



Teachers' Challenges in Teaching English for Young Learners during Indonesia's School-Based Curriculum

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to discover the challenges that teachers suffered from when teaching English to young learners in Tembilahan Elementary Schools during the School Based Curriculum in 2018. The quantitative descriptive design was used for this study. Researchers employed questionnaires and interviews as research tools to collect study results, the questionnaire functioning as the primary instrument. Questionnaires and interviews were distributed to ten teachers from nine different primary schools. The findings of the Likert questionnaire data analysis and interviews showed that the most difficult challenges for teachers in teaching English to young learners was learners' motivation. They all believe that raising motivation was tough, and that was one of the difficulties in teaching English to young learners. The findings of the highest score in the data was the thirteenth statement (motivation), where the total score was 40, and it was a teachers' challenges in teaching English to young learners in primary schools in Tembilahan.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesian educational curricula evolved over time. According to Hartoyo (2011) in his handout on Curriculum and Material Development in English Language Teaching, Indonesia has already implemented nine curricula: the 1950 curriculum, 1958 curriculum, 1962 curriculum, 1968 curriculum, 1975 curriculum, 1984 curriculum, 1994 curriculum, 2004, and the present curriculum. The 2006 curriculum is sometimes referred to as the "Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP)" or the

"School-based Curriculum (SBC). According to education regulation number 20-year 2003 regarding National Education System, "Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP)" is described as an operational curriculum (Ministry of National Education, 2006) arranged and applied by each education unit beginning in 2006 and continuing to 2013, the latest is the 2013 curriculum known as K-13 (Utama, 2021).

When the KTSP program came to an end in 2018, Indonesia had two types of curricula in place: "2013 Curriculum and

KTSP." It encourages pupils, particularly those in primary schools, to study English as a mandatory subject. Unlike the "2013 Curriculum," this curriculum expects young pupils or elementary school students to acquire English as an additional or extracurricular topic rather than as a compulsory subject. In truth, not all schools in Indonesia had implemented the K-13 curriculum at the time, as was the case in Tembilahan (in Indragiri Hilir Regency), where many primary schools had not yet implemented the "2013 Curriculum" until early 2018.

As a result, several elementary schools in Tembilahan have embraced KTSP as a curriculum, allowing students to learn English from the second grade all the way up to the twelfth grade. This was different to the K-13 curriculum, which no longer emphasizes English as a required subject. Based on this situation, English teachers for young students must prepare to teach young children. Aside from that, they must comprehend different ideas about teaching English to young learners (Nur, 2003), such as managing a classroom, techniques, media, and student characteristics. Furthermore, English instructors must not only be able to communicate well but also create resources that allow them to use proper approaches, methods, and strategies for teaching English.

According to the preceding paragraph, the teacher has a very important relationship with his students. The student will find it easier and more enjoyable to learn at school if they enjoy their school environment and are interested in it. However, as they progress

in their studies, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to learn and comprehend the material (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). They are not only trying to improve themselves, but they are also trying to improve the education system.

likewise, the phenomena of how teachers teach English to young learners in Tembilahan demanded deeper justification, considering that the KTSP curriculum has become history and is no longer used. As a result, the goal of this study is to illustrate the difficulties that instructors faced when educating young pupils, particularly those who were covered by the KTSP at the time.

METHOD

The descriptive quantitative study approach was used to explore the difficulties that instructors encountered when teaching English to young children. This research was conducted across elementary schools in Tembilahan, which was using the KTSP curriculum at the time of the research in 2018. The researchers polled ten instructors from nine elementary schools. SD 006 Muhammadiyah, SD Islam Terpadu Fathur Rahman, SD 037 Kasih Lestari, SDN 001 Tembilahan Hulu, MIN 1 Tembelahan Hilir, MI Sa'adah Al-Islamiyah, MI Sabilal Muhtadin, MI Nahdatul Ulum, and MI Al-Hidayah were the school designations.

Data gathering strategies that have been employed by researchers are questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire was meant to see the obstacles experienced by instructors when teaching (Creswell, 2005 & Arikunto, 2010). Numerous indicators are utilized in

this questionnaire, namely speaking, discipline, behavior, motivation, and classroom management. The scale relied on 5 scales ranging from strongly disagree (point 1) to the highest (point 5) (Riduwan, 2013), which is highly agree. The questionnaire itself was delivered to 10 instructors who were selected as samples in this study. The sample was chosen using the purposive approach since the authors only chose English instructors whose schools used the KTSP curriculum, which is in keeping with Andrade's belief that a purposive sample is the one whose features are defined for a goal that is relevant to the research (2021). The questionnaire's responses collected in this study were evaluated using Likert data analysis and tallied using percentages, while, the data of the interview analyzed qualitatively (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Teaching children can't be stated to be an easy business, studies feel that various problems are confronted by teachers. But no matter what the issue is, a skilled teacher will know how to meet and conquer it (Gay & Airasian, 2000). According to Senge (2000), a teacher is an expert who can provide knowledge that will help the student build, identify, and acquire skills that will be used to face life's challenges. He also says that the teacher provides the student with knowledge, skills, and values that enhance development.

