



STRATEGIES OF TEACHERS IN OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

STRATEGI GURU DALAM MENGATASI TANTANGAN PEMBELAJARAN BAHASA INGGRIS DI TINGKAT SEKOLAH DASAR

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi strategi yang digunakan oleh para guru untuk mengatasi tantangan yang dihadapi dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris di tingkat dasar. Berdasarkan wawancara dan tinjauan literatur, beberapa hambatan utama seperti minat siswa yang rendah, metode pengajaran tradisional, dan lingkungan belajar yang tidak memadai diidentifikasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa menerapkan pendekatan holistik, menarik, dan berpusat pada siswa seperti Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek (PjBL), Instruksi Terdiferensiasi, dan teknik inovatif seperti Respon Fisik Total (TPR) dan Show & Tell dapat secara signifikan meningkatkan hasil pembelajaran. Selain itu, peran guru sebagai fasilitator dan motivator, menumbuhkan suasana belajar yang positif, dan melibatkan orang tua adalah komponen penting untuk sukses. Strategi yang diuraikan bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran yang efektif dalam konteks dwibahasa dan mempromosikan keterampilan pribadi dan sosial.

Key word: *Pengajaran bahasa Inggris, sekolah dasar, strategi pengajaran*

Abstract

This study explores the strategies employed by teachers to address the challenges encountered in teaching English at the elementary level. Based on interviews and literature review, several key obstacles such as low student interest, traditional teaching methods, and inadequate learning environments are identified. The findings suggest that implementing holistic, engaging, and student-centered approaches such as Project-Based Learning (PjBL), Differentiated Instruction, and innovative techniques like Total Physical Response (TPR) and Show & Tell can significantly improve learning outcomes. Additionally, the role of teachers as facilitators and motivators, fostering positive learning atmospheres, and involving parents are critical components for success. The strategies outlined aim to enhance effective learning in bilingual contexts and promote students' personal and social skills.

Keywords: English Teaching, Elementary School, Teaching Strategies

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language that functions as a tool for communication between countries. Furthermore, in this Era of Globalization, English plays a significant role in the life and development of a nation. To keep pace with the rapid development of the Globalization era, the Indonesian government has established a foreign language learning policy, specifically for English, which is implemented in the national education curriculum at every school level. This policy is stipulated in the Law on the National Education System, stating, "A foreign language may be used as the language of instruction in certain educational units to support..."



However, English language teaching in primary schools faces various complex issues. One of the main problems is the lack of competent and qualified teachers in teaching English, which leads to inconsistency in the material and teaching methods delivered to students. This can confuse students and hinder their learning process. In addition, teaching methods that are still conventional and lack variety make students less interested and less motivated in learning English.

The limitation of supporting facilities and infrastructure for English learning, such as language laboratories, also poses an obstacle in creating an effective and enjoyable learning atmosphere. The low motivation of students is further aggravated by the lack of environmental support and the minimal use of English in the students' daily lives. The complexity of the English language, ranging from pronunciation, grammar, to vocabulary comprehension, also presents a significant challenge for primary school students.

These problems must be addressed with appropriate, creative, and adaptive learning strategies by teachers, such as the use of interactive teaching methods, engaging learning media, and an approach that aligns with the characteristics and needs of primary school students. This strategy is crucial so that English learning becomes fun, effective, and capable of improving students' English language proficiency from an early age.

RESEARCH METHOD

The case study method was chosen because the research focuses on one specific case, namely the issue of English language proficiency among students at SD Pelangi (Pelangi Elementary School) under the Putra Dana Foundation. This approach allows the researcher to understand the students' condition in depth, analyze the underlying causes, and observe the solutions implemented by the teacher.

According to Creswell (2014), case study research aims to explore a phenomenon intensively within a real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context appear unclear.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interview results

Interview Transcript: Primary School English Teacher

Narasumber: Guru Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris-Sekolah Dasar Yayasan Tri Putra Dhana

(Interviewee: Primary School English Subject Teacher - Tri Putra Dhana Foundation)

1. Student Issues (Interest and Learning Difficulties)

Q1: What is your biggest challenge in sparking students' interest in English lessons?

A1: My biggest challenge is making students feel that English is fun and not intimidating. Many of them already perceive the subject as difficult from the outset, so I have to rely heavily on games, songs, and interactive activities to grab their attention.

Q2: Which skill area do your elementary students find the most challenging to master? (Speaking, vocabulary, grammar)



A2: I'd say speaking and vocabulary are the toughest. Students often struggle to recall new words and feel shy or afraid of making mistakes when they speak. Grammar is also quite a hurdle because the concepts are still very abstract for primary school children.

Q3: How do you handle students who are afraid or too shy to speak English in front of the class?

A3: I start with pair work or small group activities to help them feel more comfortable. I provide very simple models, and crucially, I give them genuine appreciation for their effort, even if they make many mistakes. This helps build their confidence.

Q4: Is there a wide disparity in ability levels among the students? How does this become a problem in the teaching process?

A4: Yes, the gap is quite significant. Some students take private courses, while others are complete beginners. This makes it challenging because I have to constantly adjust the material and use tiered assignments to ensure all students can follow along and benefit from the lesson.

2. Method and Learning Resource Issues

Q5: Are the available teaching materials or textbooks appropriate and engaging for primary school students? If not, what are their shortcomings?

A5: The textbooks are helpful, but they're not fully engaging. A lot of the content is too text-heavy and lacks visual appeal. Because of this, I always supplement them with pictures, videos, and flashcards to make them easier for the children to grasp.

