THE PORTRAIT OF TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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Abstract: This observational study, which focuses on strategies used by teachers when teaching English as a Foreign Language to primary school students, was conducted in two classes at one of private international primary school. This study attempted to address the following question: what instructional strategies are used by the English teachers at this school? The data, which were collected by using a classroom observation and interview with the teachers and their students, were analyzed qualitatively by using categories formulated based on theories related to instructional strategies include planning and preparing the instruction, implementing the teaching and learning process, and assessing the students' achievement. The major findings of this study include 1) although the teachers do the same stages in planning but the plan is implemented and resulted in different ways; 2) the teachers are able to use games as a tool for learning; 3) although curriculum requires teachers to integrate the skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking), in actual implementation, the teachers do not teach English in integrative ways; 4) time management in this school has become a problematic factor for the teachers; 5) with respect to teacher's strategies in assessing students' achievement, the teachers do assessment by way of remedial teaching once a week after the class is over in part where the students failed to understand.
Keywords: *teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), learning process, teaching strategies, instructional strategies, assessment.*

INTRODUCTION

As one of the foreign languages in Indonesia, English is a compulsory subject from primary up to tertiary. In the elementary school, English is regarded as the local content following the Decree of Ministry of Education No. 0487/4/1992 (Suyanto, 1994). Although many private primary schools had started teaching English long before the public schools did, the result of previous study (Suyanto, 1994) revealed that the teaching of English at these schools was unsatisfactory. Many factors influence the success of the teaching and learning English. One of the factors is teaching strategies employed by the teachers.

Therefore, this study is concerned with investigating teaching strategies of two teachers of a private school.

Regarding the strategies, Sinaga in Sadtono (1997: 173) states that one of the most important requirements is quality teachers. At least two qualifications are needed from the teacher: (1) qualification in English and (2) a teaching qualification. The first qualification is essential as the teacher is the model for his/ her students. The second qualification includes a sound knowledge of how to teach children and the ability to implement it in class.

Teaching English at elementary school in Indonesia based on curriculum

1994, in a flexible context, makes English teaching possible to be taught (Alwasilah, 2000). This flexibility means that this subject may be taught (not must be taught) when the school is ready to do it. Therefore, to make the teaching and learning English at elementary school successful, the school should know the goal of the teaching and learning itself. Regarding the objectives of the English teaching at elementary school, English is taught to children to make them be able to comprehend simple oral and written English (Cf. Huda, 1999; Suyanto, 1997; Sinaga, 1997).

Teaching English to children is not the same as teaching adults (Brown, 2001) because it has something to do with helping children to achieve the goals and objectives deemed to be important by society in ways that are consistent with sound psychological principles of childhood (Jarolimek and Foster, 1989).

Huddleston (1991: 2) states the basic principles of children learning and language learning. The first principle is children in primary or elementary setting generally learn by doing (Piaget, 1955 in Brown, 2001). This means that they learn through hands-on experiences and through manipulation of objects in the environment. If this principle were extended to the EFL setting, it would mean that children in language classes need to be active rather than passive; they need to be engaged in activities of which language is a part; they need to be working on meaningful tasks and use language to accomplish these tasks.

Second principle, children learn in social contexts, in groups where some group members know more than others. This principle suggests that children need not only hands-on or direct experiences, but also experiences where they are interesting with and learning from others, both adults and other children.

Third, language acquisition occurs through learners figuring out how the language works, through learners making and testing out hypotheses about the language. This means that it stresses the importance of giving learner opportunity of practicing the target language (Swain, 1985 in Nunan, 1988). Therefore, learners need opportunities to use and to experiment with the new language. Mistakes are natural and inevitable part of language learning.

The last, language acquisition occurs through social interaction, through having to use the language with others in authentic communication setting.

However, teaching English in integration, as Brown (2001) suggests, is more effective than teaching English in isolation like what we used to do it in the past. It is expected that through the integration of the language skills and the language components in the instruction of English, the teachers can create an interesting classroom interaction that encourage students to communicate in English.

Apart from the above mentioned principles of teaching to elementary school, it is also important that English teachers of elementary school are aware of principles of teaching English as suggested by Brown (2001).

Like learning other subjects, the learning of English at this stage should also be 'meaningful'. Meaningful, according to Ibrahim and Syaodih (1996), means firstly, there is relevance between the knowledge with the fact. For example: the students have known the meaning of the words but they could not make it into simple sentences or use the words to communicate. Secondly, there is relevance between the knowledge with

the user. For example: the students have known how to greet people in English but they could not use it because there is no opportunity to use it.

