

TEACHING ENGLISH IN INDONESIA

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PENGANTAR

Makalah ini mengulas tentang ketidakberhasilan pengajaran Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia dengan memaparkan beberapa penyebab kegagalan tersebut. Di dalam makalah ini juga diajukan beberapa upaya perbaikan terhadap manajemen dan sikap guru dalam mengajarkan bahasa Inggris kepada siswa di pendidikan formal (SMP dan SMA).

Penjabaran permasalahan pengajaran Bahasa Inggris yang diuraikan dalam makalah ini dimaksudkan agar guru-guru Children's English School memahami situasi dan kondisi belajar mengajar Bahasa Inggris di sekolah formal, sekaligus juga agar para guru menyadari posisi mereka yang diharapkan sebagai salah satu pemutus lingkaran setan dalam permasalahan pengajaran Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia.

Selain itu, dengan memahami keadaan yang demikian, para guru juga diharapkan dapat menciptakan suasana-suasana baru yang akan memotivasi siswa dalam mempelajari Bahasa Inggris dan tidak menganggap Bahasa Inggris sesuatu yang menakutkan dan sekaligus membosankan. Semoga makalah singkat ini dapat menjadi bahan pemikiran bagi para guru dalam menerapkan pola-pola baru di kelas nantinya.

TEACHING ENGLISH IN INDONESIA

Teaching English in Indonesia today faces a serious problem. According to Kompas (April, 28, 1991), most Indonesian students can neither speak nor write in English well after having been taught for six years in middle and high schools. It can be inferred that teaching and learning English at pre-college level is not a success.

Some studies, which have been conducted by Directorate of Basic and Middle Education, Ministry of Education and Culture Republic of Indonesia, reveal that many factors account for the incompetency of English teaching and learning. These factors include: the limited time on learning at school, the lack of qualified teachers, the lack of teaching aids, too many subjects to cover, over emphasis on linguistic knowledge, too big classes, unresponsive students, and the top-down management in educational system of Indonesia.

English in middle and high schools have three credit hours and each credit hour has 45 minutes. During that time teachers must cover all aspects such as structure, vocabulary, reading,

conversation, and writing. Teaching and learning process might run well if the class is not too big. In fact, Indonesian middle and high school classes have around 40 or 50 students in each class. Therefore, interaction flows uni-directionally from teacher to students, and students have no chance to practice English in class. Moreover, except the chalkboard and the students' textbooks, there is no teaching aids in the class that will help teachers with their lessons to make the teaching more meaningful.

Another predicament is the lack of qualified English teachers. According to Tempo's survey in December 1987, there are only 3 % qualified English teachers in Indonesia. It means that there are 97 % who are unqualified. The survey also states that English teachers are unable to speak English well. They do not know the appropriate methodology, nor do their master the materials that will be taught to the students.

Nevertheless, we cannot only blame the teachers as there are other factors beyond them. The teachers do not have opportunities to continue their education to the higher level and to up-grade themselves. Since there are not many substitute teachers available if they go to the college and also there are no special funding to support their studies. Actually, teachers in Indonesia are really under-valued. They do not get much money from their jobs. So they cannot support themselves to continue their study.

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Aside from teacher education mentioned above, the mass educational system, where there is no individual approach, leads the students to be passive in class by keeping silent. According to some survey reports by Directorate of basic and Middle Education, most students are uncomfortable among a big group because they feel lost in a crowd. They think that teachers will never care for them, ask them, and talk to them individually. In fact, teachers never do that, since there are too many students in the class and too many aspects to be covered within the limited time. This system leads to an uncompetitive situation where students are apt to keep silent for fear of disturbing the process of teaching and learning. Actually, this system seems to create the unresponsive and uncreative students, and teachers as well.

Because of the limited time and over-emphasis on linguistic knowledge teachers in handling the curriculum content, compress their lessons and drill their students by giving them some models of achievement tests in trying to promote students proficiency. Thus, it gives rise to the fact that students never learn English well. They never get the real input of English. They only gain the knowledge of language but do not gain the skills in using that language.

The biggest cause of the problem, actually, is the top-down management in educational system of Indonesia. It seems that everything is centralized and the people in the "down-level" are

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reluctant to change the policy from the "top-level", because they do not want to be blamed. So it can be understood why Indonesia teachers seem to avoid this issue of the failure of teaching English. They are afraid of their headmasters. On the other hand, the headmasters are also afraid of superintendents. In fact, the superintendents are afraid of the Educational Officers at the higher level in the Ministry of Education and Culture. Therefore, they cannot do anything to improve the process of teaching and learning.

There are two solutions to the above problems. To combine the top-down management with the bottom-up management, and to modify the mass educational system by drawing attention to individual factors. Hence, people in education are allowed to and feel free to create their own syllabi as long as they follow their curriculum. Teachers should condition the class where they act as facilitators and students as their partners. Lecturing, teacher-oriented, and textbook-oriented activities should be reduced in class. But teachers must also be aware of the fact that they should not to lead the class into the permissive situation since it is not suitable with Indonesian culture and philosophy.

In particular, these solutions are not easy to work out. It needs the political will because the conditions above have been adhered to for a long time and they have a direct connection with all bureaucracies of educational systems in Indonesia. Furthermore,

the paternal behaviour of Indonesian community will keep the process of changing. Consequently, this reform will take such a long time that nobody can predict when the change will occur.

There are, however, some other solutions that must be addressed in addition to the above mentioned one. Firstly, to motivate the students to study English more seriously by explaining the importance of English acquisition in their life. Then the teachers should make continuous effort to improve this circumstance in class. Secondly, to establish parent-teacher communication, so parents can also help students in maintaining their capability by providing the environment where they can express themselves freely. Thus, students will gradually become responsive in their own learning.

Furthermore, schools should provide some facilities to assist language acquisition. Some extra-curricular activities can also be created to improve English learning in term of constructing English Board Magazines, Speech Contest, Scrabble Competition, and other activities.

Above all, more dedicated and creative teachers are needed by all Indonesian schools. But, of course, we must compensate their adversity such as financial support and the opportunity to continue their studies. Actually, it seems absurd talking about Indonesian educationnnnal system, but something must be done to reach the

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purpose of national education, as stated in the Indoneisan Basic Constitution.

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