**IJIET**, e-ISSN 2548-8430, p-ISSN 2548-8422, Vol. 4, No. 1, January 2020

*International Journal of Indonesian Education and Teaching*
http://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/IJIET
Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

# PRIMARY TEACHERS AND CULTURAL – BASED ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS; VOICES, ISSUES, AND DEMANDS

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https://doi.org/10.24071/ijiet.v4i1.2318
received 15 November 2019; accepted 27 December 2019

**Abstract**
Teachers and textbooks are two significant successful factors of achieving better standard of education. However, teaching English can be rerified if the teachers only depend on the existing materials without noticing the needs of the students. This study attempted to seek for issues as well solutions in overcoming teachers' difficulties in primary school of SD N 13 Koba, Bangka Regency, Bangka Belitung Province. Two teachers were involved in the study to be interviewed and as the sources of the data. The results of the interview reveal that indeed teachers at this primary school faced issues in teaching English such as their limited knowledge of English, insufficient English teaching times and unprepared more qualified teachers. As for the solution, providing them with lively cultural – based English textbook is one of the ways. As the rule makers, goverments couldprovide more fees to the teachers and add research funds so that researchers are motivated to conduct better and larger scale of areas and participants.

Keywords: cultural – based textbook, issues in English learning, primary teachers

## Introduction

Teachers and textbooks are two significant successful factors of achieving better standard of education. However, teaching English can be rerified if the teachers only depend on the existing materials without noticing the needs of the students. The essential of teaching and learning goes to the process in which the students and teacher can both engage well. The felicitious of the students in learning will result and affect in their final assessment. Many studies report that adding local values will improve their English understanding as well as promote better achievement of English skills. Kusuma (2016) suggests that the criteria of good material in English is by adding some local content information within the texts. Teachers are the essential features of education. Agents of change who educate students to be competent and skillful in their fields, moreover in teaching profession. Cao, Postareff, Lindblom-Ylanne, and Toom (2019) argue that teacher educators should be explored of how they facilitate their methods in teaching. To support these statements, the facts arised when the researchers undergone with the interview with two of the teachers at SD N 13 Koba, Central Bangka Regency.

They admitted that it was demanding for them to select the appropriate materials for the students due to his limited exposure towards English, as he is not a teacher of English. He felt that English local based textbook would help him breaking down the issues that he is facing. In addition, Ummi Kaltsum and Susiati (2019) consent to the need of a specific regional element in English textbook. In some European countries which employ English as a foreign language, they demand some criteria for primary teachers to obtain better result of early child education. Take for instance, several countries that apply ELLiE teaching model in Figure 1.

| Country | General teacher | Semi-specialist teacher | Specialist teacher | Unqualified teacher |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Croatia | × | | × | |
| England | × | | × | × |
| Italy | | × | | |
| Netherlands | × | × | × | |
| Poland | × | | × | |
| Spain | × | | × | |
| Sweden | × | × | | × |

**Figure 1.** ELLiE (Early Language Learning in Europe) Teaching Model (in Enever, 2014)

It is worth noticing that even developed countries such as Netherlands, Italy, and Sweden necessitate semi-specialist teachers at primary schools. This study revealed the issues that the primary teachers overcome during their teaching process. When the researchers conducted a small survey, by having little conversation and playing English vocabulary games to the students, they were lively and vigorously engaged in the process of learning. Inspite of the vocabulary limits they have, but they could take part to the games very well. This evidence, nonetheless, is not necessarily determining that they could take part in all aspects of English learning. Looking at the fact that primary school students are great duplicators, the authors found that teaching English at schools should have been motivating, being fun and energetic. However, to seek for best answers, the writers selected the teachers to be the participants as they acknowledge best of their surroundings. The problems stated in this study were; 1) what are the issues of teachers in teaching English at primary schools?, and 2) what kind of mediathat could help teachers address English materials at primary schools?. The aims are; 1) to cognize issues in dealing with teaching English at primary schools, and
2) to find best medium to teach English.

