



# Teaching Chinese Language Pronunciation for Early Childhood Education in Jakarta

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## Abstract

Chinese language is one of the languages that have many users in the world. Chinese language is also one language that is difficult to learn because the pronunciation and the tone are different from other types of languages in the world. Moreover, the forms of writing, in Chinese called Hanzi, are not in the forms of Latin alphabetic. Teachers are the important factor in teaching learning process. In teaching process, teachers need specific method or technique. Particularly in teaching Chinese for early childhood education, in fact, the students are not quite fluent to speak Indonesian language as their first language. As a result, it may become a constraint to expect they will be fluent speakers in Chinese. This current research was conducted since methods in teaching Chinese particularly for early childhood education are rarely found. This research then explored the methods of teaching Chinese used for early childhood education. The significance of the research was to generate method of teaching Chinese particularly in pronunciation for students between the age of 4 - 7 years old whose first language is Indonesian. The objective of this research is to find out the effective teaching Chinese Language method that is used for early childhood education in Indonesia. The research method was participant classroom action, in which conducted a research during 1 semester from 10 January 2017 to 30 June 2017 at KSPA Kindergarten Jakarta. The respondents were 20 kindergarten students of 10 girls and 10 boys between 4 - 7 years old and 2 teachers. The data were then analyzed qualitatively by describing classroom observations. The result of this research is that Chinese teaching method suitable for beginner level for Indonesian speakers in Indonesia is using song, poetry, storytelling and question and answer technique. The use of this method has an impact on the increasing interest of students in learning.

## Subject Areas

Education

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## Keywords

Study Chinese Language, Early Childhood Methods, Pronunciation Technique, Fluent Speaking Chinese

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## 1. Introduction

According to early childhood program by Minister of education in 1996, Early Childhood Education serves to help the growth and spiritual development of children aged 4 to 7 years outside the family environment before the students go to elementary school to assist the basic education of children toward the development of attitudes, knowledge, skills and creativity that children need to adapt with the environment. Early childhood education consists of kindergartens, playgroups and child care. This is determined by the Minister of Education. Supervision and guidance of the organizer was conducted by the Minister of education in Indonesia of early childhood education department.

Children aged 4 to 7 years have great intelligence. They have a great sense of curiosity and very high information-absorbing abilities [1]. This age is a good time to learn a foreign language, especially Chinese language. In 50 years of Indonesia's education development, Indonesia's education department stated that currently we pay less attention to early childhood education, whereas that age where children have brain cells developing nerve and have good ability and strong memory then to learn something new is the most appropriate time. Especially familiarizing children with listening to foreign language, starting from the listening can be continued by pronouncing foreign language.

Besides children at this age have great intelligence. The teachers and school also play the most important factor in teaching learning process. In this process, they need to select methods and techniques to teach. Particularly in teaching Chinese language, Chinese language has different pronunciation compared to Indonesian language, and a few children at this age have not had a good Indonesian pronunciation. This also becomes a problem in learning Chinese language.

Chinese language is highly different from other foreign language. It has a higher difficulty level in teaching. It is because the pronunciation is different from Indonesian language. Furthermore, the forms of writing in Chinese use Hanzi instead of Latin alphabets.

The difference in pronunciation and forms of writing becomes a great constraint to learn Chinese for both adult and children. As a consequence, determination is needed when learning Chinese. However, for children, the constraints may come twice. They, between the ages of 4 - 7 years old and still unable to read and write, found it difficult to understand and use *Pinyin* (Chinese alphabet). Therefore, it is necessary to reduce the constraints and barriers for them when learning Chinese; moreover, the materials should be short and precise.

Communicative approach in teaching, easier to understand in teaching Chinese in Indonesia, is to teach students various language variables used in various

contexts to help students communicate fluently in Chinese [2]. Teaching language is expected to meet the needs of society by learning the language components, such as grammar convention, vocabulary, and pronunciation. However, teaching Chinese for young children should also have a level of student proficiency. Materials should be reduced; it only focuses on teaching, listening, speaking and vocabulary. It aims at improving student's skill in speaking to build short sentence and listening a set of words. By focusing on these, the students are seemingly not confused and overburdened [3].