As a result, as instructors who educate young learners, they must have the abilities and expertise to deal with some of the issues that arise when teaching. They have at the very least, grasped the qualities

of young learners as teachers. Scott and Ytreberg (1990) identify five characteristics of young learners:

1. They comprehend circumstances faster than they comprehend the words employed.
2. Their understanding is grounded in the actual world, and it is constantly linked to direct experience.
3. They have a limited span of attention and focus.
4. Young children are passionate and optimistic about their education.
5. They almost never confess they don't know anything.

According to Brewster, Ellis, and Girard (2002), young learners share the following qualities and acquire a foreign language most efficiently as follows:

1. They frequently respond to an initial stimulus, such as a series of photos, but they require instruction on how to proceed with an activity or assignment.
2. When beginning an activity, children should be given a clear aim.
3. They learn best in a casual classroom environment where they are not scared to make errors.
4. Children require time to process all the information they are given so that they may subsequently do relevant work on their own.

Halliwell (1992) also highlights many characteristics of young learners that she believes are extremely beneficial to language learning. She asserts that:

1. Children are already quite adept at discerning meaning without having to grasp particular words.
2. Children may express themselves creatively with little words.

3. Children learn more indirectly than directly.
4. Children prefer to discover and generate enjoyment in their activities.
5. Children have a fantastic imagination.
6. Children take considerable pleasure in conversing.

Teachers of young learners must also bear in mind that there are various aspects to remember when teaching young learners. According to Lynne (2001), the goals of teaching English to young learners should include the following:

1. To promote open-mindedness and tolerance via the acquisition of new ways of thinking and learning.
2. To boost creativity.
3. To enhance cognitive abilities and facilitate abstract thinking.

Based on some of the opinions of the experts above, it is apparent that teaching young pupils cannot be separated from obstacles, in other words, challenges cannot be avoided, and must even be found by teachers. Citing a Global Perspective, the following are some of the obstacles that English teachers may face when teaching young learners (2015), namely:

Speaking

The issue most commonly noted was teaching speaking. This conclusion is rather surprising given classroom observations revealed that youngsters were passionate speakers (Brown, 2001; Cameron, 2001). In making the pupils to talk and persuade them that speaking English is something they can accomplish extremely hard as the teachers. Because not all the learners who interest to study English. Many youngsters are reluctant to converse by utilizing English.

Discipline

Discipline concerns were connected to the age and sex of the students, differentiation, parental attitudes, inexperience, not sharing the learners' native language, and keeping the students engaged. In discipline problem, the teachers acquire the challenges to make students focus for them when they are presenting the lesson. In this scenario, the students do not pay attention for the lecturers and make a noise in the class while English teaching and learning process.

Moreover, Gower, Phillips and Walters (2008) underline that teachers have to examine the balance between being nice and keeping discipline.

Behavior

Behavior is characterized as acceptable or not in a social context and is also impacted by the larger environment in which individuals interact with one other. In addition, the environment impacts the students' conduct quite substantially. hence, the instructors have significant function to modify students' behavior by giving entertaining learning in the classroom.

According to Harmer (2007) norms of behavior and sanctions for bad behavior must be presented to children from the first day at school. In many circumstances it is necessary to notice the warning indications of disruption and to act promptly as "unchecked behavior may grow to be a larger problem. Moreover, when the behavior problem develops it is vital to "find out what the problem is".

Classroom Management

Classroom management is tied to a process of arranging and managing a class that includes time management, students' involvement, student engagement, and classroom communication. According to Scrivener (2005), instructors are expected to have "certain organizational skills and techniques" in managing myriad of activities and events that might occur at any time in the classroom. Lemlech (1999) says that "the key to successful classroom management is preplanning".

Motivation

The instructors tend to have a great feeling of obligation to encourage students, which can mean they exert a fair deal of energy, both in arranging a range of activities and in classroom instruction. According to Harmer (2007) states that "nothing motivates like success". Moreover, teachers should stimulate their students' curiosity and attention.

The hypothesis above is an indicator in answering what obstacles instructors experience in instructing children. Therefore, after examining the obtained data, the researchers discovered that the teacher's issue in teaching English to young learners is "motivation". This means that many teachers have difficulties convincing students to give full attention to their lessons. In other words, raising the motivation of young learners is tough and is one of the obstacles in teaching English. The questionnaire data in this study show agreement with this statement, with the highest score in the questionnaire being in the thirteenth statement about motivation, with a score of 40. This statement is also supported by the results of interviews with teachers, who argue that motivation is a challenge in teaching English to young students in Tembilahan Elementary Schools. The data from the questionnaire are presented as follows:

