

EXPLORING TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS AT SD KATOLIK SANTA THERESIA

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to know teachers' challenges in teaching English to young learners. This is a qualitative research that used qualitative method with interview as research instrument. The researchers selected two English teachers at SD Katolik Santa Theresya. The results show that there were some challenges that faced by the teachers in teaching English to young learners such as teaching listening, motivating students to learn English, and lack of textbook to facilitate the students' needs. In teaching listening; the teachers found the challenges such as the students were difficult to comprehend or understand when the teachers spoke quickly. The teachers had some strategies to solve the problems to motivate the students, gave attention and care with the students. Besides, using of text book is not related with the students' need becomes the challenges in teaching English. To solve it; the teachers make another alternative book such as LKS to support the teachers in teaching English in the classroom.

Keywords: *Teachers' Challenges, Teaching English, Young Learners*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English to young learners is different from adults. Every English teacher who teaches English to young learner needs to understand and apply theories of language teaching-learning to young learners and class management. Every English teacher is not only required to be able to teach well but also to be able to design teaching materials so that they can apply approaches, methods and techniques of teaching and learning English according to their needs.

Teaching English, teachers has important aspects, one of which creates a fun and creative learning atmosphere; Fun activities such as inserting new words into songs and games help children relax and enjoy the learning process. To Teach young learners is not just a matter of releasing them to a large number of language assignments in class. To successfully teach young learners foreign languages require special skills that are different from those suitable for adult teaching.

There are some problems come from the young learners in learning English such as lack of English vocabulary, lack of motivation that makes them unconfident to learn, their speaking still difficult to understand, limited environment learning that make them boring. From the problems, English teachers should have preparation if they want to teach English to young learners, and also it will become a challenges for English teachers, they have to be creative in composing media, method of teaching that make young learners interest to learn English.

Copland etc (2014) a number of challenges emerged as affecting large numbers of teachers in different educational contexts, namely, teaching speaking, motivation, differentiating learning, teaching large classes, discipline, teaching writing, and teaching grammar. Importantly, some of these challenges have not been highlighted in the literature on young learner teaching to date. Other challenges are more localised, such as developing teachers' English competence.

Based on survey at SD Katolik Santa Theresya, the teachers faced the challenges in teaching English to young learners, they considered that teaching listening was the one of the challenges, because students are difficult in comprehending, and also the lack of audio listening tools affected the process of teaching listening, because the school facilitation was not complete.

Teaching and Learning Process for Young Learners

In teaching-learning process, the English teachers must know the kinds of language learning resources for young learners, (Sukarno, 2008:3) as follows:

- a. Learning resources are not additional materials for pleasure but main materials which are ordered and learned as interesting activities which children usually do in their daily lives.
- b. Learning resources for children must be appropriate for children's aptitude, will, world, and so forth. Therefore, ideal English teachers to young learners are those who are familiar with English songs and games in English. In addition, they are able to order those materials into becoming interesting ones.
- c. There must be a clear distinction between technique and resource. Songs, stories, poems, and games are resources.

Characteristic of Young Learners

In learning language, children begin learning simple expressions. Broadly speaking, children learn abstract rules of language from which they listen, and even they also learn expressions that they have never heard before. It is extremely important that teachers not only get children to learn language, but they also encourage them to learn it positively. Teaching of English for Children has been of particular concerns (Hashemi & Azizinezhad, 2011:2).

Cameron (2001:1) that there are some obvious differences: children are often more enthusiastic and lively as learners. They want to please the teacher rather than their peer group. They will have a go at an activity even when they don't quite understand why or how. However, they also lose interest more quickly and are less able to keep themselves motivated on tasks they find difficult. Furthermore, they don't have the same access as older learners to met language that the teachers can use to explain about grammar and discourse. The children often seem less embarrassed than adults at talking in a new language, and their lack of inhibition seems to help them get a more native-like accent.

Challenges in Teaching English to Young Learners

There are some challenges that faced by the teachers in teaching English to young learners, below are discuss the specific challenges which were perceived by teachers as most important, we include comments from responding teachers, which are quoted verbatim (Coplan, Garton, & Burns, 2014:9).

1. Speaking

The challenge most frequently identified was teaching speaking. The most common comments were about getting children to speak; for example, "making them speak and persuade them that speaking English is something they are able to do." It could be that many children are reluctant to speak in front of their classmates, particularly in a foreign language, as it can be extremely face-threatening.

2. Discipline

Discipline attracted the second-largest group of comments. Discipline problems were linked to the age and sex of the students, differentiation, parental attitudes, inexperience, not sharing the learners' first language, and keeping the students motivated. For example, one teacher commented, "Discipline, as I am teaching in a boy's school," and another stated, "Unruly children who lack

discipline from home is a major challenge.” The teachers we observed also raised the issue of discipline and used various strategies for maintaining it.

