

**TEACHING ENGLISH AT SMPIT ACEH BARAT
(A Descriptive Study of Teaching and Learning English)**

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were to describe the ways of teaching English at SMPIT Aceh Barat in terms of pre activity, main activity and post activity, to discover the methods or techniques used by the English teachers at SMPIT Aceh Barat, and to seek the difficulties faced by the English teachers at SMPIT Aceh Barat. This study used qualitative method in nature. The research subjects of this study were two English teachers at SMPIT Aceh Barat who taught at seventh grade, eight grade and ninth grade. Observation and interview were used to collect the data. The data were analysed and interpreted through qualitative procedures. The results showed that the teachers who teach at SMPIT Aceh Barat have to be always creative and innovative and the school has to provide the good facilities in order to support the teaching and learning process becomes enjoy and fun.

Keywords: Teaching English, Methods or Strategies, Teachers' Difficulties

INTRODUCTION

English has an important role in education system in Indonesia in facing global competition in the 21st century. Especially, in Aceh English has been taught starting from junior high school to university. Teaching English at junior high school level is considered as the first stage in developing foreign language skills. In addition, the success of teaching English to junior high school has a great influence on motivation and interest of students in improving English language skills at the next level of education. Now, Indonesia's curriculum named as curriculum 2013 which is the development of the previous curriculum called as Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP) curriculum. Curriculum 2013 has an aimed to adjust teaching and learning process based on students' needs and characteristic. The purpose of teaching English for junior high school level is to train and motivate students to be able to speak English fluently based on students' needs and interest for their future career (Kurikulum, 2013). So, the teachers' challenge in teaching English is to integrate the four language skills namely: listening, speaking, reading and writing into teaching and learning process.

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Therefore, teachers are expected to be creative and innovative in teaching activities such as: pre activity, while activity and post activity in order to stimulate students to be active, and to create an interactive class. In addition, teachers have an important role in creating successful teaching and learning process so that they are required to have knowledge about the principles of innovative teaching methods and be able to create learning activities based on students' needs and context as well as curriculum demands. However, this could be a challenge for teachers especially in implementing the curriculum. Regarding to the facts, the study of implementing the curriculum is very important to be conducted in teaching and learning activities.

Based on the explanation above, it can be summarized that the implementation of methods and approaches which could attract students' needs, they could also determine teaching and learning activities successfully for students. According to Zuraida (2005) who conducted a study entitled the implementation of Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP) at school in Surakarta figured out that: (1) Students haven't achieved the target, (2) Teachers' center which influence students become passive students and they don't have chances to give their idea, (3) Students' assessment are conducted by using "paper and pencil". The findings of the study emphasized that the implementation of teaching and learning process has not yet achieved the characteristic of KTSP Curriculum. Therefore, the researchers are interested in doing a study about the implementation of methods and techniques which are used by teachers and to figure out the teachers' difficulties in implementing those methods and techniques. This study will be conducted at one of private junior high schools in west Aceh, SMPIT Aceh Barat which implement two curricula namely Islamic curriculum and K13 Curriculum.

The Islamic curriculum contains of Islamic value such as memorizing the holy book (Qur'an), Dhuha and Zuhur prayers together. This curriculum has been designed to improve the students' ability in acquiring special skills after graduating. Meanwhile the school curriculum only demands the students to be able to master four language skills; reading, listening, writing and speaking. Besides, this study was related to the previous study which was conducted at SMPIT Nurul Islah, Banda Aceh and the result showed that the students use communication strategies in learning English (Syafitri, 2018).

Based on the previous research, a study focusing on teaching English at SMPIT Aceh Barat, with the following research questions in mind:

1. How is the implementation of teaching English at SMPIT Aceh Barat?
2. What kinds of methods or strategies used by the English teachers at SMPIT Aceh Barat?

3. What are the teachers' difficulties in teaching English at SMPIT Aceh Barat?

English has been teaching as foreign language in Indonesia. Teaching English requires not only the skill, knowledge of subject, methods and strategies but also infrastructural facilities like language laboratory, teaching materials and teaching media such as books and audio-visual aid etc. The effective of teaching and learning will depend on the use of suitable teaching aids and teachers' competence in choosing methods and approaches. In addition, teachers must be able to play many roles in the classroom. For instance, they are required to focus on teaching the lesson at understanding level of students. Also, they have to complete the syllabus given time and assess the learning of the students in the classroom.

There are numerous different methods or strategies of language teaching that can be implemented by the teachers in the classroom. As mentioned by Fatiloro (2015), one way to alleviate the students' problems in teaching English is teachers must use variety ways of methods or strategies in teaching English. Besides, an effective teaching process could happen in the classroom by implementing various methods or techniques. Also, it could help teachers to find an appropriate method or technique which relates to a certain topic, (Pande, 2013). To sum up, when teachers understand or are able to figure out the best teaching method or technique for the students' needs, automatically they will feel enjoy and happy to learn a new language.

