

Teaching English to the Elementary School Students in Kutoarjo District

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Abstract

The process of teaching English as a foreign language involves the use of target language as a means of providing language exposure to the students. The appropriate amount and quality of the use of target language affect the quality of the instruction. The present paper reports an effort of describing degree of the use of English by teachers in teaching process, techniques teachers use and problems the teachers usually face of their teaching activity. This research belongs to a case study involving four English teachers in Kutoarjo District. Two teachers were selected from advanced schools with complete facilities, while the other two from rural schools with mediocre facilities. The result shows that degree of the use of English by teachers varies. T1 uses 25% English in teaching, T2 20%, T3 35% and T4 40% in their instruction. Further, it is also revealed that teachers use various techniques in their teaching process. They also face some problems. For example T1's students have poor vocabulary mastery which can affect the teaching learning process. T2 often feels difficult to master the classroom atmosphere. Some T2's students have unstable motivation to learn English. The pronunciation of T4 find students' poor pronunciation becomes a problem.

Keywords: *teaching English, Elementary School, vocabulary, motivation, pronunciation*

Background

English is one of the mandatory subjects offered in secondary schools long before the Indonesian independence (Noss, 1984). Based on second language acquisition theory that the earlier students start learning foreign language, the better their competence would be, the Indonesian Minister of National Education issued the 1994 Curriculum for Primary level of education which accommodates the local content subjects. This category of subjects is designed to be alternatives provided for the local or provincial office of the ministry to design the best education for the citizen by offering what are needed or strategic for those areas.

Direcorate General of Basic and Secondary Education implement the policy to feed the educational needs in big cities or urban location, more specifically so in areas which have potential for tourism resorts. In such areas, English is the number one selected as one of the local content subjects, out numbering other local subjects such as local languages and cultures or local handicrafts. Since then, more and more elementary schools insert English in their curricular content. Up to the present time, English is not only offered as a local content subject, but has been received as one of the educational excellences offered in those particular schools.

For most elementary schools in Kutoarjo, teaching English in primary school is hard to accomplish because most of them lack the supporting components especially the availability of competent human resources, sufficient facilities, and linguistics environment. Although the Office of Ministry of Education in Kutoarjo disctrict facilitate them by providing some trainings

for teachers, the training has not been sufficient for them teach English effectively. This is understandable because they are not majoring in English. In brief, the three conditions are not conducive to advocate the policy of providing quality instruction for English subject to the elementary school students. However, most principals insist the schools offer English to win parents' attention to trust their kids' education to those schools.

Responding to this condition, the researchers decided to conduct a case study on the practice of teaching English in Kuoarjo district to provide in-depth description of such practice. Such description is very important to evaluate the policy and to suggest some improvement of the practice.

Based on the above description, the problems of this study are formulated as follow.

1. How is the degree of the use of English by teachers in teaching English in Kutoarjo district?
2. What teaching techniques do the teachers use in teaching English?
3. What problems do the teachers come across in teaching English in Kutoarjo District?

Literature Review

Practice of teaching English to the formal institutions could be documented from Noss' note that it started long before the Indonesian independence along with the replacement of Dutch with English as the primary subject (Noss, 1985:11). This practice prevails until now. However, the teaching of English to the elementary school students in Indonesia was initiated with the decree of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture No. 060/U/1993 dated on February 25 that makes it possible to introduce English to the elementary school students from the fourth grade on. On the course of development, many schools take the policy very strongly by introducing English from grade 1. Such school policy is usually serves as the comparative excellence the schools could provide so that more and more parents trust the education for their kids to the schools.

The policy was actually formulated as one of the efforts to make the teaching of English in secondary school better. This is also supported by the 2006 Curriculum specifying the status of English for elementary students is not for a study section, but for preparing the students to achieve the expected English competence in junior high school.

The policy to introduce English to the elementary school students was understood to be one of the positive responses of the efficacy of the teaching of English in secondary school. One of a very strong evaluation of the English instruction in secondary school was expressed by Tomlinson making a statement 'after learning English for six years, the students are not able to perform simple communication in English' (1985:5). Literatures from second language acquisition also confirms that providing L2 exposure earlier would be better than when they have to wait until puberty (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, 1982:78). Therefore, starting the teaching of English since first grade will not be a problems as long as the school can afford the facilities needed, primarily by the teachers.as well as students.