## Method

### *Design*

This study tried to reveal the issues found and the solutions to overcome the problems. To accomplish the aims of the research, a descriptive study of qualitative design was employed. The researchers applied one-on-one interview

to the teachers at SD N 13 Koba. Those 12 questions then also improved as researchers wanted to dig up more information. One-on-one interview is a process of data collection in which only one person in the research asks queries at the same time (Cresswell, 2012). This one-on-one interview allowed researchers to collect and record the data from participants. The researchers, however, explored elaborative probes when conducting the interview. As what Cresswell (2012) mentions, the use of good, straightforward and simple questions allow people to understand the problems and provide meaningful answers.

***Participants/Data Collection***

The participants of the present study are the teachers of SD N 13 Koba through purposeful sampling tehcnique. Teacher 1 is the teacher of the $5^{th}$ grade while teacher 2 is the teacher of $6^{t\ h}$ grade. Two teachers teaching at higher classes(the fifth and the sixth grades) were interviewed for purposeful reasons, namely;
1) English is taught at higher classes, 2) higher classes students acknowledge more vocabulary both in Bahasa Indonesia and English, 3) teachers of higher classes are given chance to explore English though it is an optional subject.

***Data Analyses***

Qualitative researchers analyze the data several times by reading them and performing each analysis (Cresswell, 2012). There were five steps, then, carried out in analyzing the data, they are; 1) Listening several times to the data records,
2) transcribing and typing them into words, 3) presenting the data in table, 4) analysing and interpretating each answer, 5) relating answers with experts judgments to find the solvents.

**Result and Discussion**

To answer the two research questions;1) what are the issues of teachers in teaching English at primary schools?, and 2) what kind of media that could help teachers address English materials at primary schools?, twelve interview questions with probes explorations were deployed to find the best solutions of the problems faced by the teacers. The ten questions were then described to seek for information about how English is taught at the school.

The results of the interview have been translated from Bahasa Indonesia and are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Interview Questions & Answers

| Questions | Answers |
|---|---|
| Can you speak English or have you ever taught English? | T1: No, I studied English at schools but many things I've forgotten. English was learnt to fulfill the grades only.<br>T2 : I know English but not very well. I know few vocabulary only. English is no my language. |
| Do you teach English at your school? | T1 : English lesson in this school is |

| | |
|---|---|
| | not a mandatory, so when I havetime I give them some easy English vocabulary. But mostly I focus on other subjects.<br>T2 : I only teach it whenever I have time. At the higher class we focus more on passing the national examination, many additional hours need to be fulfilled. |
| How do you teach your students at school if you do not master English? | T1: English is an optional subject here. So I rarely teach them.<br>T2 : If we have time, we practice some easy vocabulary like foods, drinks, vegetables, etc. |
| But do you want your students enable to speak English? | T1 : Yes very much. I am so sympathy for them that as a teacher, I am not so good in English, I mean I do not master English well. When they enter junior schools, it is a problem for them because they are not accustomed to English.<br>T2 : Yes, but I am not so very good in English. |
| Do you think that English should be taught at elementary school and why? | T1: For my case, yes, it is hard for students to speak and learn English well when they enter junior schools. There is only one student who joins English course in my class. And the attitudes towards English is not so good. It means that they don't really care about English because they don't know the vocabulary.<br>T2 : I think they need to study English but with the real teacher of English, because my English knowledge is limited. |
| Do you want to expand your knowledge in English or do you need any books that could help you teach? | T1 : I think I need English books which can build up their motivation and mine as well to learn English<br>T2 : I want to enlarge my English as well as the books to use to transfer my knowledge. |
| Do you think local content materials could help engage with English? | T1 : I think so, there has no English textbooks with local content materials which could support my teaching, |

