongoing learning and reinforcement of concepts.

The classes take place in the students' home, creating a comfortable and familiar learning environment that influences the dynamics of teaching and learning, offering a unique context compared to traditional classroom settings. The home provides a personalized space for each student, potentially filled with resources and materials that align with their interests and learning styles. The teacher employs a student-centered approach, adapting lessons to the developmental stages and individual needs of each student. This method is particularly effective in a one-on-one setting where the teacher can closely monitor and respond to the students' progress and challenges. For the 6-year-old, lessons might include more interactive and playful methods, such as storytelling, games, and hands-on activities to maintain engagement and facilitate learning. For the 13-year-old, the instruction may involve more complex texts, critical thinking exercises, and discussions to develop higher-order skills (Leona et al., 2021).

The significant age difference between the two students requires the teacher to switch between vastly different teaching strategies and materials, ensuring each student's educational needs are met. As an autoethnographer, the researcher must balance the roles of teacher and observer, maintaining the quality of instruction while also critically reflecting on the teaching experience and documenting observations and insights. Given the home setting, there may be a higher level of parental involvement and oversight, influencing the teaching dynamics and requiring effective communication and collaboration between the teacher and parents. The researcher continuously reflects on their teaching practices, the effectiveness of the one-on-one instruction, the impact of the home environment on learning, and the interactions with each student. These reflections are documented in a detailed narrative that explores the personal and professional experiences of the teacher, providing insights into the unique challenges and rewards of homeschooling from the perspective of an educator. By combining the roles of teacher and researcher, the autoethnographer aims to contribute to the understanding of homeschooling practices, the effectiveness of individualized instruction, and the complexities of teaching in a non-traditional educational setting.

Theme 1: Students Learning Style and Teaching Strategy

The 6-year-old, referred to as Student A, is characterized by a strong preference for kinesthetic learning. He thrives on activities that require active involvement, particularly enjoying English online games that demand participation and engagement. This student's aversion to reading and watching learning videos necessitates a teaching approach that avoids passive learning methods and instead incorporates movement and interactive elements. By integrating games and hands-on activities into lessons, the teacher can maintain Student A's interest and enhance his learning experience (Behl et al., 2022).

"During our lessons, I noticed that Student A becomes noticeably more engaged when we play educational games compared to when I introduce traditional reading or video-based learning materials. His excitement and participation levels soar during these interactive sessions, underscoring the importance of catering to his kinesthetic learning style. When I attempted to use storybooks or educational videos, his attention would wane, and he would become restless, clearly showing his preference for activities that require physical involvement." (December, 2023)

One particularly successful session involved an English game that required Student A to act out different verbs. This not only helped him learn new vocabulary but also allowed him to expend energy and stay engaged. The physical activity seemed to reinforce his memory of the words far better than passive learning methods had. Observing this, I have adapted my lesson plans to include more such activities, ensuring that learning remains a dynamic and enjoyable process for him." (December, 2023)

In contrast, the 13-year-old, referred to as Student B, prefers visual learning and enjoys tackling more analytical and complex topics. This student excels in listening and reading skills and has a talent for arranging words to form coherent sentences. However, Student B lacks confidence in speaking, which requires careful attention from the teacher. While Student B also enjoys learning English through games, the educational approach must include visual aids and structured activities that cater to his analytical nature. Incorporating debates, visual presentations, and complex problem-solving tasks can help engage this student effectively.

Student B's proficiency in reading and listening is impressive, but his hesitation in speaking reveals a gap in confidence. During our sessions, I try to create a supportive environment that encourages him to practice speaking without fear of making mistakes. Visual aids and structured activities seem to resonate well with him, enhancing his understanding of complex topics. For instance, using diagrams and graphic organizers helps him break down and understand intricate grammatical structures. This method not only clarifies difficult concepts but also provides a visual reference that he can rely on. (October, 2023)

Despite his initial reluctance to speak, Student B shows significant improvement when we incorporate discussion-based activities that allow him to express his ideas in a low-pressure environment. For example, after reading a passage, I encourage him to answer quiz related to the passage and discuss the result in English. This practice helps him gradually upgrade his reading comprehension and build confidence in his speaking abilities. Moreover, incorporating topics of personal interest into our discussions, such as his favorite books or games, has made him more willing to participate actively. Recognizing his analytical nature, I often pose challenging questions that require him to think critically and articulate his responses, further boosting his confidence and speaking skills. (November, 2023)

Balancing these diverse characteristics and learning styles requires the teacher to be highly adaptable and responsive. For Student A, lessons are crafted to be dynamic and multisensory, focusing on active participation through games and physical activities that cater to a young child's natural learning inclinations. For Student B, the focus shifts to fostering analytical skills and intellectual engagement through structured lessons, visual aids, and interactive discussions that challenge and inspire, while also providing opportunities to build confidence in speaking through supportive and

encouraging practice.