Summarizing literatures on methods used in teaching English to young learners, Blanka Frydrychova (2013:550) chose Total Physical Response (TPR) as the most preferred method in

the Czech Republic. TPR was most frequently used in classrooms because most children love to be engaged in practical, fun activities and exercises for kids, called physical responses and participate in making things English classroom activities. Typical activities in TPR require students to respond teachers' linguistic input usually in the forms of teacher instruction. Attending this class, students are trained to gradually imitate and practice to communicate by responding teachers' instruction. Initially the response are in terms of physical in nature and gradually using the target language along with their body movement. This has proven to be effective in the process of teaching English to young learners.

In line with this, Uysal and Yavuz (2015:20) describe the young learner's condition from the perspective of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in that in their efforts to acquire second or foreign language getting directly involved in, interaction with other people is best. This means that young learners' best learn foreign language, such as English, by getting involved in direct interaction. This happens in the TPR classes in which the teacher keeps involving their students in simple interaction accompanied by their body movement as a means of teaching meaning of the words or expression used. Uysal and Yavuz (2015:20) also agree to use TPR as one of the very effective methods in teaching English and which proved to have helped children reach their optimum learning or acquiring English as a foreign language.

The same condition also applies to the Indonesian context. In Indonesian primary education where the students still belong to young learners, TPR is most frequently applied by teachers in teaching English to their student. This is considered most practical because applying TPR is the least demanding teachers' academic and professional competence. From the students' side, the activities are both suitable to the students' condition and interesting for them. One of the advantages of application of TPR is that students practice speaking English in 'simulated conversation' in classroom, between the teacher and students and among the students.

Teaching is not a simple activity to do. When someone wants to be a teacher he or she has to have teaching skill and enough knowledge. Besides that, teaching needs patience because not all the students can be controlled easily like a robot. Many of them are naughty children that must be taught to be better children and have more knowledge. On the other hand, the way of teachers in doing their duty is not always easy. Many teachers face problems and some of them have stopped teaching.

Methodology

This research belongs to a case study which is defined as 'the study of particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances' (Stake, 1995). The phenomenon under study is said to be particular phenomenon because most of the formal institutions offer English. However, the teaching of English in elementary schools in Kutoarjo regency is a difficult accomplishment because of the scarcity of the resources needed to support the policy and practice.

Research Participants

This study involved four English teachers in Kutoarjo District which were purposely selected based on their availability and the information they could offer for the present research (Johnson, 1990). Due to ethical consideration and preserving their privacy, their identities were disclosed for public. For the sake of methodological demands, their pseudonyms were used instead to be Mrs. R from SD Muhammadiyah 1 Kutoarjo and thence referred to as T1, Mrs. E from SDN 1 Kutoarjo as T2, Mrs. S from SDN Prajurit as T3, and Mrs. N from SDN Wirun as T4. These participants were purposively selected based on their varied backgrounds.

Research Setting

This research was conducted at four elementary schools in Kutoarjo district. In order to gain valid data, the four schools were purposively chosen based on their different academic and non-academic conditions and accomplishment. The difference could be elaborated in terms of school atmosphere for learning and teaching which is different from each other. For example, the condition of advanced school is very conducive for the students to study because the schools are equipped with relatively complete facilities especially concerning the availability of the teaching aids and media. While the condition of the average schools is different. These schools are good enough but the facilities provided by the schools are not complete. On the other hand, the condition of isolated schools is really different. Those schools need more help from the government and other people to develop the quality and quantity of those schools.

Data Collection Techniques

Data needed for this study were teachers' activities in developing their classroom activities. This data were collected by means of classroom observation, field note and also in depth-interview. As data were in the form of non-number, they were analyzed qualitatively using thick description. The data and analysis result of this study need to be validated by means of triangulation technique which accommodate observation, field note, record, and in depth interview.

Findings and Discussion

The use of English by English teachers in Kutoarjo district

Based on the analysis of teachers' transcript of their classroom presentation, the use of English is presented in terms of percentage of their use of English in relation to the use of Indonesian and local language that is Javanese. Although the teachers use TPR who directly use English as the linguistic input, all of them accompanied the English with some Indonesian and also local language. Based on this the, use of English used by teachers could be presented in the following table.

Table 1 Percentage of the Use of English in Classroom Interaction

No	Stage of Presentation	T1	T2	T3	T4

1	Opening	50 %	40 %	35 %	25 %
2	While Activity	35 %	30 %	30 %	25 %
3	Post Activity	50 %	40 %	30 %	30 %

Note: Name of teacher participants who are referred to here correspond to the description of teacher in Research Participant section.