| | |
|---|---|
| | T2 : Yes, with local content I think it will be easier for them to study. |
| What kind of local content materials that can be delivered? | T1 : Many things, I don't know. I hope someone makes that book. |
| | T2 : I think we need something that is related to their daily activities. |
| Can you suggest one or two local content themes to be put in the book? | T1 : Yes, I think we are culturally rich, we can talk about Kaolin lake, Pelawan forest, etc. |
| | T2 : There are so many legends in our hometown that can be taken as themes. I am sure those are useful. |
| Why do you think it is important to make English textbook based on local materials? | T1 : Because we need them to understand their own culture. |
| | T2 : I think it is easier if we learn things with our own perspectives and values to support better learning environment. |
| If you can, will you write cultural – based English textbook for your students? | T1 : I am not able to do such thing. Please someone does it. |
| | T2 : For the sake of the students, I would if I could, but I have limited exposure towards English. I hope the goverment could think about it. |
| What other problems that you find in English teaching in elementary schools? | T1 : We don't have English teacher here and English is the optional subject, it is big problem for them. |
| | T2 : I do need English textbooks that can help me teach English better to them. |

***Issues faced by the teachers***

The issues emerged are; 1) teachers' limited exposures towards English, 2) there is no English teacher to support English learning, and 3) English as an optional subject. While one of the media that could aid teachers' performances in English teaching is providing them a cultural – based English textbook with easy – used and learnt.The issues faced by the teachers in teaching English

*Teachers' limited exposures towards English*

Teachers at primary schools should have the best notion towards English. Teaching effectively is reflecti ng wisely. reflecting teaching promotes professional development, critical thinking, self-evaluation and self-oriented learning (Shu, 2017). Through reflective teaching, teachers cognise their strengthsand weaknesses, evolve their teaching methods, as well as amend their previous skills for the better. Have the interviewed teachers reflected their teaching?

> *"T1 : Yes very much. I am so sympathy for them that as a teacher, I am not so good in English, I mean I do not master English well. When they*

*enter junior schools, it is a problem for them because they are not accustomed to English.*
*T2 : Yes, but I am not so very good in English."*

The answers above certify that their English skills are fiddling and are adequate for theirselves. It is no surprise since they are not graduated from English department program. It is taught with bounded times at non – English study program of higher educations. However, they did not mention why they had little knowledge of English. This is confirming Cresswell's (2012) impression that limited answers of the interviewee could be an issue due to their insecurity of telling the truth to the interviewer. The teachers, however, feel so motivated to enhance their English skills, though they did not own the media to help them perceive better English skills. Cheng and Dornyei (2007) emphasize that 'even thebrightest learner will not persist long enough, without ample motivation to acquirea genuinely useful language skill'.

*"T1 : I think I need English books which can build up their motivation and mine as well to learn English.*
*T2 : I want to enlarge my English as well as the books to use to transfer my knowledge. "*

From the answer of T2, it entails that he actually desires to achieve better English proficiency. He shows his motivation and interest towards English which actually could better their self-efficacy. Self-efficacy of teachers is consudered as one of the key concepts that affect educational performance (Uztosun, 2016). But the lack of the sources is one of the problems since they are not concerned with English learning. Enever (2014) demonstrates that teacher's anxiety in controlling the classroom relates to their language competency. Nevertheless, this finding contradicts with Marian and Jesus (2015) whose study result demonstrated that teaching English was the only reason that made the teachers desire to be primary school teachers.

*Lack of efficient time and qualified English teachers support to accompaniment English learning*

This result corresponds with Uztosun (2016) who states that one of the major issues in several countries where English classes were included in primary education years, was that primary schools were lack of suitably qualified teachers, take for example, Croatia and Italy (Enever, 2014), China (Jin, Liang, Jiang, Zhang, Yuan, and Xie, 2014), and Turkey (Gursoy, Korkmaz & Damar, 2013). Efficient and effective of the use of time would be sufficient to upgrade students' English skills. As a matter of fact, Kirpatrick (2007) states that English teaching in Indonesia has failed to support educational development througout the country. Hettiarachchi (2013) writes up that the demotivators of Sri Lankan public school teachers included limited facilities, inefficiency of school administration and zonal education, English curriculum and students' proficiency. Similarly, a study conducted in Thailand, Forman (2014) reports that other than limited time given,

