



ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN AN INDONESIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL:
TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were (1) to find out the current teachers’ perspectives of English language teaching (ELT) in an Indonesian primary school, and (2) to find out challenges in teaching English in an elementary school. The sample consisted of four teachers who teach English in an Indonesian primary schools. The data on of the interviews with lecturers were analyzed using thematic approach. The results of the research showed that (1) teachers used textbook as the only main resources for teaching; 2) they encountered also a number of challenges including limited availability of teaching materials, large class size, limited allocation of time, and difficulty to find appropriate teaching methods.

Keyword: *English Language Teaching, Elementary School, Teaching Method*

INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this research were (1) to find out the current teachers’ perspectives of English language teaching (ELT) in an Indonesian primary school, and (2) to find out challenges in teaching English in an elementary school.

The growing demand of English language instruction among the Indonesian population and unsatisfactory result of current English competence are the main reasons, why English should be taught at elementary level. Similarly, a number of current researchers suggested that English should be taught at elementary school starting from kindergarten (Department of National Education, 1994; Richards, 2006).

In Asian context, the establishment of AFTA (Asian Free Trade Area) started from 2003 has led to a dramatic change in Indonesia. This has created enormous

demand by Indonesia students to learn English as international language. People realize the difficulty in getting employment and the increase of high competition in the job market require high quality and professionalism (Rudder, 2006). Responding to the global and national changes, the government of Indonesia put English as one of the local content materials at elementary school. Department of National Education (1994) officially placed English as one of the local content material in elementary school stated that the aim of the English taught as local content material is to enable students to read, understand, pronounce, and write a number of English vocabulary and simple sentences and phrases in English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study used Brown’s concept (2001) and a number of research findings relating to the need and practice of teaching English at elementary school (Rudder, 2006;

Hidayat, 2006). Brown (2001, p. 87) said that "teaching English to school-age children, therefore, is not merely a matter of setting them loose on a plethora of authentic language task in the classroom. To successfully teach children a language requires specific skills and intuitions that differ from those appropriate for adult teaching". Brown (2001, pp. 87-90) identified several factors affecting language development in children: (1) intellectual development, the children up to the age eleven years old are still in the stage of intellectual development, as Piaget in Brown (2001) called "concrete operation"; (2) authentic span, which means that children at this stage tend to capture their immediate interest around them; (3) sensory input, where children tends to prefer physical activity, visual activities such as using picture, music; (4) affective factors refers to egos of the children are still being formed, and therefore their emotion tends to be not stable; (5) authentic meaningful language deals with the children are focused on what language can be used around them.

Hidayat (2006) who investigated the elementary school concluded that factors affecting the ELT in elementary level are teachers, material, classroom management, class physical condition, class room climate, and students' motivation. In addition, he added that teaching English at elementary school can be very challenging including insufficient qualified teachers, lack of financial rewards, and unavailability of standard curriculum. Therefore, teaching in

primary schools can be both rewarding and challenging.

RESEARCH METHOD

The data gained through interviews of four teachers who teach English in an Indonesian primary school. In addition, semi-structured interview was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' viewpoints in ELT practice and its challenges in elementary schools.

The result of data analysis were classified based on the categories: 1) teachers' perspective: teaching materials, teaching aids, and time allocation; 2) teachers' challenges: limited availability of teaching materials, large class size, limited allocation of time, and difficulty to find appropriate teaching methods.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Teacher's perspective

Research indicated both teachers on two schools encountered much similarity of using material in teaching English in elementary school. In terms of teaching material, they really relied on textbook. As the teachers explained below:

I really rely on the textbook as the source of teaching materials (T1).

I use students' work sheet as complement for teaching (T2).

The book I used is from Pabelan press, and from Department of

National Education of South Sulawesi province (T3).

I used the book written by Sudirman, English for Children published by Karya Ilmu and English for Children written by AR Lehan published by Terbit Terang Press (T4).

In terms of teaching aids, the equipment they used for teaching English were English cassettes, pictures and physical objects around the school. Those teaching aids assist teachers to present English teaching material. As the teachers described as follows:

I usually used media for teaching. I bring the English cassettes for listening comprehension (T3). I used only the objects around the school such as flowers and other plants. I prefer non electronic equipments to use for teaching. (T4).

The expectation of teachers was the government should provide a number of resources that help teachers to increase students' motivation to learn English. In addition, teachers expected to have professional development programs through regular trainings in teaching methods, designing materials, language assessment, language games, and knowledge of English.

Challenges for teachers

All teachers' participants identified four challenges:

- a. Limited availability of teaching materials
- b. Large class size makes it difficult to manage
- c. Limited allocation of time

- d. Finding appropriate teaching method.

The appropriate materials for teaching are quite difficult to get especially for elementary schools. Some books may available at the bookshops but the teachers unable to buy such books because they are very expensive. Therefore, they use very limited materials that support their teaching and learning process. The other challenge in teaching is the class size which contains more than forty students in one class room. This large class makes it difficult for teachers to manage and to control. In addition, larger class makes students have very limited chances to ask and to do different exercises. Teachers believed that time allocation for teaching English at elementary schools should be more than 2 x 40 minutes. It means that the time allocation that provided for English as one of the local contents in school should be added. Finally, teachers find it difficult to choose the appropriate method for teaching English because of the level of difference among students in acquiring English.

CONCLUSION

The research concluded that teachers used textbook as the only main resources for teaching. Teachers encountered also a number of challenges. The problems ranging from limited availability of teaching material, large class size makes it difficult to manage, to limited allocation of time and difficulty in finding appropriate teaching method. The implication is that teachers' professional development programs are required especially improving teachers'



knowledge in teaching method, and language development of children. Last but not least is that the government should conduct a comprehensive need analysis and action research to uncover the problems and the need of teaching English at primary level.

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