Learning Chinese in early childhood education has different ways in the learning process and must be adjusted to the ability of each child. So this research entitled Teaching Chinese Language Pronunciation for Early Childhood Education in Jakarta.

The problem in this research is how Chinese teaching methods should be used in early childhood education in Jakarta with a background of students who have no Chinese language base. The purpose of this research is to know the effective teaching method used in early childhood education class in Jakarta.

The objective of this research is to find out the effective teaching Chinese Language method that is used for early childhood education in Indonesia.

## 2. Literature Review

A word Chinese, in English and Indonesian, refers to several terms to spoken Chinese language. In a specific term, Chinese means Mandarin and Chinese that are similar standard languages based on spoken language (Beifanghua). Mandarin is spoken language in Republic of China; meanwhile Chinese is national spoken language in Taiwan. The former is usually called Huayu, as one of four national languages in Singapore [4].

In a wide definition, Chinese refers to Beifanghua that is meant "conversation from the North" which covers various dialects of Chinese conversations used by local language speakers in the most area of the north and southwest of Republic of China. It then becomes a base of Mandarin and Chinese. Beifanghua has more speakers than other languages dan consists of various types.

Chinese language (汉语/漢語, 华语/華語, or 中文; *hànyǔ*, *huáyǔ*, atau *zhōngwén*) is a part of Sino-Tibet Language group [5]. Though Chinese people consider various spoken language of Chinese as one single language, the types of those spoken languages are equals as various types of old Roman.

Approximately one fifth of world population speaks Chinese as home/first language. Chinese Language is the language with the most speakers over the world. It is also as official language in China.

By the growth of world population, Chinese language is then used in many countries around the world. As the matter of that fact that in this digital era, China has become a center of trend and trade over the world, Chinese language proficiency can be one of ability in international business. As a consequence, teaching Chinese at schools in Indonesia has become trending. Chinese language

classes are not only opened for elementary schools, secondary schools and university education but early childhood education as well. Teaching Chinese language for young children, of course, brings different process of learning which is met to the student ability.

The age under 5 years old is the critical period in developing character and personality. In addition, children also develop their intelligences before they get 5 years old [6]. They have a great potential and intelligence. However, most parents and teachers can only teach a little to them. Actually, they can be not only easy to learn. They have high curiosity and ability to get information. People are less attention to education for young children. Indeed, they have million cells in their brains and have a good ability, and have a good memory [7]. As a result, education that focuses on building values of humanity, development of intelligence, character, moral and love in general is highly necessary since early childhood.

As a consequence, early childhood education cannot be neglected and abandoned. Moreover, it should be started from a very beginning time when they are still in pregnancy period [8]. Early childhood education is to help development of children physically and mentally outside home environment before taking elementary schools. Its objectives are to develop attitude, skill and creation needed by children to make adjustment in their environment and to support next development stages. Units of early childhood education can be kindergarten, play group, day care, and others mandated by ministry of education. Surveillance and development are also held by ministry of education.

The pronunciation is a certain way of producing sound that emphasizes the sound received by the listener [9]. The Chinese teaching method of pronunciation in early childhood education differs from adult teaching, and the use of alphabet is not used.

The use of Chinese language teaching methods as appropriate foreign language according consists of five methods:

1. provide the right learning topic for children;
2. must be in accordance with the scope of the child in terms of the teacher's speech;
3. add learning materials that fit the curriculum;
4. use props that match the learning;
5. use musical instruments or songs to attract students' learning [10].

Learning vocabulary using distributive method is more suitable for Indonesia because the background of students is not familiar with Chinese language [11]. The process of learning to teach Chinese for early childhood education is better by using teaching methods that songs and poetry because this methods can attract students to study [12].

