
TEACHING ENGLISH IN MULTILINGUAL SOCIETIES

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Abstract

In the era of globalization, English becomes the most powerful and essential tool of communication. Consequently, teaching and learning English must be placed at a seriously important priority of educational system. In order to achieve the ideal outcome of teaching and learning English in multilingual society, three major aspects should be taken into account: 1) teachers, 2) teaching methods, and 3) teaching materials. The flourishing English teachers are always characterized by three dominant characteristics: 1) high degree of reflectivity, 2) high sense of efficacy, and 3) highly student-centered teaching style. English teaching methods should be creatively developed in order to promote not only lower thinking order (memorizing and understanding) but also higher thinking order, especially creative thinking level. Finally, teaching English materials should be developed on the basis of students' background knowledge and environment, the concepts, principles, values, and components for adapting didactic issues, and the higher thinking order.

Keywords: *teaching English, multilingual society*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, where we are living now, English becomes the most powerful and essential tool of communication. No parts of the world, and no part of our life without English; politics, economics, science and technology, education and socio-culture and so on employ English as the means of communication. English becomes the language of all nations, and the language of every sectors of the post modern age life. As reported by Ethnologue that English is utilized by 339 million people in 106 countries over the world (<https://www.ethnologue.com/> accessed on April 21th 2016). It means that those who refuse learning English will be consequently thrown out from the global companionship. As the result, teaching and learning English must be placed at a seriously important priority of any level educational system.

In Indonesia, English has been formally taught as a core subject at the first year of junior high school (K-7) through third year of senior high school (K-12). The basic competences to achieve is the capability of communication in English covering interpersonal communication, transactional communication, and functional communication. The 2014/2015 National Examination (Ujian Nasional) Report shows that the English score of Indonesian students are relatively good—higher than other courses. For junior high school, the average national score of English is 60,01, higher than Mathematics (56,28) and Science (59,88). For senior high school, the average national score of English for social sciences group (IPS) is 58,43—higher than Mathematics (55,76), Economics (54,92), and Geography (51,55), except Sociology (59,00); for science group (IPA), the national average score of English is 65,83—higher than Mathematics (59,17), Chemistry (59,98), Biology (64,04), except Physics (67,43) (Kemendikbud, 2016 <http://www.kemdikbud.go.id/> accessed on 04/18/2016).

However, the undoubtedly empirical fact shows that most of Indonesian high school graduates who have formally learned English for six years are unable to communicate in English as expected. They don't speak English fluently, and cannot write English confidently, although they got excellent mark for English. It seems that there is no empirical relationship between the high school students English score and the students' communication ability—orally and written. The basic competences of interpersonal, transactional and functional communication seems to be far from the expectation. In short, It is hard to conclude that teaching English for high school students in Indonesia has been successful in achieving its goals.

The question is what the problems of teaching English in Indonesia are. In general, there are three common issues of teaching and learning including teaching and learning English as foreign language in multilingual society: 1) teachers, 2) teaching methods, and 3) teaching materials. Although the constructivism approach places the students at the centre of teaching and learning process, the significance of teachers' role in teaching and learning English should not be overlooked. Teaching methods do not only motivate the students to actively take part in the teaching and learning activities, but also inspire them to be more creative and self-encouraging. Teaching materials is a very significant component of English teaching to create a lively and meaningful teaching and learning atmosphere. These elements should be well integrated into a process of teaching and learning English as foreign language in multilingual society.

This paper discusses the above mentioned issues in order to critically evaluate the effectiveness of teaching English in a multilingual society like Indonesia. This paper focuses on the central role of teacher, the significance of teaching methods, and teaching materials.

2. THE CENTRAL ROLE OF TEACHERS

Although the constructivists argue that student is the center of teaching and learning process, teachers always play a very central in teaching and learning language, including English. As noted by Freeman Johnson (1998) that second language teacher educators have begun to recognize that teachers, apart from the method or materials they use, are central to understanding and improving the quality of English language teaching. This point was strongly supported by Akbari & Allvar (2010) stating that there has been a substantial theoretical and practical shift of emphasis, mostly in mainstream education, towards acknowledging that teachers are among the principal components of any pedagogical program. They found that three variables (e.i teacher's degree reflectivity, teacher's sense of efficacy, and teacher's teaching style are significantly correlated to students' achievement in English as second language. They highlight teachers' central role in language teaching.