Adapting my teaching strategies to meet the unique needs of both students has been a rewarding challenge. Observing their progress and tailoring my approach based on their responses allows me to create a more effective and engaging learning experience. This process of continuous reflection and adaptation not only benefits the students but also enriches my understanding of personalized education in a homeschooling setting. I have learned that flexibility and responsiveness are key to addressing the diverse needs of individual learners. (January, 2024)

Moreover, the intimate setting of homeschooling allows me to develop a deeper understanding of each student's personality and learning style, enabling more personalized and effective teaching. For instance, with Student A, I have discovered that incorporating elements of play into our lessons not only keeps him engaged but also fosters a positive attitude towards learning. With Student B, I have learned the importance of providing a safe space for him to practice speaking, which has gradually helped him overcome his fear of making mistakes. (February, 2024)

As an autoethnographer, the researcher must continually adapt their teaching strategies to meet the unique needs of each student, reflecting on how these approaches impact the students' engagement and learning outcomes. This dual role of teacher and observer allows for a deep understanding of how individual characteristics and learning styles influence educational experiences in a homeschooling setting. By documenting these observations, the researcher aims to contribute valuable insights into personalized education and the effectiveness of tailored teaching methods in fostering student growth and achievement (El-Sabagh, 2021).

"These reflections not only inform my current teaching practices but also offer valuable contributions to the broader field of educational research. Understanding how personalized approaches can enhance learning outcomes in a homeschooling environment provides important insights that can be applied in various educational settings. My ongoing documentation of these experiences aims to highlight the potential of individualized instruction in fostering both academic and personal growth among students." (February, 2024)

Theme 2: Teaching Resources

The teacher utilizes a variety of resources to enhance the learning experience for both students. While some resources are printed, the majority come from online platforms, chosen based on a thorough needs analysis for each student. Online resources such as British Council, Cambridge Learn English, Duolingo, and various YouTube videos are preferred by the students due to their engaging nature and ability to accommodate different learning styles. These resources are particularly effective in maintaining student interest and facilitating interactive learning (Li et al., 2022)

In my experience, online resources have proven to be invaluable tools in creating a dynamic and engaging learning environment. For Student A, online games that incorporate English learning elements are particularly effective. Platforms like Learn English Kids by British Council, which offers games such as Fantasy Run and Job Mixer, provide a fun and interactive way for him to learn new vocabulary and practice language skills. The gamification aspect keeps him motivated and eager to participate, transforming learning into an enjoyable activity rather than a chore.

Similarly, Student B benefits greatly from online resources that offer a mix of visual and interactive content. Websites like Cambridge Learn English and apps like Duolingo provide structured lessons that cater to his analytical mindset. Additionally, YouTube channels dedicated to English learning offer visual explanations of complex grammatical concepts, making them easier for him to grasp. Incorporating these resources into our lessons not only diversifies the learning materials but also caters to his preference for visual learning and his love for analytical challenges. (February, 2024)

The most favored resources are those that provide gamification in learning, such as online ESL games, Learn English Kids British Council, English Prodigy, and other gamified learning tools. These resources engage students through interactive elements that make learning fun and immersive (El-Sabagh, 2021); (Behnamnia et al., 2020).

One of the standout successes has been the use of English Prodigy, a platform that combines English quiz with the game. Both students respond positively to the challenges and rewards system, which keeps them motivated and actively involved in the learning process. For Student A, the physical interaction required by these games aligns perfectly with his kinesthetic learning style. For Student B, the problem-solving aspects and immediate feedback provided by these platforms help him hone his skills in a structured yet enjoyable manner.