### 3. Methods

The method used in this research was participant classroom action research, in

which was conducted for one semester, from 10 January 2017 to 30 June 2017 at KSPA Kindergarten Jakarta. The concept of classroom action research in this research using Kurt Lewin methods is in a cycle consisting of four steps: 1) planning, 2) action or acting, 3) observing, and 4) reflection (Lewin, 1990). The respondents were 20 kindergarten students of 10 girls and 10 boys between 4 - 7 years old and 2 teachers. The research method used was descriptive and qualitative that describes the situations that occurred in the classroom when the learning was going on with one kind method. The data collected were from observation, questionnaire, and interview.

Data measurement done in this study employed Likert-scale format, as follows.

### Assessment on The Teacher's Teaching Methods Results

Component	Success	Good	Very Success
Using Poetry			
Using Song			
Story Telling Methods			
Question and Answer Methods			

### 3.1. Results

The first step is planning: the Chinese teaching for young children focused more on the introduction and familiarization to the language. However, the introduction still paid attention on grammar rules in composing sentences. Grammar rules were not explicitly taught to the students. Nonetheless, short sentences in simple conversations were applied, such as using particles in connecting words or phrases.

Teaching Chinese language is expected to meet the needs of society and suitable to language etiquette of young children. Thus, materials used in the teaching activities for Chinese pronunciation program were made to be in the line with the scheduled schools system and program. The selected topics and sub-topics have been consulted by the teachers and the school principal. It is because the curriculum about teaching Chinese language program mandated by the Ministry of Education and Culture is still unavailable. In fact, the program is one of the school authorities. As a result, the Chinese language teaching as a subject is adjusted to the curriculum and syllabus from other languages. In the research place, the curriculum was adopted from English program.

As a matter of fact, early childhood education did not focus on teaching reading and writing. In teaching Chinese language, listening and speaking become the needs. Therefore, the most appropriate method for the children is listening how the words/sentences are pronounced and repeated. Before that, the students need to learn some simple sentences to use in daily activities with Chinese language.

1. 你好吗? “how are you?”
2. 我很好 “I am fine”
3. 谢谢 “Thank you”
4. 不用谢 “You’re welcome”
5. 再见 “See you”
6. 我要喝水 “I want to drink”
7. 我要洗手 “I want to wash hand”
8. 我要吃饭 “I want to eat”

The second step is action: it emphasized on speaking and listening objectives to make the students fluent to pronounce short sentences and listen to words given. Moreover, it also aimed at reducing and decreasing their confusion and burden during the learning sessions.

Teaching pronunciation was done by asking the students to pronounce one new word, such as using picture. They were assigned to utter the Chinese word based on the given picture. Furthermore, singing a Chinese song and reciting a short Chinese poem were also applied.

Teaching speaking skill for young children can be done by pronouncing the words and translate them into mother language. Moreover, the other method is direct questioning to the individual student.

In Chinese language, there is tone usage to differ meanings. Consequently, teaching tone has become prominent in pronunciation and speaking. Teaching tone effectively to the students is by giving the stress to each utterance.

In practical activity, teaching pronunciation was conducted by delivering several teaching speaking methods formulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture [13]. This was taken for two reasons. Firstly, the methods are suitable and appropriate for the students. Besides, they are already well known by the teachers. The methods are:

1. Storytelling method done by telling stories from Chinese children’s story books. The stories used were: Three Little Pigs, Jack and Beanstalk, Snow White and many more. Storytelling using teaching aids was chosen to get the students’ attention when listening. The aids consist of picture cards and props. This was done because they were more interested when listening to the story while looking at existing tools. It was applied by giving stories in the books in the front of the students. By using this method, they can see the picture on the books while listening to the stories.