3. Motivation

The teachers seem to feel a strong sense of responsibility to motivate students, which can mean they expend a good deal of energy, both in planning a range of activities and in classroom teaching. Certainly in the classes we observed teachers worked very hard both before and during class to ensure the lesson was well-organised, involving, and focused.

4. Differentiation

The fourth-largest category is differentiation, meaning that many teachers are dealing with students who are at different stages of learning and have different individual needs. Specifically, students are often perceived as not being strong at learning languages, or having a special educational need of some description.

5. Writing

Given that many children will be learning a new script when learning English, it is not surprising that writing also presents a challenge. Moreover, many children are learning to write both in English and in their first language, which means they are developing literacy in two languages simultaneously.

6. Grammar

Another key issue is teaching grammar. Although many teachers identified “grammar” as a challenge without further explanation, comments such as the following were not uncommon: “To explain difficult grammar categories (e.g., the difference between the present perfect and the past simple)”; “In my personal opinion is grammar aspect because children become bored when teachers try to teach in this way.” The fact that young learners between 7 and 11 are being taught grammar is of particular interest. Given their age, the amount of English teaching they are receiving each week (usually less than two hours), and that they are often in large mixed-level classes, the value of explicit grammar teaching might be questioned; yet as several comments show, it is clearly an aspect of some teachers’ practice.

7. Class Size

Class size is identified as the second most important factor in improving teaching and learning in schools. Class size is clearly more salient in state schools than in private schools, where numbers are generally lower; and as suggested in this comment, class size might be indicative of other issues: “Big size class, poor teaching and learning conditions.”

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted at SD Katolik Santa Theresia Ternate. The researcher used qualitative method to analyze teacher’s challenges in teaching English to young learners. According to (Sugiyono 2015:15) qualitative method is research method that are based on the philosophy of post positivism, used to examine natural conditions of object, where researcher is the key instruments from sampling data sources conducted purposively and snowball, collecting data techniques with triangulation or combination, inductive data analysis, an result research emphasizes more meaning than generalization. Furthermore, (Leo, 2013:100) states qualitative research is a research based on data collecting, analyzing, and interpreting, in narrative form to get deep understanding from the particular phenomenon observed.

Interview is a process of obtaining information for the research purposes by way of question answer while face to face between the interviewer and respondent using a tool called an interview guide (Susanti. 2016:10). In this instrument, it would provide a list of question related teacher’s challenges in teaching English for young learners. To analyze interview data, the researcher made

transcript that contained teacher's answer about challenges in teaching English to young learners, after that the researcher sorted the answer that relevant with questions, and make the conclusion. The steps of analyzing are data reduction, data display, and conclusion (Milles & Huberman, 1994:10-11).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

In interview section, there were two teachers who participated in interview to explore their challenges in teaching English to young learners. The two respondents named respondent 1 (R1) and respondent 2 (R2). The data is presented based on the order of questions in interview which are categorized in some different theme. The teacher's answers were in Indonesia but it was translated and presented in English.

In teaching English, class size was one of supporting factor that important for the teachers, the teachers would enjoy their teaching and the students also could be comfortable in learning English. Based on data one respondents illustrated that class size was important aspect for the teachers in teaching English, meanwhile with big class the students would be happy in learning English, and about the small class; the students usually not comfortable. But one respondent also expressed that class size was not important aspect in teaching English, because the students could learn English with big class and even small class. This was pointed out by the respondent (R1) and (R2), their answer was presented below:

1. Are class size important in teaching English? And does class size with containing of 25 students affect you in teaching English for young learners? Explain!

"Class size is important aspect in teaching English, because the students will be happy in learning English when the class is big. In other hand the students felt not comfortable in learning English with a small class, But I enjoyed in teaching English with small class, because easy in transferring the materials " (R1)

"Not important, why? Because the students can learn English with big class, even small class, it means that I was easy to transfer the knowledge in the class" (R2)

In English class, there were many students that have different capacity such as big capacity and weak capacity, every teachers should focus to improve the student's English skill, based on data the teachers focused on students needs, especially on the students with weak capacity, they considered that the students at SD Katolik Santa Theresya able to learn English, and always gave their attention to the students. This was pointed out by the respondent (R1) and (R2), their answer was presented below:

2. How do you do in the class when your students have different capacity in learning English?

"Yeah, I always gave the attention to the students and focused on students need, especially the students who had weak capability; they felt lazy in learning English. I gave more attention to them, asked them what they need so that they stayed to learn English. Also I supported the students who weak capability to stay in learning English. But overall here the students able in learning English, most of the students were good in English" (R1).