The use of these diverse resources has highlighted the importance of tailoring educational materials to fit the individual needs and preferences of students. By leveraging a mix of printed and online resources, I am able to create a balanced and engaging curriculum that meets the varied learning styles of both students. This approach not only enhances their understanding of English but also fosters a love for learning that extends beyond the classroom. (February, 2024)

As an autoethnographer, the researcher must continually evaluate the effectiveness of these resources, adapting their use based on student feedback and observed outcomes. This ongoing process of reflection and adaptation ensures that the teaching methods remain relevant and effective, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of how diverse educational tools can support individualized learning in a homeschooling environment (Grivennaya et al., 2020).

The integration of these varied resources has provided me with invaluable insights into the impact of technology and gamification on student engagement and learning outcomes. By documenting the successes and challenges encountered in using these tools, I aim to contribute to the broader discourse on innovative teaching methods and their potential to transform education in both homeschooling and traditional settings. (February, 2024)

Theme 3: Attention Span

A third theme evident in the researcher's notes is the attention span of young learners. Despite the absence of a universally defined duration for young learners' attention spans, the researcher observed that Student A struggles to focus on a task for more than 5 to 20 minutes. In contrast, Student B can maintain focus for 15 to 30 minutes. This disparity necessitates a highly creative approach from the teacher, requiring the tailoring of activities to match the topic with a variety of engaging and dynamic methods in each session.

In my observations, Student A's limited attention span has been a significant factor in planning our sessions. After approximately 10 to 15 minutes, his focus begins to wane, and he becomes visibly restless. To counter this, I have integrated a series of short, varied activities that keep him engaged. For example, starting with a brief interactive game, followed by a hands-on activity, and then transitioning to a different game or physical exercise helps maintain his attention. This rotation of activities not only caters to his kinesthetic learning style but also prevents boredom and keeps him actively involved throughout the session.

On the other hand, Student B's ability to concentrate for longer periods allows for more in-depth exploration of topics. However, even with his extended attention span, I have found it beneficial to break down complex topics into smaller, manageable segments. This approach ensures that he remains engaged without feeling overwhelmed. Incorporating visual aids and interactive discussions within these segments further enhances his focus and understanding. Additionally, providing periodic breaks and incorporating activities that require critical thinking or problem-solving keeps him mentally stimulated and interested. (January, 2024)

The need for creative and varied teaching strategies is paramount to accommodate these differing attention spans. For Student A, lessons are structured to include frequent changes in activity and interactive elements that capture his interest. For Student B, the focus is on balancing detailed exploration of topics with engaging and intellectually stimulating activities. This tailored approach not only addresses their attention span limitations but also enhances their overall learning experience (Ruhland and Lange, 2021).

The challenge of addressing varied attention spans has pushed me to innovate and adapt continuously. With Student A, I have learned that incorporating physical movement and frequent changes in activity are essential for maintaining his engagement. For instance, a typical session might include a mix of educational games, hands-on activities, and short, interactive lessons. This variety not only keeps him focused but also makes learning enjoyable and dynamic.

For Student B, while his longer attention span allows for more detailed exploration, I have discovered that breaking down complex subjects into smaller parts and using visual aids significantly improves his comprehension and retention. Incorporating discussions and critical thinking exercises helps maintain his interest and provides opportunities for deeper engagement with the material. Additionally, periodic breaks and interactive activities prevent monotony and keep him motivated. (January, 2024)

As an autoethnographer, the researcher must reflect on these observations and continually adapt their teaching methods to effectively meet the students' needs. This iterative process of observation, reflection, and adaptation not only enhances the learning experience for the students but also provides valuable insights into the dynamics of attention span in young learners and the effectiveness of varied teaching strategies in a homeschooling environment (Szymkowiak et al., 2021).

Through this ongoing process of reflection and adaptation, I have gained a deeper understanding of how to effectively manage and cater to the diverse attention spans of young learners. Documenting these experiences allows me to share insights and strategies that can benefit other educators and contribute to the broader field of educational research. Understanding the nuances of attention span and its impact on learning is crucial for developing effective teaching methods that engage and inspire students of all ages. (January, 2024)

So, the role of the autoethnographic researcher as a teacher in a homeschooling environment involves continuously adapting and reflecting on teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of individual learners. By focusing on the unique characteristics and learning styles of the students, utilizing varied and engaging resources, and addressing the challenges of attention span, the researcher aims to create an effective and personalized educational experience. This dual role not only benefits the students but also contributes valuable insights to the broader field of education, highlighting the potential of tailored teaching methods in fostering academic and personal growth.