R	Questionnaires' Item																				Total Score
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
T1	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	5	3	3	3	3	76	
T2	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	2	3	3	4	73	
T3	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	39	
4	4	3	4	3	3	3	5	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	69	
T5	2	4	4	4	2	2	2	2	4	4	4	2	4	2	4	1	1	2	2	54	
6	5	4	4	4	4	2	2	5	4	4	4	2	4	5	5	4	2	4	4	76	
T7	3	4	4	4	2	2	4	1	3	4	4	3	4	2	3	4	2	4	4	65	
T8	2	2	4	3	2	2	2	4	2	3	3	3	4	2	4	4	2	2	3	55	
T9	2	3	2	4	2	2	4	4	2	2	2	3	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	48	
T10	2	2	1	2	3	2	4	4	2	3	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	2	4	47	
	29	32	34	34	28	21	33	33	30	34	32	27	40	27	31	34	22	27	28	36	
	Total																				602

Questionnaire Description

First statement (Communicating with the student). Ten teachers stated that

interacting with their students was tough. They believe this occurs because not all young kids can speak effectively, despite

the fact that the teacher has prompted them with multiple questions or directives.

Second statement (Difficult to get students to speak English) 79.99% of respondents agreed with this statement, which is quite fair given that they cannot even converse in the language of Indonesia, nor even English.

Third statement (Persuading students to speak is difficult) In keeping with the previous remark, 79.99% of teachers believed that convincing students to speak English would be tough. According to the findings of interviews with teachers, the climate or atmosphere of the class or school made them unwilling to speak. Furthermore, we do not speak English to them.

The fourth claim is regarding (Students are reluctant to speak English), and the findings are the same, with the majority of teachers (79.99%) accepting.

The fifth statement (Making disciplined students is difficult), also indicates that the majority of teachers feel that it is difficult to discipline young students.

The sixth statement (students' attention when studying), respondents believe that the attention offered by students is only "enough" (42%).

The findings of the teacher's view on the *seventh statement*, namely, age and gender affecting students to learn English, revealed that as many as 66% of teachers believed "yes" had an impact.. Furthermore, 66% of instructors agree with *statement 8* (poor attitude of students because of to a lack of desire).

Statement 9 (making students enthusiastic about learning English

difficult). 60% of teachers agreed that they have difficulty getting students excited about learning English

Statement 10 (Feeling difficult to manage students to focus when studying), the majority of teachers think it is enough by (68%)

Statement 11 (Difficulties in enlivening the class atmosphere that English is important) 64% of teachers agree with this statement.

Statement 12 (Difficulties in forming students' attitudes), the results of the teacher's answers showed that they have quite difficulty forming students' attitudes (48%).

Statement 13 (Increasing students' motivation to learn English) In this 13th statement, 80% of teachers stated that generating motivation is a major challenge for them while teaching English to young learners..

Statement 14 (Confused about how to motivate students) 78% also thought they did not understand how to increase student motivation, this is in line with the previous statement.

Statement 15 (Encouraging students to be passionate is difficult), 62% of teachers agree with this statement. *Statement 16 (Because students think English is not their language, so students were not motivated to learn English)*, the result was 68% of teachers agreed.

Statement 17 (Difficult to organize English classes) Teachers believe that young children are tough to handle when they are teaching (in the teaching and learning process), which is equally stressful for them. This is how 44% of teachers feel.

Statement 18 (Making a fun class is difficult), as many as 54% of teachers believe that it is difficult for them to create fun classes for young students.

Statement 19 (Making student involvement in English learning activities difficult), 56% of teachers stated that it was quite difficult to involve all students to actively learn English

Lastly, *the 20th statement (students have difficulty understanding my explanation when teaching)* According to the teachers' responses, 72% believe that students had trouble grasping the explanation they provided during learning.

Finally, the author emphasizes that the argument about motivation is actually a big problem for teachers in teaching English in this KTSP era, even though the curriculum accommodates English for young students, it does not mean that the challenges they face do not exist, even if the challenges they face are getting bigger because the students themselves do not understand what the real benefits of learning English are.

Based on data analysis, the authors finally argue that teaching English at the children's level is learning at a fun level, so learning English for children is presented not merely at the level of memorization or solely to improve their cognitive abilities, but more to play while learning English, don't let students or even students' parents think learning English is difficult,, this is in accordance to what was conveyed by Lesia, Petrus and Eryansyah that 2 important aspects of teaching English to young students are perception and strategy (2022).

CONCLUSION

English teachers in elementary schools must comprehend the notion of how to teach young learners. They must not only be able to teach well but also be able to develop materials so that they can correctly use the approaches, methods, and strategies of teaching English in primary schools. The researcher concluded that the teacher's challenge in teaching young learners at Tembilahan is about motivation, because students' motivation in learning English at school was still low during the teaching and learning process of English, and teachers were also confused about how to increase student motivation. The author advises that instructors engage more with some of the material on educating young learners, because learning is also play for them during childhood.

The researchers reinforced their recommendation to teachers for them to better understand the features of young children, who cannot be pushed to study. As a result, teachers must devise some enjoyable methods of teaching English in primary schools. Furthermore, to improve their student's motivation, teachers must plan their courses using suitable strategies and media.

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