Based on the discussion on the teaching English in elementary school, as Alwasilah (2000) suggests that the English teaching at elementary school necessitates qualified teachers who know much about children psychology and English teaching methodology for children so that they can successfully encourage students to learn English and help the learning process itself. One aspect which plays a significant role in the success of the teaching of English is to do with challenges of teaching English to elementary school.

According to Musthafa (2000) there are at least three challenges that should be faced by children to learn English as a foreign language in Indonesian elementary school. The first challenge is the students are lack of social uses of English language in real life situation which involve children in their daily life. However, according to Cox in Nicholls (1999) and Dewey as cited in Pardjono (2002), learning is the acquisition of knowledge and skills through individual experiences not from texts or from teachers. How children will be able to acquire the language and see learning English as a useful and relevant activity if they are lack of demonstration in and exposure to functional uses of English.

In addition, as Franke in Nunan and Lamb (1996) suggest, a language could be best be taught by using it actively in the classroom. Rather than using analytical procedures that focus on explanation of grammar rules in classroom teaching, teachers must encourage direct and spontaneous use of the foreign language in the classroom (Richard and Rogers, 1986 in Nunan and Lamb, 1996).

The second challenge is related to the way English words are written as opposed the way the words are pronounced. In this stage, children also still learn the first language in which the sounds are reflected consistently in the way they are written down. Therefore, it is natural if the children are confused to differentiate how the word should be read and written because there is no obvious one-to-one correspondence between the pronunciation of a word and its spelling.

Other reason why students use their own language in the classroom, as Harmer (2002: 131) suggests, is when the students learn a foreign language, they use translation. This is because they usually try to make sense of a new linguistic (and conceptual) world through the linguistic world they are already familiar with. Regarding learners learn vocabulary, according to Read (2000), they tend to memorize lists of English word and rely on bilingual dictionary as a basic communicative resource.

Therefore, Read (2000) says, actually students can learn vocabulary in context through their reading and listening activity in which it focused on the extent to which students can infer the meaning of unknown words when they read or hear them. In addition, as Sukayadi (2006) suggests, the teacher should make meaning perceptible through concrete objects or by presentation of experience. In short, when a language learner makes a mistake or misconception of something, the teacher does not correct it through translation but tries to show something to make the meaning clear (Sukayadi, 2006) or conveys meaning directly through demonstration and action (Richard and Rogers, 1986 cited in Nunan and Lamb, 1996). Sukayadi (2006)

also added that vocabulary is learned more effectively if they use it in full sentences rather than memorize it. For example: the teacher can repeat new words by asking them to the students several times in different context and eliciting the situation in order for the students to use the words.

The last challenge, there has been widely-held wrong assumptions that children learn things exactly the same way adults do. Therefore, the teacher tends to teach children the same as they teach adults. According to Alwasilah (2000), the generalization and the use of one approach to two different groups of learners are misleading because teacher should realize that children have their own world that is different from adults. It seems necessary for teachers to know and understand about this world if they are to plan an appropriate learning environment for children based on their cognitive development. Therefore, classroom materials should be concrete and plentiful, while students should be given direct experiences and concrete objects that can be seen, handled, touched, and talked about.

In addition, as suggested by Van lier (1996), "language learning is the cumulative results or sustained effort and engagement over time, with continuity being central". If the lesson—whether they are once a week, once a day, or more frequent than that—are the only occasions on which the students are engaged with the language, progress will either not occur or be exceedingly slow. However, it points to a real problem of all foreign language learning. If the gap between what is done in the classroom, and what is done outside the classroom, is too great, then the possibilities of leaning anything at all are very seriously impaired.

Teaching strategies are procedures used by the teacher which serve as a way of reaching a goal (Suryosubroto, 2002). To reach the goal, teacher has the important role in the teaching and learning process because most of the output of students was determined by the teachers (Jarolimek and Foster, 1989). According to Usman (1990: 7), a competent teacher will be able to create an effective learning environment and will be able to manage the process of teaching and learning so that the students can achieve an optimal result. To be able to manage the process of teaching and learning, the teachers must have the strategies to do that.