There are many problems faced by teachers in teaching English and those problems might be categorized into three issues such as students' problems, teacher's problems and the school's facilities problems. Many teachers believed that students' problems in learning English are the students are not able to master vocabularies, cannot focus on the topic, have no good discipline, and low of motivation. On the other hand, the teachers' problems might come from teachers' experiences, language proficiency, limited mastery of teaching methods, are not able to use IT, and lack of professional development. Moreover, the highest schools' problem in which need to be considered in this era is the facilities issues including inadequate resources and facilities, and time constraint (Songbatumis, 2017).

Moreover, Khan (2011) added that teaching English as a foreign language is a demanding task. It was shown by the researchers' teaching experience in several schools in Aceh. They encountered various problems in teaching English, namely lack of English exposure, classroom size, and shortage of English teachers. Since there is a great number of English graduates in Indonesia, particularly in Aceh Barat (West Aceh) regarding to shortage of English teachers should not have happened however many schools in the rural area need teachers.

In addition, Emery (2012) agreed that crowded class could be one of the most problems happened in the world especially in Asian countries. When the class are fulfilled by a lot of students, it is hard for the teacher to handle and monitor his or her students so that they have a chance to play or pretend to study. Furthermore, class size refers to the number of students being taught by a teacher in one class. Each country has various limits for the student-teacher ratio for both practical and theoretical lessons. For practical lessons in which the students are under the instruction of one teacher, the number of students should not exceed 35 in the case of Cameroon. However, in the case of Ireland, England and Wales, they should not exceed 20 students. On the other side, for a non-practical class, Northern Ireland recommends that the students not exceed 30. Cameroon suggested that the students should be 60 per class: while it is suitable for a secondary general class to have 30 students in a classroom. Moreover, class size gives an impact to individualization when a teacher teaches his or her students (Wilson, 1996) in which it can influence the time that is offered for students. In brief, classroom management such as classroom size is very crucial to help teachers to create or design the practical activities that can be applied while having the class, decide the appropriate teaching method in order to get students easily receive the lesson and manage the time.

RESEARCH METHOD

Participants

The present study was based on two English teachers who taught at SMPIT Aceh Barat, one teacher taught at the seventh and ninth-grade classes and another one who taught at the eighth-grade class.

Instrumentation

To answer the research questions, in this study, the researchers used observation and interview to collect the data. The observation was conducted for once in every class within 2 x 40 minutes per meeting. The researcher used the 5 Likert scale observation sheet which consisted of three items of activities. The first item was focused on the teachers' pre activity, the second item was focused on while activity and the last item was focused on post activity. On the other hand, interview was used to get the information about teachers' background, teaching preparation, teaching and learning process, teaching materials, teaching media, and assessments for students.

Data Analysis

The researchers analyzed the observation sheet, watched the videos that were recorded by the researchers, described the activities, double checked if the activities were

related to the written lesson plan or not and took a summarize about the teaching English process. On the other hand, for the interview, the researcher interpreted the data and took the conclusion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result and Discussion

RQ1: The Implementation of Teaching and Learning English at SMPIT Aceh Barat .

Pre- Activity

Regarding to data observation in terms of pre-activity, it can be summarized that both of the teachers do the same activity; greeting the students by saying “Assalammu’alikum” (Muslim’s greeting) or good morning and checking the students’ attendance list before starting the lesson, those activities were written on their lesson plan as well.

While- Activity

In terms of while activity, it can be assumed that each teacher has his or her ways to teach their students. They used different techniques in different classes although there was one teacher who had to responsible for two classes, he still used different techniques to teach his students.

Post- Activity

Finally, the post-activity, both of the teachers used the simple activities, T1 described that he only says “Wassalamu’alaikum (Muslim’s way in closing the class)” to end his class while T2 only described that she just says “time is up” to end the class. It was totally contradicted to the written lesson plan in which the teachers were required to review the lessons before closing the class. This part must be taken as an evaluation for the teachers to manage the activity and time to end the class. For detail information, please refer to Table 1.

RQ2: What kinds of methods or techniques used by the English teachers at SMPIT Aceh Barat?

