

READINESS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN MATARAM CITY

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Abstract: This research is aimed at describing the readiness of teaching-learning English at elementary school (ES) in Kodya Mataram, accentuating on perception of respondents; English teacher's qualifications; the availability of English teacher and teaching facility; students' interest of study English; and constraints in English instruction. This survey assigns its subjects to 14 principals without EP, 49 parents of children's schools with EP, and 55 parents of children's schools without EP. The instruments used to collect data are questionnaire, interview guide, and observation form. The study reveals that (1) most respondents in each group are ready to teach English at ES; (2) English teachers' qualification meet the criteria; (3) Of 30 ES without EP, 7 (23.33%) are ready, English text books for ES with are categorized mostly ready; and (4) Students at ES with are mostly ready. In addition, 9 (30%) of students at 30 non-ESP schools are totally not ready.

Keywords: readiness, English, elementary school.

THE TEACHING English at elementary school is now allowed to be conducted as a legitimate local content subject. It is supported by the Decree of the ministry of Education and Culture No. 030/U/1993. As a matter of fact English has been chosen by many elementary schools (ES) as one of the local content subjects in some provinces, especially in the area of business and tourism. The rapid increase of the number of ES to offer English indicates that serious attention has been given by the society to this particular subject and its benefits.

Recently, much interest has focused on the issue of teaching English at elementary schools. Even though English is not a compulsory subject at ES but there are many elementary schools applying English as a choice of local content. The question of teaching English at elementary schools students will disturb their socialization and their social and cultural background. Baradja (1990) for instance, states that though the teaching might result in unwanted psychological effects for the students. Kasbolah (1990) does not show her disagreement.

Out of the contradictory opinion above, a bright idea to improve the proficiency of English among learners arises. The idea is to try teaching English earlier at elementary schools than we used to. We know from experience that very young children are able to understand what is being said to them even before then understand the individual words (Halliwell, 1992:3). In this case Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982:78) believe that acquisition of child's second or foreign language under the age ten years is better than the age of puberty.

If children can study English in a natural situation, the acquisition of sound of the language they learn will be almost the same as a native speaker.

In term of teaching English (might be also significance for English as a local content subject at elementary schools), Baradja (1992) offers six requirements to be completed accurately to obtain the expected teaching-learning result, there are, objective, learners, teachers, materials, method, and environment. Thus he also believes only there factors are considered as main factors than can be potentially affect the success or failure of teaching English, namely: objective, learners, and teachers.

This study is aimed to describe the readiness of teaching English at elementary schools in Kodya Mataram which includes: (1) perception of respondents; (2) qualification of English teacher (*especially for ES with EP*); (3) the availability of English teacher (*especially for ES without EP*) and the English teaching facility; and (4) the students' interest to study English. In addition, this study also want to describe constrains faced by elementary schools in English instruction program.

METHODS

The design of this study is a survey. This design in based on the consideration that a survey is more appropriate to obtain information and to describe phenomena with a large scope, with representative sample, and in a relatively short time. From the analysis point of view, this research is a phenomena. The phenomena described in this study relate to the readiness of the elementary schools toward English instruction as a local content subject in Kodya Mataram, based on the perception the principals and student's parents, English teacher's qualification, the availability of English teacher's and parent's support, the availability of English teaching facility, and student's interest to study English.

The population of this study is all public and private elementary school principals and student's parent in Kodya Mataram. For this purpose, there are four groups of respondents taken as samples, i.e. principals whose schools have an English program (EP). 30 ES principals without EP, 49 student's parents whose children's schools have an EP, and 55 student's parents whose children schools without an EP.

There are three instruments used in this study, they are questionnaire, interview guide, and observation form. The collection of data was done through delivering the questionnaire directly to the elementary school principals covered in this study. At the same time, the researcher visited the schools to interview their principals and observe their availability of English teaching learning facility. The questionnaire for student's parents was distributed through the students by the help for principals. The data analyzed utilizing descriptive applied statistics – means and percentage. The criteria used to determine the readiness degree of teaching English at ES as follows.