"Of course, usually I focused on students need, although they had weak capacity, I always gave the attention to support the students in learning English" (R2)

At SD Katolik Santa Theresya, the teachers had a few difficulty in teaching English, especially in preparing textbook; such as the using of textbook covered less the English material, the teachers considered that it was the big difficulty in teaching English, but one of the respondent reported that she did not found the difficulties in teaching English, because actually the students at SD Katolik at

Santa Theresya had capability in learning English. This was pointed out by the respondent (R1) and (R2), their answer was presented below:

3. Do you found any difficult to teach them? Explain!

“One of the most difficulty that faced by me in this school was the using of textbook, verily the textbook that used here was Erlangga book and there was no feed, sometimes textbook was not related with the students’ need. Erlangga book was too easy for the students; so that there was another source which I strived for cover all of it” (R1)

“Not really, because the students were at SD Katolik Santa Theresya had big capability in learning English, so easy for me in teaching English” (R2)

As illustrated from students answer, actually teaching materials which became the difficulty for the teachers, because they should search another sources to cover the students need, because the textbook which used by the teachers was too easy to the students, in other hand, the students obtained less challenges. Beside the teaching material, as the teachers; they should focus on how to improve the student’s skill such as listening, writing, reading, and speaking. From these skills, the students should have ability to master it. From the data of interview, the teacher also had the challenges in teaching English, they had difficulty in improving students listening skill, because supporting tools such as audio listening were lacking in the school. This was pointed out by the respondent (R1), his answer was presented below:

4. What aspects of English language skill are difficult for you to teach students? Explain!

“Actually, there was no difficulty in teaching four skills such as listening, speaking, writing, and reading. It was just that here often encountered the difficulty in teaching listening, the drawbacks were listening audio tools affected us that often difficult in teaching listening. Beside it, reading also where textbook which used by us only a little bit, for writing and speaking; I thought it was running well” (R1)

Beside it, one respondents demonstrated that she had difficulties in teaching listening, because the young learners had a problem in comprehending the meaning, it could known when the teachers spoke quickly; the students confused to get the point. This was pointed out by the respondent (R2), her answer was presented below:

“Usually teaching listening, it was rather difficult for the children to comprehend it. For example: when the teachers spoke quickly, the students usually difficult to get the point. For writing ok” (R2)

They expressed the big challenges that faced by them was how to motivate their students to learn English, because every students had their favourite subject. The teachers reported although the students at SD Katolik Santa Theresya had capability in learning English, but the teachers always accompanied and more focused to the students needs. This was pointed out by the respondent (R2), her answer was presented below:

5. What is your biggest challenge in teaching English to young learners?

“My biggest challenges, and probably all teachers; how to motivate the students in learning English, so that the students enjoyed to learn English, because talked about elementary students, they had special interest that every students had their own favorite subjects, example; anyone liked mathematic, I did not like English. That was a challenge for the teachers how to motivate and motivated to learn English” (R1)

“Actually, if you said the biggest challenge was nothing. Because most of the students easy understood English, it was just some students which rather difficult, so we should guide the students such as be focused to them when the students difficult to unnderstand the material and the task, the teachers focused on that” (R2)

From the biggest challenges in teaching English which faced by the teachers, they had the way to solve the challenges or minimize that challenges, from interview data showed that the teachers always gave motivations to their students to learn English, giving some games, and before

entered in the class; the teachers gave warm up class, students' movement. This was pointed out by the respondent (R1), his answer was presented below:

6. How do you solve or minimize the challenges or problems in teaching English? Or Do you have any strategies in teaching English when your students are bored and lazy in learning English?

"Sometimes the students were not motivated, they were bored and sleepy. So the things that the teachers did when entered in the class, looked at the lack of students' mood. I tried to know it, first strategy which I did was approaching them with giving more attention to the students who not motivated to learn English, and I explained the importance of the students who could speak English. After giving more attention, then opening the class with some games, and it could lure them, such as guessing word where the teachers gave the clues and the students answered based on clues, when the teachers only came in the class and gave the material, wah this was none challenge, sometimes we started with warm up class, students movement, the important one was the students would be bored if we did not slip the games in learning English" (R1).

One respondent expressed that to minimize that challenges, the teachers should focus or more attention to the students who had weak capability, the teacher also divided some classes where one teacher handled the students which had big capability, and another students handle the weak capability. This was pointed out by the respondent (R2), her answer was presented below:

"I taught English with Mr Alan, so one class had two teachers, when he taught English, I handled the students who had weak capability in learning English, then we more focused on them" (R2).