However, the teaching strategies adopted in this study have been drawn from the work of several theorists (see Suryosubroto, 2002; Arikunto, 1990; Brown, 2001; Harmer, 2002; Djamarah and Zain, 2002; Ibrahim and Syaodih, 2002; Jarolimek and Foster, 1989; Nicholls, 1999, Nunan and Lamb, 1996, Nunan, 1988) who have proposed teaching strategies. Even though, there are differences but those theories generally propose similar strategies such as planning, implementing the teaching and learning process, and assessing students' achievement.

Plan and Preparation
Planning (see Jarolimek and Foster, 1989: 15) is a decision making process in which one has to make choices from among the options that are thought to lead toward a desired goal. Teaching, like any other complex process, requires careful planning for its success. For example: the teachers are not supposed "to forget what they should bring with before they start teaching because what they plan can be useless" (Brown, 2000: 194).

Teachers who realize the importance of planning for effective

instruction and classroom management assign planning a high priority as a teaching skill. The critical association between planning and preparation needs to be dealt with because planning leads onto preparation of the materials, resources and props that will be needed in the lesson. If these materials are prepared prior to the lesson, the teacher is in a much better position to successfully differentiate the activities, as well as to cope with maintaining the smooth and effective progress in learning throughout the lesson for all students.

Regarding planning, Mawer (1995: 55) as quoted by Waring in Nicholls (1999: 99) states that

> *Planning appears to mediate between a teacher's basic knowledge of the subject being taught and his or her ability to teach the subject effectively, because it brings into play the teacher's general pedagogical content knowledge. This includes knowledge of theories and principles of teaching and learning, knowledge of the learner, and knowledge of the techniques and principles of teaching such as class management. The plan for a lesson, unit, or course is the result of a considerable degree of thinking on the part of the teacher.*

Planning plays a significant role in the smoothness or the progress that is achieved by the students in the teaching and learning process. The significance of planning in the teaching and learning process has also been observed by Djamarah and Zain (2002) who says, the smoothness of the process is an indicator whether the students could focus on their attention to the lesson that is given by the teacher or not. For example: the teacher starts the activity before she or he ends the previous activity or stop the first activity and then start the second activity and then go back to the first

activity. If these happened during the process, it could distract students' focus or attention.

Basically, if a certain activity has been planned first, the goal of the activity will be more directive and works. Therefore, the teacher should have ability to plan the instruction. Before she starts to teach, it would be better if she planned the teaching and learning program, prepared everything that would be taught.

When planning a lesson, teacher, as suggested by Suryosubroto (2002), should take students into account. Johnson (1979) as quoted by Suryosubroto (2002) argues:

> *Teachers are expected to design and deliver instruction so that student learning is facilitated. Instruction is asset of event design to initiate aclivate, and support learning in students, it is the process of arranging the learning situation (including the classroom, the student, and the curriculum materials) so that learning is facilitated."*

It means that to facilitate the learning process, the teachers must put students into their consideration when they plan the instruction.

The process of planning according to Suryosubroto (2002) can be divided into four categories which are mastering the curriculum, compiling the instructional material analysis, forming the program for a semester, and forming the lesson plan including know the students' characteristics, set the goal expectation of the study, choose the material and order it, choose the teaching methods, choose the teaching aids, and choose the strategy of evaluation. According to Jarolimek and Foster (1989: 157), the teacher should be able to plan a good learning environment, select goals for the year, plan for getting instruction under way, develop a lesson plan by

knowing first about the students' characteristics, and prepare student-progress reports for parents.

Implementation of the teaching and learning process

The implementation of teaching and learning process should be conducted by the teacher after the planning process has been done. The theory used in this study is a combination from several theorists (see Suryosubroto, 2002; Usman, 1990; Sudjana, 1989; Brown, 2001; Jarolimek and Foster, 1989) including the genre based approach which has been the bases for the curriculum 2004. Regarding the implementation of the teaching and learning process, according to Suryosubroto (2002) and Sudjana (1989), the teacher should do several things to make the teaching and learning process successful, among others to do with the opening the teaching and learning process, the use of teaching method, the delivery of the material, classroom management, and closing.

Assessing Students' Achievement

Assessment reflects the way teachers absorb the information and evidence related to students' learning, and how they use it to inform their future lesson, whether this is the next task or series of tasks. The main focus of this form of assessment is to identify errors, difficulties, and shortcomings in students' work. It also informs the teacher of the nature of advice and information needed to improve students' future learning outcomes (Nicholls, 1999: 117). Nicholls (1999:119) argues that assessment has many faces and can be used for a variety of purposes.