the development of materials for local teachers is seriously limited by large-scale class sizes, associated markings, and heavy teaching charges, as well as by thelow pay that most teachers have to take on further private work. Likewise, these obstacles are also faced by Indonesians as Dardjowidjojo (2000) summarizes that large class sizes, low salary, low proficiency of English teachers, lack of preparation of curriculum contribute to problematic factors in developing English atmosphere. In 2001, Alwasilah revealed that unskilled teachers, abject facilities, and discouraging environment for learning are some common issues faced by Indonesians. As a matter of fact, Dardjowidjojo (2000) also states that mostly high school graduates are unable to intelligibly communicate in English, unless for those who have taken English courses. Those several drawbacks in some developing countries such as Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka might leave a questionable educational systems within. Governments of the developing countries better take these matter critically. Because teachers are the key parts of estimable humans developement. However, the authors confirm that researchs conducted by Dardjowidjojo (2000) and Alwasilah (2001) had been taken into accounts for more than ten years, compared to Forman (2014) that revealed the issues in the past several years. It is worth explaining that the both studies reveal essential results to English development in South East Asia regions.

***Cultural – based English textbook as one of the media to improve skills***

There is no question that English textbooks portraying local values contribute significant improvements to students' motivations and skills. Scholars reveal that culturally textbooks that emerge their own culture promote benefecial of English learning.

> "T1 : Yes, I think we are culturally rich, we can talk about Kaolin lake, Pelawan forest, etc.
> T2 : There are so many legends in our hometown that can be taken as themes. I am sure those are useful."

Those statements correlate to what Richards and Renandya (2002) express that textbook is inappropriate for students as it differs in form of culture and is not contextualised. Forman (2014) reveals that by using a textbook written by the natives which is totally dissimilar with students and teachers' prior knowledge, no single answer was correctly answered by the students. Even in his study, the participants said not to use the book anymore as it did not meet the purpose of their learning appendage. Nonetheless, contradictive judgements appear. Shin, Eslami, and Chen (2011) state that the contents of the materials must be local and global in nature to explore global comprehending of the students. Similarly, Setyono, Widodo, Abd Rashid and Engku Ibrahim (2017) argue that multicultural materials within English textbooks could enhance students' understanding of indigenous people around the world with universal values. Furthermore, Huang (2019) believes that contextualised textbooks can better impact to language learninig and communication as well as become the platform for cultural diversity and tolerance. This is mattering to the researchers as it means there are pros and

contras among textbooks written perceptions. However, the authors value all of the notions since they all have their own unicity and modes in perceiving an issue. In addition, local and worldwide beliefs, values, and understandings are needed to be inserted within English textbooks. The writers believe that by bringing both regional and international motions together, the students could enlarge their perceptual experiences larger, expand their apprehension towards global culture, and honour their own as well as other civilization altogether.

## Conclusion

To sum up, teachers brings essential roles in developing students' ability and skills of English. Despite the facts that they meet some obstacles in teaching process, that they needed to be heard, as teachers. Not only that the diffculties in teaching they have, but also the inexistence of such meaningful yet adequate and appropriate medium to teach they need. Governments, as the rule makers, could keep this study results as the demand of changing educational system for the better. the facts arise in findings above reveal that Indonesia is not the onlycountry that pays less attention to teachers' needs such as low pay and limited time access to teach English. So the funds for researchs and teachers' payments should be noticed at best. Teahers as the educators should be more aware of the students to continue their unendless support and care, because teaching is not only about giving materials and accepting fees, but also being empathy, motivators,and facilitators. Further, for better research results, future researchers could conduct similar study which include larger scale groups of participants. Also, the present study result could promote to making English textbooks which culturally relevant to students' prior knowledge, and globally accepted to boarden their international assumptions.

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