Mean	:	> 3.50	=	Totally ready
		2.50 – 3.49	=	Mostly ready
		1.50 – 2.49	=	Mostly not ready
		< 1.49	=	Totally not ready
Percentage	:	90-100	=	Totally ready
		70-89	=	Mostly ready

50-69 = Totally not ready

FINDINGS

With respect to the research problem, the findings of this study are successively discussed in terms of: (1) Perception of Respondents, (2) Qualification of English Teachers, (3) The Availability of English Teacher and Teaching Learning Facility, (4) Students' interest in Learning English, and (5) Problems Faced by ES in Teaching English.

Perception of Respondents

Data of perceptions toward the teaching of English at ES in Kodya Mataram including indicators, such as need, expectation, attitude, belief, and feeling.

Generally state that most of Scholl principals from the two groups consider that English is necessary to be offered for ES student. The mean scores indicate that the respondents are mostly ready to the indicator. The Scholl principals with EP get mean score 3.21 and those without an EP get 3.27. students' parents of the groups also indicate their readiness to accept English to be taught at ES in Kodya Mataram. Each group is categorized mostly ready with the mean 3.59 for parents whose children's schools with EP and 3.49 for those without an EP.

In line with the need of teaching and learning English at ES, The four groups of respondents reply that the four language skills are also necessary to be given to the students. The average mean score of all indicators of language skills indicates that 2.87 for principals of schools with an EP and 2.98 for Schools principals without an EP. Those mean scores suggest that both groups of respondents are mostly ready to the application of four language skills at ES. students' parents of the two groups are also categorized mostly ready to the same indicator with the mean score 2.96 for parents whose children's schools with EP and 3.17 for parents whose children's schools without EP.

Data analysis about the exception of respondents that English can be formally taught at age 10 to 12 years (children on grade four to six of ES) indicates that most for respondents in each group are mostly ready (mostly in favor and favor). This indicator is proved by the mean scores as follows : 3.14 for school principals with EP, 3.13 for school principals without EP, 3.22 for parents whose children's schools with EP, and 3.29 for parents whose children's schools without EP.

The respondents of each group indicate that most of them show their positive attitude toward the English instruction at elementary schools. In other words, most of them are ready if English Is really applied at ES. As it is shown on the mean score of each group, that is : 3.21 for school principals with EP, 3.13 for school principals without EP, 3.49 for parents whose children's schools with EP, and 3.42 for parents whose children's school without EP.

The average mean of belief towards the usefulness of learning English at ES indicates that 3.47 for school principals with an EP and 3.19 for school principals without EP. The average of those means shows that both groups of respondents are mostly ready to their beliefs of the usefulness of English. However, if an attention is paid to each indicator, school principals with an EP are classified totally ready with mean score 3.57 on indicator 'learning' English at ES can help students learning English at SLTP (Junior High School) Otherwise,

student's parents of the two groups are categorized totally ready of the same indicator as indicated on the average mean score : 3.58 for parents whose children's schools with EP and 3.57 for parents whose children's schools without EP.

The readiness of respondents, either school principals or student's parents related to their feeling toward the English instruction at Es in Kodya Mataram indicates that each group of respondents is categorized mostly ready. As it is shown by the mean score of felling indicator , that is 3.21 for school principals with EP, 3.20 for school principals without EP, 3.47 for parents whose children's whose schools with EP, and 3.36 parents whose children's schools without EP.

Qualification of English Teacher

The average mean score of the respondents' answers to all indicator of English teacher's qualification is 2.52. it mean that the English teacher teaching English at ES in Kodya Mataram are generally categorized mostly ready. However, if attention is paid to each indicator of the readiness of English teacher's qualification, it is found that the English teachers are classified on totally not ready especially on 'experience in seminars and workshops for English for young learners'.

Availability of English Teacher and Teaching Learning Facility

The data about the availability of English teachers particularly for ES without an EP are found out through interview guide. The data analysis indicates generally that ES without an EP are totally not ready because only 7 principals (23.33%) of 30 school principals state they have English teachers.

The readiness of English teaching and learning facility for young learners is shown on the indicators of English textbooks, and storybooks, and magazines. The average mean score to all indicators indicate that 1.83 for school principals with an EP and 1.00 for school principals without an EP. The average mean found out by the school principals with an EP is categorized on mostly not ready while for school principals without an EP is totally not ready. Specially on textbooks, ES with an EP are categorized mostly ready with the mean 2.36.