> …*Assessment lies at the heart of this process. It can provide a framework in which educational objectives may be set,*

and pupils' progress charted and expressed. It can yield a basis for planning the next educational steps in response to children's needs… (Report of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing as quoted by Nicholls (1999: 116)

This quotation suggests that assessment of children's learning and progress is central to effective teaching and learning. There are several aspects that should be taken into account such as assessing in the classroom and remedial.

On the basis of the background to the present study mentioned above, the research attempted to address the following research question: what instructional strategies are used by English teachers at one of private international primary school? These strategies include plan and preparation of the instruction, implementation of the teaching and learning process, and assessment of the students' achievement.

METHOD

A qualitative research design has been considered appropriate in this study as cited by Maxwell (1996: 17-20). In the case with a qualitative study, this study attempts to understand the meaning, for participants in the study, of the events, situations, and action they are involved with and the accounts that they give of their lives and experiences; attempts to understand the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their action. It means that every detail is thought to contribute to a better understanding of behavior or to obtain a complete understanding of the setting.

The participants of this study were two English teachers (called teacher A and B) and their students. The participation was voluntary based. Both teachers graduated from English

department, Indonesia University of Education. A taught grade 4 consisting of 20 students; and B taught grade 3 consisting of 13 students. Both teachers were relatively new teachers. The range of age of students was 8 to 10 years old.

These teachers were willing to participate in the study and to have their classes observed by the researcher.

Two data collections were employed in this study, which were observation and interview. However, in collecting data, the researcher has to employ appropriate instruments such as observation and interview. All the data collection was recorded in order to keep the authenticity of the data.

In the observation, the data were analyzed in several steps. First, the researcher transcribed the transcription gained from audio and video recorder. Then, the researcher made categorization into three strategies based on theorist adopted in the study. During the observation, the researcher observed the plan and the preparation the teachers made before they taught, and then how they implement their plan in the teaching and learning process, and the last, how the teacher would assess their students. The data analysis was not only a conclusion but also an ongoing assessment especially if the data gained from audio or video.

In the interview, the data were gained from both teachers and students. The interview was conducted to support the data from observation. The interview data were analyzed in several steps. First, the researcher transcribed the transcription gained from audio and video recorder. Then, the researcher made categorization of the strategies which were preparation, implementation, and assessment. The names of interviewees were omitted to avoid bias, and then the answers were collected

based on the categories. The interviews were presented in a condensed version.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The data presentation and analysis will be summarized based on the central themes including teacher's strategies in planning and preparing the instruction, in implementing the teaching and learning process, and in assessing student's achievement in the classroom.

Teacher's strategies in planning and preparing the instruction
In terms of plan and preparation, both teachers plan and prepare the instruction before they teach. Their preparation simply can be seen from whether they have prepared the activities to support the lesson, whether they master the material, what kind of teaching aids they will use, whether the process of teaching and learning run smoothly and effectively. Although both teachers make a plan and preparation before teaching, the teachers have different ways in implementing the plan. It really depends on the teachers' skill in classroom management. Therefore, the result of the implementation of the plan is also different. Teacher A is strict to what he has planned. He also make the rules about what to do and not to do explicit for the students and what he does works so that he can achieve the target of the teaching and learning. Meanwhile, teacher B makes her plan too general, so that sometime the target of the teaching and learning cannot be achieved.

Teacher's strategies in implementing the teaching and learning process
In terms of teacher's strategies in implementing the teaching and learning process, there are several aspects that will be discussed including teaching method in terms of games, integrative

skills, and problems that are faced by the teachers in implementing the teaching and learning process. Regarding the problems, the problems that are faced by the teachers are due to lack of time and availability of rules which are constant and stable.

Concerning the teacher's strategies in implementing the teaching and learning process, both teachers use several methods in teaching. They always combine the teaching methods with games. In terms of games, although both teachers use games during the teaching and learning process, they have different way in implementing the games. Teacher A uses the game as a vehicle for learning so that he always relates the games with the topics which is given. He can make the games as an introduction to the new material or as a review to the last material. Meanwhile, it seems that teacher B does not think that games have to be relevant with the topic because games is just for fun. Therefore, the result of the implementation of games is also different. In teacher A' class, the students can enhance both learning and memorizing through playing; meanwhile, in teacher B's class, the students do not get anything in terms of learning because most of the time, the games are totally different from what is being taught.