Regarding to the observation from T1 who taught at the seventh and ninth grade students of SMPIT Aceh Barat, it can be described that the teacher used communication strategies such as correcting pronunciation, practicing to write and pronounce words in English or it can be known as appeal for assistance. Instructors respond to these appeals in a variety of ways, depending on the type of assistance requested. Appeals for assistance either elicited a specific response (‘Is x correct?’ ‘Which is correct, x or y?’ or ‘How do you say x?’) or a more open-ended response, ‘What does x mean?’). In the following example, the learner makes a limited appeal for assistance. In brief, all that is required of the teacher as the instructor is identification of the correct form. He provides only the assistance requested by the learner and resumes the lesson, (Houston, 2006).

Meanwhile the teacher who taught at the eighth-grade students implied one common method used by a lot of English teachers such as the cooperative learning method especially Number Head Together (NHT). The teacher divided the students into five groups and did some activities such as discussing the story which was written in the envelope, finding difficult words and giving the meaning of them. As mentioned by Maman & Rajab (2016), cooperative learning method was developed based on the learning theory of cooperative constructivist. This can be seen on one of Vygotsky's theory is the emphasis on the sociocultural nature, on the other words it trains students to work cooperatively in a group. Another purpose of it is to create a situation to individuals for the success fuelled by the function and the role of their group to achieve the three of learning objectives, the academic ability, the acceptance of individual differences, and social skill development. As a conclusion, it can be stated that each teacher implied different method or strategies in teaching English. The more information could be seen on the Table 1.

Table 1. The implementation of teaching at SMPIT Aceh Barat

| Participants | Pre-Activity | While-Activity | Post-Activity |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teacher I | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance list | <p>Topic: Time</p> <p>Materials: clock and watch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correcting pronunciation Introducing number 1-60 in English Asking the student to write down the numbers on the white board Practicing to write and pronounce the numbers in English such as the teacher asked the students to write number 31-40, 21-30, 41-50, 51-60 and Correcting the students' answer Asking students to translate the sentence "I have 15 cats" Differentiating "15" and "50" Giving time for students to take notes within +- 15 minutes <p>Tool:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only white board <p>Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking students to write the clock in English for example: 08.30 a.m, 10.40 a.m, and 07.50 a.m. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With video |
| Teacher II | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance list | <p>Topic: Modality (MUST)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explaining the usage of MUST Giving the examples of the usage of MUST Using media (an envelope written a story) Giving the envelope to students Dividing students into 5 groups (Number Head Together) Discussing the story from the letter Finding difficult words and the meaning of them Returning the letter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closing time (time is up) |
| Teacher III | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance list Opening the book Asking the student to write the topic on the white board Returning students' tasks by calling students' names one by one | <p>Topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present Continuous Tense Asking what is present continuous tense? Introducing action verbs Asking the example of verbs, for instance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cook---cooking = memasak Put---putting = meletakkan Differentiating "look and see" Explaining the usage of look "is/am/are" Correcting the words written on the white board. Differentiating "ride and drive" Asking the usage of ride and drive for "bicycle" Reading sentences written on the white board | |

RQ3: What are the teachers' difficulties in teaching English at SMPIT Aceh Barat?

Interview

There were two teachers interviewed by the researchers. The first teacher called T1, he taught at the seventh and ninth grade students at SMPIT Aceh Barat while the second teacher called T2, she taught at the eighth-grade students of SMPIT Aceh Barat. The interview had six sections; the first section was aimed to describe the information about the teachers' background, second teachers to evaluate the students' achievement in learning English.

Background of the Teachers

T1 only graduated from bachelor degree, meanwhile T2 graduated from master degree. T1 has been teaching English for 9 (nine) years since T1 took his study, while T2 had no any teaching experience when she took her study, so she only had two years experiences in teaching English. In addition, both of the teachers had an experience in attending workshops or training. Also, both of them only taught English at SMP IT Aceh Barat (West Aceh).

Teaching Preparation

Regarding to both of the teachers' responses. It can be implied that both of teachers did a good preparation before having the class. First, lesson plan; T1 stated that he follows the previous lesson plan. On the other hand, T2 expressed that she always prepares everything needed in teaching before the new semester will be started. In addition, in terms of lesson plan, she designs the lesson plan per chapter for one semester meanwhile she prepares the weekly lesson plan one week before the schedule and follow the government format. Second, curriculum; both of the teachers totally agreed that they use K13 Curriculum. Third, teaching design, T1 expressed that he follows the guidance book (booklet of K13 Curriculum). On the other side, T2 responded that she thinks of the purpose of learning. Fourth, materials; both of the teachers used various teaching materials and media, for example: T1 said that he uses Erlangga and Kemendikbud textbooks. Besides, he took some materials from internet and his laptop document. T2 described that she combines the materials taken from the school textbook and the authentic materials from other sources. Fifth, media; T1 expressed that he brings his own laptop and speaker because the equipment is not available at the school for the listening skill. Meanwhile, T2 mentioned that she uses the school and her own equipment. Sixth, choosing material; both of the teachers had the same responses that they choose the material based on the students' needs. Seventh, asking partner; to know the students' problems in learning English, both of the teachers will ask to each other or other English teachers.