The teachers had reasons why those strategies were worth it to be used by them, such the students were not bored, not saturated, and cheer up again. This was pointed out by the respondent (R1) and (R2), their answer was presented below:

7. Are the strategies worth it to be used by you? How much are you sure about these strategies?

"Those strategy were indeed feasible, and I already tried it before in my classes" (R1).

"I thought worth it to be used in learning English, because the teachers should be smart in creating the interesting strategy so that the students were not saturated, so the importance of this strategy to raise up the students spirit" R2).

In teaching English, supporting teaching facilities such as textbook, material book, audio listening tools, computers actually would helped the teachers in teaching English, they were easy in transferring the material and the knowledge, related teaching facilities; the teachers reported that the school provided all of the media teaching such as textbook, computers, and media, picture dictionary. This was pointed out by the respondent (R1) and (R2), their answer was presented below:

8. Does this school provide your needs in teaching English like a textbook, handout, computer, teaching media, etc?

"Here, we had the facilities beside textbook which provided by the school, such as dictionary, picture dictionary, English tapes. Beside it, it was from teachers' creativity. The teachers could provide the students need which not only on textbook" (R1)

"Surely, it has been provided such as books, another media, and also if it was needed, we could search another source" (R2)

The teachers also reported if the school did not provide it, they could search another sources or they could make alternative books to cover student's needs in learning English. This was pointed out by the respondent (R1) and (R2), their answer was presented below:

9. If the school does not provide learning and teaching facilities, how do you deal with it so that the learning and teaching process continues smoothly?

"Sometimes I made LKS by myself; I made it when the material in the book provided by the school was lacking, so I looked for other sources, I made teaching material to cover my teaching in the class, either I mixed it with my thoughts and combined with download on internet" (R1).

"If not, we searched another reference on internet" (R2).

B. Discussions

The results of the research indicate that there are some issues about teacher's challenges in teaching English to young learners at SD Katolik Santa Theresya. These issues will be addressed and their implications for teaching English will be discussed.

The first, class size was less important aspect in affecting teachers' performances as long as teaching and learning process, it could be known from the interview that the teachers reported that sometimes important and not important also. The teachers also reported a big class and small class usually and even rarely affected the teachers in teaching English, the students also could still learn English. It revealed that class was not a problem/challenge in affecting teacher's performances in teaching English. This finding had different with Coplan, Garton, & Burns, (2014) class size is identified as the second most important factor in improving teaching and learning in schools. Sukarno (2008:7). classroom management and the classroom situation are parts of factors which determine the success of the teaching-learning process. Good classroom management and a situation will lead to good results of the teaching learning process.

In teaching English to young learners, teachers should focus to improve student's skill, and also always give motivations and attention to the students who have big capability and weak capability. From the findings the teachers always fair in giving attention to the students although the students had difficulty in learn English. It revealed that the teachers knew the student's need. It supported by interview data that the students able learned English well, although a small percentage of them in learning English. Overall the teachers could handle the problems that happen in their classroom. It revealed that differentiation was not a challenge for the teachers in teaching English. It was different data with Coplan, Garton, & Burns (2014) the challenge in teaching English to young learners was differentiation, meaning that many teachers are dealing with students who are at different stages of learning and have different individual needs. Specifically, students are often perceived as not being strong at learning language, or having a special educational need.

In teaching speaking, the teachers always interacted with their students as long as the process of teaching and learning, the teachers also had no problem in getting the students speaking, because the students were considered able to speak English, it could be known from the teachers who rarely used language combine in their class. It was supported also by interview data that the teachers considered had no challenges as long teaching English. From this findings, it was different with Rosa (2018) that the challenges faced by the teacher teaching speaking. Coplan, Garton, & Burns (2014) the challenge most frequently identified was teaching speaking; the most common comments were about getting children to speak.

If teaching speaking was not a challenge for the teachers, in teaching listening; all teachers found the challenges such as the students were difficult to comprehend or understand when the teachers spoke quickly, it was supported by Underwood (1989) in Yilmaz & Yavuz (2015:1) lack of control over the speed at which speakers speak. The students also had the difficulty in listening such as a song where they difficult in comprehending the meaning. To solve this challenge; there was a strategy that used by the teachers was giving them the audio listening; this strategy had been the purposed so that the students listening skills improved. It was supported also with interview data there were some listening audio that less facilitated by the school, it affected the teachers were difficult in increasing students listening skill. It was supported by Kurniawati (2016) that teaching

and learning listening to children which play an important role on language acquisition, listening is always referred to as a boring lesson, it means teaching English was a challenges for English teachers.