With respect to the integrative skills, both teachers do not apply integrative skills comprehensively. They have not put the speaking into the skills. The English class is dominated by the using of Indonesian language. Therefore, it seems the students are discouraged to use English either in responding to the teachers' question or in participating in the classroom. In short, the teaching and learning of English does not happen in terms of integrative skills. In fact, the teaching of English is supposed to encourage the students to use the target language and the teachers also need to give as many exposures as possible to the students.

In implementing the teaching and learning process, both teachers have to face the problem during the teaching and learning process. The problem is due to lack of time. The time management in this school has not well-established. Therefore, it can inflict a loss upon the teachers. The teachers have a dilemma in deciding the activities that should be done in the classroom. In short, the school has to facilitate the teachers in preparing a condition that is conducive to conduct a smooth and effective teaching and learning process.

Regarding the rules in the classroom, the teachers need to establish rules which are constant and stable so that the rules can be students' daily routines. The rules are important to be applied in the classroom because the teaching and learning process needs a situation and condition which is conducive. It seems that one of the teachers failed to make the rules explicit in the class, so that it is easy to predict that the class will have a stormy time during the teaching and learning process. Therefore, it will disturb the smoothness of teaching and learning process.

Teacher's strategies in assessing students' achievement
Related to teacher's strategies in assessing students' achievement, both teachers do several ways to assess their students including assessing in the classroom and remedial. Assessing in the classroom will include marking, classroom tasks, homework, and quiz. Regarding assessing in the classroom, both teachers assess the students per session. It can be in a form of classroom tasks and homework. The teachers always return the students' homework or

assignment after they check and mark it. Both teachers also give quiz at the end of the unit to measure the students' ability in comprehending the material. All of these procedures are conducted by the teachers regularly. To some degree, it seems that the teachers are capable of assessing their students. These procedures can help the teachers to decide further action such as whether the students need remedial teaching, remedial test, more exercises about the lesson.

Regarding the remedial, not all the teachers apply the remedial teaching. Only one of the teachers conducts an extra lesson or remedial teaching regularly after the class is over. The teacher usually observes the students during the process of teaching and learning. If he considers there are students who still have not understood his explanation, he will conduct an extra lesson. The extra lesson will take more or less 15 minutes. In this activity, usually the teacher re-teaches the students so that the students' ability will not be left behind from other students. It seems that this activity was good in order to give motivation to the students to learn better.

CONCLUSION
From the results and discussions in the previous chapter, several conclusions can be drawn. First, regarding planning and preparing the instruction, both teachers do the same stages such as they master the material, prepare for the activities, and prepare teaching aids to support the activities. However, in terms of implementation the teaching and learning process, the teachers have different ways and results. The results of the teaching and learning really depend on teachers' skill in classroom management.

Second, concerning the implementation of the teaching and learning process, both teachers use games as a teaching method for different purposes such as games only for fun and games as a vehicle for learning. In terms of games as a vehicle of learning, the games are relevant with topics given by the teachers. Therefore, the students can learn and memorize the material through playing.

Third, the teachers do not teach English in integrative ways. In this school, the teachers have not put speaking English into the skills; meanwhile, the opportunity to use other skills such as listening, writing, and reading is not sufficient. The teaching of English in the classroom is still dominated by the using of Indonesian language. The data shows that the teaching and learning of English in terms of integrative skills does not happen in the classroom. The teaching and learning of English in the school is still in terms of grammar.

Fourth, time management in this school has become a problematic factor for the teachers. The class always starts late because of non academic activities (for example, students' preparation and clean up after dhuha or dhuhur prayer). The time problem can inflict a loss upon the teachers. Therefore, the school has to facilitate the teachers in preparing a condition that is conducive to conduct a smooth and effective teaching and learning process.

Fifth, regarding the rules in the classroom, the teachers need to make rules explicit to the students about what to do and not to do. The rules are informed to the students and agreed by all students. Otherwise, the teachers will have a difficult time to handle the class. By doing this, the students will also learn to be responsible to whatever they do.

Sixth, regarding the teacher's strategy in assessing students' achievement, both teachers have different ways to evaluate their students. One of the teachers conducts remedial teaching if he observes the students still do not understand to what he has explained. The remedial teaching is conducted in a narrow sense in the form of re-teaching. Therefore, through this activity, it seems that the teacher can help the students to promote their comprehension toward the material.

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