Students' Interest in Learning English

Data analysis indicates that the mean score of principals of schools with an EP is 3.43, meaning that the students are mostly ready or mostly interested to study English. Otherwise, mean score for school principals without an EP is 1.30, meaning that the student are totally not ready or totally not interested in studying English. Specifically, 9 principals (30%) of 30 school principals state that their students are ready or interested in studying English formally at their schools.

Problems Faced by ES in Teaching English

School principals with an EP state that they face problems in terms of the cooperation or support of student's parents and the supplying of English teaching facility. While the school principals without an EP state that instead of they face problems on the cooperation or

support of the students' parents and the supplying of English teaching facility, they also face a problem in terms of the availability of English teacher.

DISCUSSION

Perceptions of the Respondents

Nowadays, English is increasingly needed not only because it is one of the international languages mostly used in the world but also as it is used to transfer science and technology. English is also much more used as a means of communication in some fields of living. People are starting to consider that English takes important role not only for those who want to enroll themselves into higher educational institutions but also for those who want to look better jobs and positions. Realizing how important English is for the progress of our country, the government has established English as the first crucial foreign language which may be taught at elementary schools as an elective or local contents.

However, some accept and reject the idea of the need of starting English at elementary schools. In terms of the need of English to be offered for ES students in Kodya Mataram, most of principal respondents and parent respondents stated their agreement. In other words, most of respondent in each group are ready to accept the English program at ES in Kodya Mataram (based on the average of mean score).

Those who agree with the application of English at elementary school give various reasons. However, among those reasons, one is very familiar and significant with the respondents, that is 'many guests, businessmen, and tourists from many countries visit many tourist spots in Kodya Mataram that possibly children have the opportunity to practice their English'. This might be in line with the fact that instead of Kodya Mataram as the capital of the provincial town is also the center of business and possesses a unique culture that is Sasak and Balinese, Islam and Hindu. One of the common jokes but it is fact real, to make tourists interested in coming to Lombok (Mataram) is that 'you can see Bali in Lombok but you cannot see Lombok in Bali. That is why the rate of arrival of foreigners to this area increases every year.

However, foreigner who come to this area always speak English. It is crucial for the communities in Kodya Mataram to equip themselves with the ability to communicate in English with the foreigners. For future purposes, since English is one of the international language and the most widely used all over the world. English should be offered earlier for young learners starting from elementary schools.

All respondents consider learning the four language skills of English for ES is very important. The 1994 English Curriculum for primary education also suggests that the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) can possibly be presented integratedly. However, the teaching and learning process of English the emphasis is on reading skills (Appendix 2 the Decree of Minister of Education and Vculture No. 060/U/1993:1).

Based on the expectation, most of respondents of all groups expect that English can be taught formally at age 10-12 years (beginning from grade four to six of ES). The respondents believe that young children between 10 to 12 years will be easier to learn a new language including English. Young children are able to understand what is being said to them even

before they understand the individual words and their acquisition of a language is better than at puberty (Halliwell, 1972, Dulay, Burd, and Krashen, 1982). The respondents also believe that learning English earlier from age 10 to 12 would make it easier for learners to learn English at SLTP (Junior High School). We know English has been taught at SLTP for years but the students still have many difficulties. Implicitly, Baradja (1990) and Huda (1997) reveal that students learning English at this level do not have enough exposure and chance to communicate using their target language. That is why, it can be predicted that to start teaching-teaching English at ES will give enough English exposure and a chance for learners to communicate using their English.

The readiness of respondents either principals or parents related to their attitude to the English instruction at ES in Kodya Mataram appears that they give their positive attitude. Even the respondents do not give their reasons why they give their positive attitude toward the teaching of English at ES, it can be interpreted that learning English at ES might be a good basis for students in learning English at SLTP. Instead of that they also believe that learning English for young learners will enrich the learners knowledge.

Teachers' Qualification

One of various factors that can influence the result of learners' learning achievement in teaching-learning process is the qualification of teacher with the indicator of formal educational background. Ideally, an English teacher should graduate from an English department. Based on the data analysis, the qualification of English teacher teaching English at ES in Kodya Mataram is mostly ready or very good. It is known that most of the English teachers have an English education background at S1 and D3/D3. Meaning that they have an authority to teach English. It does not mean that those with non-English field of study do not have an authority to teach English. If they are interested in English they may teach English but really have to make an effort to enrich their knowledge of English.