Q6: Is the current duration of English lessons effective for achieving the learning objectives?

A6: I don't believe so. With such limited time, it's hard to provide enough language practice. English requires constant repetition and reinforcement, so having fewer sessions makes the learning process less than optimal.

Q7: What media do you frequently use? Are there any constraints when using them?

A7: I often use flashcards, English children's songs, educational videos, and games. The main constraint is usually the availability of equipment, such as the LCD projector or speakers, which sometimes aren't operational.

Q8: How do you ensure students understand new instructions or material, considering English is not their mother tongue?

A8: I rely on gestures, direct examples, simple sentence structures, and drilling. I also make a point of asking them to repeat the instructions back to me or to physically practice the task, just to be sure they truly understand.

3. School Environment and Support Issues

Q9: Does an overcrowded classroom affect your ability to give individual attention to students?

A9: Yes, an overcrowded class makes it very difficult for me to give focused attention to every student, especially during speaking practice. I have to manage my time as efficiently as possible and rely more heavily on group work.



Q10: Does the school have supporting English language facilities? If not, does this pose a constraint?

A10: Our school currently does not have a language lab or a dedicated English reading corner. This is a constraint because students lack a specific space where they can practice listening or reading independently.

Q11: What is the most important support needed from the school or parents to improve the quality of English instruction?

A11: I would hope the school could provide better facilities, like functional LCD projectors, speakers, or more complete classroom setups. Parental support is also crucial, especially in motivating the children to learn at home, perhaps by helping them memorize vocabulary or watching simple educational videos together.

Discussion results

Based on the results of an interview with an English teacher at Tri Putra Dhana Foundation Elementary School, the main challenge is rooted in three things: student interest, methodology, and learning environment. In overcoming the problem of low student interest and the assumption that English is difficult, teachers are advised to shift the focus from grammar to fun practises. The solution is to implement Simple Project Based Learning (PjBL) that allows students to create creative outputs such as short dramas or English posters, turning learning perceptions into applicative and fun activities. To handle the main difficulties in speaking skills and vocabulary, where students often feel embarrassed and afraid of making mistakes, teachers can start with a Light Mandatory Show & Tell Session in small groups that are gradually introduced to the front of the class, accompanied by the Total Physical Response (TPR) technique to strengthen vocabulary memory through movement. In addition, the significant difference in ability levels requires a differentiated learning solution, where teachers provide tiered assignments and varied learning resources so that novice students and advanced students can be challenged according to their respective abilities.

Related to learning methods and resources, the main problem is the teaching materials that are too textual and less interesting for elementary school children, as well as the limited duration of the meeting. The solution is that teachers need to proactively make Independent Visual Material Supplements such as illustrated vocabulary cards, interesting worksheets, or utilising authentic materials such as children's songs in English. To optimise the limited time, teachers can integrate Language Practice Outside of Class Hours through English Moment or give a short routine homework in the form of memorising vocabulary or watching educational videos. Technical obstacles such as media facilities that are not always available can be overcome with Low-Tech Media Diversification, for example utilising the Display Board/Word Wall that is regularly updated for new vocabulary exposure, and strengthening the understanding of instructions through the Visual Understanding Confirmation System such as gestures or drawing.

Finally, in terms of the environment and school support, the problem of dense classes that hinder individual attention can be overcome by optimising the Peer-Tutoring System (strong students help the weak) and Work Group Rotation so that teachers can focus on giving intensive feedback to certain groups.



The absence of Supporting Facilities such as language laboratories can be investigated by making a Simple English Corner inside or outside the classroom as a self-study room. Teachers also need to initiate School-Parent Intensive Communication, provide practical guidance on how to motivate children to study at home, to ensure support and a learning environment are not limited to the classroom.

The fundamental solution of this book is centred on achieving Effective Learning and encouraging the development of reflective skills and personal-social abilities in learners, such as collaboration, communication, and leadership. The learning strategy offered must belong to the learner, arising from the need for challenging real learning tasks, not just a rigid technical package. Teachers are encouraged to change the role of a compass and facilitator who motivates students to be confident in speaking English. Philosophically, this solution also emphasises the importance of encouraging students to take positive actions for their own well-being and safety as well as the surrounding environment.

To implement these solutions, learning must ensure harmonious interaction of six key components: material must be systematic and relevant; methods must be varied and culturally sensitive, with strong recommendations for approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), and Cooperative Learning; media must be optimised as a messenger; evaluation must be integral and valid; learners must have high discipline; and a learning environment must be comfortable and positive. In addition, this book provides detailed strategies for teaching all four language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) and also offers guidance for learning in the Digital Age, which requires teachers to implement interactive, collaborative, and interesting strategies to stimulate students thoroughly.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this discussion indicate that the challenges in teaching English at the primary school level, which include low student interest, unengaging methods, and a limited learning environment, are overcome through a holistic approach centered on Effective Learning and the development of personal-social skills.

The primary solution is to adopt Simple Project-Based Learning (PjBL) to create learning activities that are application-oriented and enjoyable, supported by Differentiated Instruction to accommodate various student ability levels. This is further reinforced by leveraging innovative techniques (such as TPR - Total Physical Response and Show & Tell) along with low-tech and authentic media to strengthen the material.

Philosophically, success is achieved by transforming the teacher's role into a facilitator and motivator who builds student self-confidence, ensuring that all key learning components (material, method, approach, media, evaluation, and environment) work harmoniously. This is supported by a Peer-Tutoring system to foster a supportive learning environment both inside and outside the classroom

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