The chart shows that the extent of the use of English in classroom by teachers correlates with the school condition and the complete media available in the school. The teacher working in a good school tends to use higher percentage of English than those teaching in not good school with more or less complete media provided in school. Also a teacher working in a less good school with incomplete media, tends to use more English than those teaching in those teaching in less good school with incomplete media.

Further information concerns how the teachers use English in classroom presentation. This section elaborates in which stages teachers use English in teaching based on Permendikbud No.65/2013. The procedure covers three main stages of Opening or called Pre-Activity, Main Activity, and Closing or Post-Activity. Under pre-activity there are some smaller-scale activities such as preparing students ready to study, motivating students, revealing previous knowledge to the learning materials, stating the learning objectives of the day and stating the scope of learning materials and learning activities. The main activity constitutes students activity in observing, questioning, collecting information, associating/managing information, experimenting, communicating and creating texts. The last step, closing or post-activity constitutes making summary of conclusion of the learning materials, giving feedback, giving follow-up in the forms of assignments, and informing the learning activities of the next meeting/class. In each of the main steps and the micro activities the teachers can use different techniques which are suitable with the students and the material itself. The use of English in each step is presented in the form of number of turns used by the teachers in using English in each stage of classroom activity.

The use of English in the teaching stages by the teachers

Table 2 The use of English in the teaching stages by the teachers

Teaching procedure (Based on Permendikbud No.65/2013)	Exchange/Interaction			
	-1	-2	-3	- 4
1. Opening/Pre-Activity	-25	-12	-7	-11
2. Main Activity	0-59	3-8	-39	3-56
3. Closing/Post-Activity	1-67	8-50	9	0-79

Teaching technique used by the Teachers

Technique refers to what the teacher does in class or what happens in class (Richards and Rogers, 19). Practically all activities that are observable in classroom belong to techniques, such as asking, providing examples, and involving students etc, which are designed to achieve the goals of the teaching process. The teaching techniques used by the teachers vary depending on students' condition, teacher condition and also the available resources. The table below shows the use of teaching techniques by English teacher in Kutoarjo district in teaching English.

Tabel 3 Teaching techniques used by the teachers

No	Techniques	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teache 3	Teacher 4
1	Lecturing	√		√	
2	Question and answer	√			
3	Demonstration	√			
4	Discussion	√		√	√
5	Speech		√		
6	Workbook		√		
7	Vocabulary drill		√		
8	Cooperative learning			√	
9	Games				√

Problems faced by the teachers in teaching English

Based on the observation and interview, these are the problems faced by the teachers in teaching English at elementary schools in Kutoarjo District.

Tabel 4 Problem in teching English

	Teacher			
	T 1	T 2	T 3	T 4
Problems faced in teaching English	a. The students have poor vocabulary mastery which can affect the teaching	a. The teacher often feels difficult to master the classroom atmosphere	a. The students have unstable motivation to learn English.	a. The pronounciation of T4's students is rather poor. b. The students'

	learning process b. The students find difficult to catch teacher's explanation in english	b. The students often make noisy when the teacher is teaching	b. The students cannot concentrate well	vocabulary is limited
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Conclusion

The degree of using English by every teacher is various. T1 uses English 25% in teaching, T2 uses English about 20% in teaching, T3 uses English about 35% in teaching and T4 uses English about 40%. This condition happens because of the English competence of the teachers.

Every teacher as the subject of this research uses various techniques in their teaching process. T1 uses lecture method, question and answer method, discussion and demonstration. T2 uses Speech, workbook and vocabulary drill. T3 uses lecture, cooperative learning technique and discussion while T4 uses discussion and game to make the students understand about the English lesson. Moreover, the teachers use their skill to teach their students.

Problems faced by the teachers are also vary. Teacher 1 has students with poor vocabulary mastery and low ability to understand the teachers' explanation. Teacher 2 finds it difficult to control her students. They class is noisy and hard to handle. The students of Teacher 3 are stable and they cannot concentrate well. They are not motivated to learn English. Teacher 4 has students with limited vocabulary and poor pronunciation.

It is suggested that teachers know the students' language proficiency so the teachers can adjust the level of the language used with the students' level of language they master. The English teachers need to improve their creativity and helpful characteristic because those two things can create a good atmosphere in teaching learning process. The chance for the students to speak and be involved in teaching learning process needs to add. The vocabulary enrichment should be put in the main consideration so the students can increase their knowledge. This can help them to understand what their teacher discusses. This will help them to be more skillful and lead them to be a more autonomous person.

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