#### 2. Thematic Conversation Method

It was conducted by giving a conversation to the students. The themes are suitable to the given materials, so that the lessons are more interesting. Sometimes it was completed by pictures, songs, or poems. One of the examples of poems is as follows:

拍皮球 “Play ball”  
 一二三, 三二一 “1 2 3, 3 2 1”  
 一二三四五六七 “1 2 3 4 5 6 7”

四五六，七八九 “4 5 6, 7 8 9”

大家一起拍皮球 “together we play ball”

The poem is about numbers and playing football. So, when they learn to spell this poem, they will learn numbers in Chinese language and how to pronounce it.

### 3. Question-answer Method

It was applied at the end of the session as closing activity taking 10 minutes. The question is about words in Chinese language that have been studied. This method has two techniques.

a) Whole-class question-answer technique. It is when the teacher gives a clue or picture, the students respond or answer it together. For instance, when discussing the word 人 *ren* “people”, it was showed a picture of people. They are asked to answer it in Chinese language or the teacher will give them a blank paper and say one Chinese word and then the students will answer with picture they draw in the blank paper already given by the teacher.

b) Individual question-answer. It is done by using distraction to the students. For example, the teacher gives assignment (such as dotting the Chinese alphabet). While the students are doing their assignment, the teacher comes to them and asks some questions, such as what are you doing? What picture is it? What word is it? They are also assigned to answer the questions correctly. The teacher will ask them using Chinese and English language. The students can answer it by using Chinese or English language.

The third step was observing the process of teaching and learning in the classroom whether it is comfortable and interesting so that the students will enter the classroom with enthusiasm. By using the appropriate teaching methods and tailored to the thinking power of each child, then the language learning can be implemented maximally. The teaching materials play an important role in the progress of the students' foreign language learning. They play role on boosting interest and decreasing the students' learning reluctance. The classroom should be arranged neatly in accordance with the teaching methods used. For example, when preparing the classroom layout, it is all the students gathered in a circle with the chair facing the teacher, so that they are more able to observe clearly the story brought without any complaints being not able to see the picture.

The fourth step is an assessment without a written exam for Chinese lessons in early childhood education. The learning process as well as the students' learning outcomes was assessed based on the teacher's observation on the progress of their skill development in Chinese language pronunciation. The assessment system is done in two ways, as follows.

1. Assess the students directly one by one at the end of each month before going to new subject matter. Then the results of each month's tests are combined and summarized together. All of them are then processed to be written in report cards.

2. See the results of their works in the portfolio provided by the faculty. Port-

folio contains how to write and practice writing Chinese characters, coloring and determining the image. The material of the portfolio is chosen on the basis of the learning topic at that time which is known and approved by the school.

From the two ways above, it can be seen that the results of learning Chinese language every semester. The students' learning evaluation was done by the Chinese teacher and assisted by the classroom teacher as supervisor. The evaluation results for one semester were summarized into one and then given to the parents of the students. The results consist of speaking, listening and writing skills. It will be in the form of a book.

### 3.2. Conclusion

In Indonesian context, the method for teaching Chinese language to beginner-level students was using songs, poems, storytelling and question-answer techniques. These methods can attract their learning interest. The songs used in the classroom should be familiar and have educational values. Moreover, the selected poems have to be attractive, entertaining, and easy to memorize (in addition, they cover the use of poem, tone, and structure). During the session of singing a song and reciting poem, Chinese pronunciation will be easier to learn. Indonesian children songs can also be translated into Chinese language; and used for teaching materials. Songs were effective teaching materials.

Pictorial story used in the class is a classical story that is commonly popular among people and aired on television. The last is question-answer method that is asking some questions related to the discussed materials and emphasizing on vocabulary building. This session can be equipped by picture cards or games so that the students do not feel stressful during the learning session.

The selection of teaching materials should be appropriate. The teacher should make a selection of materials based on scientific consideration before, such as taking into account the number of new vocabularies that will be studied, paying attention to the language terms, paying attention to the students' psychology and background, and paying attention to the level of students' language proficiency. Thus, the teacher needs training required improving the teaching ability such as Chinese language training teacher, Teaching Chinese language workshop, Teaching Chinese seminar or postgraduate school.

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