Simply defined, reflection is stepping back and thinking about one's actions or thoughts (Akbari & Allvar, 2010). Reflection is a reaction to the past experiences and is concerned with conscious recall and examination of the experiences as a basis for evaluation and decision making, and as a source for planning and action (Bartlett, 1990). The term of reflective teaching was first promoted by Dewey(1933) who believed that teachers are not just passive curriculum implementers, but they can also play an active role in curriculum design and educational reform. In English language teaching, reflective teaching has been included in the studies on English language teaching as an important means which teachers use to understand the complexity of the English language as well as the social conditions affecting such learning and teaching (Abaslou & Langroudi, 2015). They found that both critical thinking and motivation were significantly affected by reflective teaching. The implication is that teachers of English should have higher degree of awareness in terms of the effects of reflective teaching on learners' motivation and critical thinking. Consequently, as asserted by Akbari & Allvar (2010), that teacher education programs should familiarize preservice and even inservice teachers with the components of reflective teaching if they want to educate effective teachers, who, in turn, enhance student achievement gains.

Secondly, an other significant teachers' characteristic correlating to students' achievement in English as second language is teacher's sense of efficacy. In general, efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events (Bandura, 1993). Teacher sense of efficacy is defined by Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001) as a teacher's judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning. Akbari & Allvar (2010) found a positive relationship between a teacher's sense of efficacy and student achievement in English language teaching. Teachers who possess a strong sense efficacy show a strong commitment to teaching and spend more time in subject matters. They tend to develop more effective lessons, take more responsibility for student achievement, use effective management strategies stimulating student autonomy and keep student on task, and willing to cooperate with parents and try to let parents know about students' educational performance. Therefore, English teacher training programs are required to provide prospective teachers with various verbal experiences to enhance their level of efficacy

Finally, teachers' teaching style strongly affects the students' achievement in English as second language. Teaching style refers to a teacher qualities that persist although situational condition changes (Akbari & Allvar, 2010). It is a label associated with various sets of consistent classroom behaviors of the teachers regardless of the content that is being taught (Conti & Welborn, 1996). In other words teaching style is a series of a teacher's expressive behaviors that constantly persist based on his/hr beliefs, philosophy, and experiences.

Teaching styles is a very crucial component of English language teaching that either motivate or demotivate the students. There are a number of teaching styles that have been identified in teaching. Akbari & Allvar (2010) identifies some teaching styles introduced by deferent experts: 1) Visual, Auditory, Group, Kinesthetic, Individual, and Tactile Styles (Salem, 2001), 2) Formal – Informal (Bennett, Jordan, Long, & Wade, 1976), 3) Open -Traditional (Solomon & Kendall, 1979), 4) Intellectual Excitement – Interpersonal Rapport (Lowman, 1995), and 5) Expert, Formal Authority, Personal Model, Facilitator, and Delegator (Grasha, 1994). Sheikh & Mahmood (2014) evaluated the dominant teaching styles of English language teachers that introduced by Grasha (1994) and found that Delegator is the most prevalent style among the English language learners, because it is student-centered in nature. In short, the more the teacher's teaching style student-centered in nature, the more motivative the style is.

3. TEACHING METHODS

The second crucial issue of teaching English as foreign language is teaching methods. The teaching methods determine the level students' involvement in the teaching activities. A number of teaching methods have been introduced by experts for teaching English as second language. However, not all of those methods are appropriate for all of language skills, especially the interpersonal, functional, and transactional communication ability. The English teachers should mainly utilize the teaching methods that promote the students to use the language in practice, rather than memorizing and comprehending the rules or grammar of English. In other words, teaching methods selected by English teachers should be the ones that encourage the atmosphere where the students have more opportunities to speak more than listen to the teachers lectures.