Teaching experience is also able to affect the result of students learning and the teaching and learning process. English teachers who have enough experience in teaching at other schools will able to teach better than those who do not. In accordance with this indicator, the English teacher teaching English at ES in Kodya Mataram are categorized mostly ready. Other experiences of English teachers that can also effect the students' learning achievement are workshops, seminars, and training for English for young learners. These experiences are able to increase the teachers' knowledge in instructing and managing the class.

English Teacher and English Teaching Facility

Teacher is the most important factor in the success or failure of the teaching-learning process, especially the English teacher for young learners. One of the criteria for elementary schools that want to program English for their students is the availability of English teacher. Elementary schools that have English teachers are suggested to offer English for their students. Instead of English teacher, English teaching learning facility is also a crucial point that should be provided to support the teaching and learning process in the class and then in turn to increase the result of students' learning. Elementary schools learners, such as:

textbooks, storybooks, illustrated English dictionaries, magazines, teaching aids (audio and visual).

Students' Interest

As we know, one of various factors that can affect the students' success in learning English is interest or motivation. Those who are interested to study English, of course they feel contented and attempt to study hard to master it. If it happens up side down, meaning that the students are not interested in studying it, it may make them feel lazy. Many learners fail in learning English because they less interested in it. Based on the data analysis ES students with an EP are mostly ready or mostly interested in studying English. On the other hand, ES students without an EP are totally not ready or totally not interested in studying English. Only 9 of 30 principals respondents whose schools without an EP state that less than 50% of their students ask English to be taught at their schools.

Problems Faced by Elementary Schools

In teaching and learning English at ES in Kodya Mataram, there are some problems faced by the principals either whose schools with or without an EP. Generally, the sources of the problems are divided into indicators, human factors and non-human factors.

Human Factors

Based on the interview analysis, there are two sources of problems dealing with human factors: (a) English teachers and (b) the cooperation between students' parents and schools.

The problems of English teacher at ES in Kodya Mataram is due to the teacher's salary. Most elementary schools (principals) state that they cannot pay the English teacher because of they do not have enough fund. The case of cooperation between parents and schools (principals) is due to the awareness of students' parents is still low and many of them are still under the rate of poverty. That is why, the need of their children education in schools are considered as schools' and teacher's responsibility.

Non-Human Factors

Main problems faced by elementary schools relating to the non-human factors are: (a) English local content curriculum/course, (b) English teaching materials (textbooks, storybooks, magazines, and dictionaries), and (c) English teaching aids (tape recorder, cassettes, pictures, real objects and flash cards). Most of principals admit that they face problems to those English teaching and learning facilities because they do not have enough money to by them.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research findings and the discussions, it can be concluded as follows.

1. Most of the respondents in each group are ready to accept the program of teaching-learning English at ES in Kodya Mataram. In other words, most of the respondents

- have supportive perception towards the teaching-learning English at ES in Kodya Mataram.
2. The qualification of English teachers (especially for ES with an EP) indicates that most of them are or in other words most of the complete their requirement to be English teacher because most of them were graduated from undergraduate (S1) and D2/D3 of the English department. But indicating on their experiences to accompany seminars or workshop for English for young learners, they are not ready. Meaning that most of them never follow English seminars or workshops for young learners.
 3. The availability of English teacher, especially for schools without an EP show that only 7 of 30 (23.33%) schools are ready with the English teacher. While English teaching-learning facility indicates that most schools with and without an EP are totally not ready, expect indicates that most schools with and without an EP are with English programs are categorized mostly ready because each school has three to five textbooks.
 4. Students who go to school with an EP are mostly ready and interested ins studying English. On the other hand, the students whose schools without an EP are totally not ready or not interested in studying English.
 5. The are two problems related to human factors that are faced by schools with and without an EP include (a) English teacher and (b) the cooperation between parents and schools. Some problems appear dealing with non-human factors faced by the schools include all English teaching-learning facility for young learners.

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