Teaching and Learning Process

As the data taken from the teachers, the answers indicated that both of the teachers have similar thought and procedures in teaching and learning process. First, time; T1 and T2 agreed that they follow the time regarding to the time written in their lesson plan (RPP). Second, informing the activities; both of the teachers mentioned that they inform the students about what they are going to do at the beginning of the class. Third, out-class learning; T1 stated that he never has a course outside of the classroom but he never asked the students to have an activity such as finding vocabularies.

Meanwhile the T2 explains that she ever held the class outside of the classroom. Fourth, technique; to attract the students' attention in teaching and learning English, both of the teachers use similar technique such as game, song, video and audio. Fifth, passive students; talking about this issue, T1 and T2 have different opinion, T1 said that he felt unhappy if the students are so passive but he does not want to show his true feeling to his students. While T2 expressed that she is okay if the students are so passive, she believes the students need process to be active in learning their non-native language.

Teaching Materials

All of data taken from the two teachers implied that first, school textbook; T1 and T2 only focused on using one textbook from the school and other materials taken from other sources. Second, no textbook; both of the them stated that they ever taught the students without using the textbook. Third, reason of choosing the textbook; Surprisingly, the two teachers have different opinion in choosing and using the textbook. T1 said that the textbook is better than the Kemendikbud textbook and it is more organized, at the same time, T2 explained that the textbooks provided by school was not good recently.

Teaching Media

The data showed that T1 and T2 have different habits in using media for teaching. First, frequency; T1 said that he often uses media in teaching while T2 stated that she usually uses it twice in four meetings.

Second, media's product; T1 said that he often uses his own media in teaching and learning meanwhile T2 mentioned that she uses both her own media and school. Third, kinds of media; both of the teachers are so creative in using different types of media, for instance: T1, he likes to use speakers, laptop, smartphone, while T2 she likes to use pictures, sound recording, video, dictionary, etc. Fourth, students' media product; both of them ever asked their students to create the media based on the students' needs, for example: asking them to make Pop Up Cards for giving an invitation topic. Fifth, electronic media, T1 said that he uses laptop and speakers. On the other

hand, T2 uses video.

Teaching Assessment

Regarding to the teachers' responses about the teaching assessment, it can be assumed that all students have no improvement but the English course is not a difficult subject for students. As can be explained first, types of assessment, T1 described that besides written and oral assessment, he also assesses the students' attendance, the students' activeness, and attitude. Meanwhile T2 expressed that she only focuses on written and oral assessments. Second, deciding the score, both of the teachers explained that their standardization score is passing grade (KKM score) in which arranged at the beginning of the year. Third, English students' ability, compared to the students' previous performances, T1 said that there is no significant improvement about their English ability only a few students who get an improvement. Meanwhile T2 had different opinions she stated that the students' English ability can be categorized as fair because English can be found easily anywhere. It can be assumed that all students had no improvement but the English course is not a difficult subject for students.

To conclude, it can be figured out that there are two difficult problems faced by the teachers who taught at SMPIT Aceh Barat; the first one was the teaching material, in this study, the teaching material means the use of the textbook. Based on one of the teachers' confession, it reveals that the school needs to provide more or variety of textbooks so that the teacher could have various references to choose the appropriate teaching materials for students' need. Also, Songbatumis (2017) mentioned that one of the highest problems in school in which need to be considered in this era is the facilities issues including inadequate resources and facilities. Therefore, as one of essential teaching resources, teachers agree that the textbook has fundamental role in teaching, especially in providing the material for the students (Herlinda, 2014).

Another problem was the teaching electronic media in which one of the teachers who taught at that school always used his own equipment whenever he needed them for teaching. It is recommended for the school to provide the sufficient teaching media. Choosing the required materials based on a country's cultural and episodes of sacred texts converted into visual might help students to know the real objects (Oroujlou, 2012) and motivate them to learn a language, unsurprisingly visual things speak more than words, (Mishra, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Teaching and learning English is not an easy task, teachers are required to think about what are the best methods or techniques or strategies could be used to deliver the topic in the classroom. Besides, to make the process run smoothly, teachers need sufficient teaching

materials and sophisticated teaching media or technology to create a fun learning environment. In addition, even if those requirements could be provided by the schools, teachers still need to consider about the students' proficiency level or students' ability in choosing the materials and preparing the classroom. On the other words, school needs professional teachers who are able to be creative and innovative teachers for their students.

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