Although English consists a series of grammatical rules which students should understand, it is a skill that involves a complex mental process. With reference to Bloom's taxonomy, teaching a language does not end at the cognitive domain or lower thinking order (remembering, understanding, and applying); it should reach the level of higher thinking order (analyzing, evaluating, and creating). Teaching and learning English should not be only aimed at recognizing and recalling vocabulary and rules, understanding the functions of the speeches, and applying them in mechanical ways, but also at breaking down the components of language, judging the values of the communication, and creating new sentences in meaningful contexts (e.i. interpersonal, transactional, and functional communication, as stated in Kurikulum 2013). Therefore, the English teaching methods should be creatively developed in order to promote higher thinking order, especially creative thinking level.

As reported by Baktash & Talebinejad (2015) that the very low learning objectives (remembering, understanding, and applying) received more attention in this course book while little heed was given to higher learning objectives (analyzing, evaluating, and creating). This is equally true as the teaching methods where teachers of English tend to use lower thinking order teaching methods, like lecturing, mechanical drills, and alike. Hosseini (2007) asserted that most of Iranian language classroom are run through a hybrid of grammar-translation method and audio-lingual methods, entails translation, repetition, memorization, recitation, and reproduction. Interaction seems to be not essential to the teaching and learning process, so that students miss the opportunity participate in the process of collaborative tasks and interaction with their colleagues. This might be a major source of English teaching disappointment in multilingual society, including Indonesia.

4. TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS

The last issue discussed in this paper is the importance of selecting and developing appropriate materials for teaching English students in multilingual society. Teaching materials are anything that can be used to facilitate learning. They can be linguistic, visual auditory or kinaesthetic in nature which can be presented in print, through live performance or display, or on cassette, CD-ROM, DVD or Internet. Teaching materials are not only prepared to help teachers perform their role effectively, but also to facilitate them to motivate students, diagnose class and individual needs, organize instruction, guide learning, evaluate people progress, and confer with parents concerning their children. Therefore, in order to develop appropriate materials for teaching English in multilingual society, the teacher as material developers should pay attention to: 1) what the students have been familiar with, 2) the concept, principles, values, and components for adapting didactic materials, and 3) the higher thinking order (analyzing, evaluating, and creating).

Since the setting or environment of English teaching in Indonesia is different from that of America, England, or Australia, the materials should not be like what those in America, England or Australia. The materials should be based on our students' daily life, rather than on other nations' culture. The materials should be developed on the basis of our culture and what the students have been familiar with. It is hard to imagine that the English teaching be effective when the teachers use the materials adopted from others' culture like Halloween, Canadian Day Festival, and Aborigin Culture. It might be beneficial if the English teachers in Sumatera Barat develop the teaching materials based on Minangkabau culture like Randai, Makan Bajamba, Malim Kundang, Cindua Mato, beautifulness of Minangkabau nature, and so on.

Developing the teaching materials on the basis of national values must be a crucial consideration of English teaching in every country in the world. For Indonesia, religious, humanism, national integrity, democracy, and social justice values must be seriously taken into account by English teachers when developing teaching materials. I believe that the National Curriculum (Kurikulum 2013) is designed on the basis of our national values. However, the teachers should stand on the first frontline of developing the young generation of our nation. In other word, although English is not our culture, teaching English should be utilized as a tool of the national values development.

Finally, English teaching materials should encourage the higher thinking order as in Bloom's Taxonomy introduced by Benjamin S. Bloom. The materials should not only be focused on the cognitive domain (memorizing, recognizing and recalling rules or grammar and vocabulary; understanding the rules or grammar and vocabulary; applying rules or grammar and vocabulary) but also on the higher thinking domain (i.e. analyzing, evaluating rules or grammar, vocabulary, and context, so that the students can create realistic and natural sentences). In short, English teaching materials should be developed on the basis of integrating lower thinking order and higher thinking order.

5. CONCLUSION

Since English is the most widely used language in the globalization era, teaching and learning English should be placed on a seriously important priority of educational system. In order to achieve the basic competences as stated in the national curriculum (Kurikulum 13)—the English communication skills encompassing interpersonal communication, transactional communication, and functional communication—three major components of English teaching should be taken in account. The first is characteristic of English teachers covering the degree of reflectiveness, the teachers' sense of efficacy, and the teaching styles. The second is the teaching methods that should be creatively developed in order to promote higher thinking order, especially creative thinking level. Finally, teaching English materials should be developed on the basis of students' background knowledge, the concept, principles, values, and components for adapting didactic materials, and the higher thinking order (analyzing, evaluating, and creating).

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