Discussion

This autoethnographic study delves into the nuances of teaching English to two homeschool students, aged 6 and 13, within their home environment. It underscores the dynamic interplay between the students' unique characteristics, preferred learning styles, the selection of appropriate teaching resources, and their attention spans. Such insights contribute significantly to understanding effective individualized instruction in a one-on-one educational setting.

The differentiated learning styles of the students, Student A and Student B, highlight the necessity for tailored pedagogical approaches. Student A's preference for kinesthetic learning, where physical activities and interactive games are pivotal, resonates with findings that such methods enhance engagement and retention among younger learners (El-Sabagh, 2021). This approach is crucial as it aligns with the belief that active involvement promotes deeper learning experiences through sensory engagement (Zhou et al., 2020). Conversely, Student B's inclination towards visual learning and analytical tasks reflects the scholarly perspective emphasizing the effectiveness of visual aids and structured problem-solving activities in fostering comprehension and application (Li et al., 2022).

The utilization of diverse teaching resources, predominantly online platforms like British Council and Duolingo, underscores the integration of technology to enhance learning experiences. These platforms offer interactive and engaging content that caters to various learning styles, aligning with Mayer's multimedia learning theory that posits the combination of text, visuals, and interactive elements enhances learning outcomes (Behl et al., 2022). Furthermore, the incorporation of gamification in educational tools, as observed with platforms like Learn English Kids by British Council and English Prodigy, is supported by research advocating for gamified learning as a motivational strategy that increases engagement and knowledge retention (Behl et al., 2022).

Attention span differences between Student A and Student B also play a crucial role in shaping instructional strategies. Student A's shorter attention span of 10 to 20 minutes necessitates frequent changes in activities to sustain engagement and prevent distraction (Patanduk et al., 2023). In contrast, Student B's ability to focus for longer intervals, 20 to 30 minutes, allows for deeper exploration of topics with periodic breaks to maintain concentration. These findings highlight the importance of flexible teaching methods that accommodate varying attention spans, as advocated by cognitive load theory, which posits that optimizing learning requires balancing cognitive demands with appropriate instructional strategies (Sweller, 2020). This autoethnographic study provides valuable insights into the efficacy of personalized teaching strategies in homeschooling environments. By examining the intricate dynamics of students' characteristics, learning styles, resource selection, and attention spans, the study underscores the significance of adaptive and responsive teaching methods. These findings contribute to ongoing discussions in educational research, offering practical implications for educators to enhance learning outcomes through tailored instructional approaches that cater to individual student needs.

CONCLUSION

This autoethnographic study illuminates the critical role of personalized teaching strategies within homeschooling environments. By navigating the complexities of individual student characteristics, learning styles, resource integration, and attention span considerations, the research underscores the effectiveness of adaptive pedagogical approaches. The study's findings resonate with scholarly perspectives on educational practices, emphasizing the importance of tailoring instruction to meet diverse learning needs. Insights into kinesthetic and visual learning preferences align with established theories on active learning and multimedia integration, advocating for the use of interactive tools and varied instructional methods to enhance engagement and comprehension. Moreover, the integration of technology and gamification in educational resources reflects current trends in educational technology, showcasing their potential to motivate students and foster deeper learning experiences. These insights are pivotal for educators seeking to optimize learning outcomes through innovative and responsive teaching methodologies that accommodate individual learning styles and attention spans. By documenting these experiences and reflecting on their implications, this study contributes valuable insights to educational research and practice. It underscores the ongoing evolution of educational strategies in adapting to the unique needs of students in homeschooling settings. Ultimately, the study affirms the transformative potential of personalized education in nurturing academic growth and fostering a lifelong love for learning among students.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The author of this study declares that they have no affiliation or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honorarium; educational grants; participation in speaker's bureaus; membership; employment; consulting; stock ownership, or other equity interests; and expert testimony or patent licensing arrangements), or non financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

DECLARATION

The authors of this study certify that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honorarium; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The dataset generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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