In increasing students reading skill, the teachers did not have the challenges if could be known from the findings that the student's reading interest were good, their vocabularies also enough to comprehend English book, one of the less of teaching reading was the English reading book was less provided by the school. The teachers also expressed that teaching reading was not a challenges because the students able to understand, the less from applying teaching reading for the students were a little bit of textbook, so far the teachers considered that in improving students reading skill was not a big challenge.

While in teaching writing, the teachers also had no the significant challenges, because the teachers able to teach writing although their first language was not English, the teachers also believed that their students able to write, it could be looked at many vocabularies that they had, while to teach the students how to use correct diction and how to gather the ideas from the topic of writing were not a significant challenge for the teachers, they could handle it. It was supported by interview data where the teachers reported there was significant challenge that faced by them. It revealed that in improving students writing skill; the teachers had no a significant challenge. From discussions, it was not supported by Coplan, Garton, & Burns (2014) that given that many children will be learning a new script when learning English, it is not surprising that writing also presents a challenge. Moreover, many children are learning to write both in English and in their first language, which means they are developing literacy in two languages simultaneously.

In transferring English material to the students, so that they could understand well about the material, as long as the process of teaching and learning English, the teachers had no a problem in teaching English because the students could be discipline. It was not supported by Coplan, Garton, & Burns (2014) that considered discipline was a challenge in teaching English.

When the students felt bored, saturated, and sleepy as long as teaching process, the teachers always motivated the students so that they stayed spirit to learn English, but the one of the challenges that faced by the teachers was motivating the students to learn English. The teachers considered that every student had their favourite subject of learning beside English subject, although the teachers always gave the motivations for the students, but the teachers felt motivating the students was a challenges in teaching English. It was supported by Coplan, Garton, & Burns (2014) that the teachers seem to feel a strong sense of responsibility to motivate students, which can mean they expend a good deal of energy, both in planning a range of activities and in classroom teaching. Certainly in the classes we observed teachers worked very hard both before and during class to ensure the lesson was well-organised, involving, and focused.

It was not only that, if the students did not want to learn English, or they had weak capability; the teachers had some strategies to solve the problems that they always motivated the students, gave attention and care with the students. This finding differentiated with Rosa (2018) that the teacher uses several strategies in dealing with challenges. The teacher uses punishment, reduce the student's score, drilling; also the teacher tries to do her best.

In grammar, the students really enjoyed when the teachers taught it, it could be looked from the students who not bored in learning English, they also able in making a simple sentence which contains subject + predicate + object. So teaching grammar for the students was not a challenge.

The teachers also considered that to help them in teaching English for the students, there were supporting media that they obtained to facilitate them in increasing the student's English skill such computers, textbook, material book, media of teaching. They are enough to cover the teachers in teaching English. Although some of the facilitation which not covered by the school, but to

solve it they had alternative way that provided or made English material by their selves or downloaded on internet.

From the discussions, it had implication for the teacher and the schools; the teacher always pay attention to the students needs, although most of the students are able to learn English. The teachers should motivate the students, being creative teachers who make the alternative material, applied the strategies in guiding the students to learn English. It had implication also for the students that always improve their skills, and for the school probably could provide the good facilitation.

CONCLUSION

Based on data analysis, there are some challenges that faced by the teachers in teaching English to young learners; 1) teaching listening and 2) motivating the students to learn English become the largest challenges that faced by the teachers at SD Katolik Santa Theresya. In teaching listening; all of the teachers found the challenges such as the students were difficult to comprehend or understand when the teachers spoke quickly. The students also had the difficulty in listening such as a song where they difficult in comprehending the meaning. To solve teachers' challenge in teaching listening; there was a strategy used by the teachers in giving them the audio listening, this strategy had been purposed so that the students listening skills improved.

In motivating the students to learn English, the teachers considered that every student had their own favourite subject of learning beside English subject, although the teachers always motivate the students in learning English. But the teachers felt motivating the students was a challenges in teaching English. The teachers had some strategies to solve the problems; 1) always motivate the students in some situation such as when the students feel bored, sleepy, not want to learn. 2) gave attention to the students especially the students who had weak capability and 3) care with the students such as help the students in doing the task, grouping work. The teachers also had some games, one of the games is guessing games where the teachers gave the clues and the students answered based on clues, moreover the teachers start with warm up class, students movement before teaching English.

Beside that, the use of textbook is not related to the students' need becomes the challenges in teaching English. To solve it; the teachers make another alternative book such as LKS to support the teachers in teaching English in the classroom. The teachers considered that the students able to learn English, their English vocabularies also enough to comprehend English subject.

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