Authors: Purtanto, C.A., Wahyuningtiyas, R.T., Rohmana, W.I.M.

CHALLENGES IN TEACHING ENGLISH LITERATURE: A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Chika Azizah Purtanto[1], Retno Tri Wahyuningtyas[2], Wahyu Indah Mala Rohmana[3]

*chikaazizah04@gmail.com[1],
retnotri2003@gmail.com[2],
malaindah@uin-malang.ac.id[3]*

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang

ABSTRACT

In Indonesia, teaching English through literature (literary text) in primary school has challenges because it does not have a curriculum. Especially English subject is only local content that does not have to include in primary school. A school that never implemented English in their learning must be difficult to provide teaching. So, this study aims to research the challenges in teaching English literature in primary school from a teacher's perspective and the strategies used to solve the challenges. The method used in this research is qualitative descriptive and the subject is an English teacher of 6th grade in MI Nadlatul Ulama Malang. Data were collected through an unstructured interview via WhatsApp and met in person. The researchers analyzed the data based on the results of the interview. The research found three challenges an English teacher of 6th grade at MI Nadlatul Ulama faced in learning English literature. The three challenges are in the aspect of learning media, students' English skill gap, and the time of the English lessons. Some strategies are used to make teaching done effectively. To increase students' motivation, the teacher delivered material using PowerPoint not only on the blackboard. The teacher also accompanies when students have difficulty or are confused about accepting the material provided.

Keywords: Teaching, English Literature, Challenges and Strategies

INTRODUCTION

English is used and taught as a foreign language in Indonesia. The fact that English is an international language that is essential and important for communication; therefore, the Indonesian government has recommended that teaching and learning English become a compulsory subject in secondary schools (Nurkamto, 2003). In addition, the English maintenance as a foreign language has

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been steady since it is officially taught throughout secondary schools (Lie, 2007). The aim of teaching English in schools is based on the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 060/U/1993 dated 25 February 1993 and the 1989 Constitution on the System of National Education that the final goal of the English subject at the schools is to enable the students to be proficient in English in the globalization era (Rachmajanti, 2008). Meanwhile, teaching English in schools aims to develop the student's communicative competence, which would help the students in their university education (Nurkamto, 2003).

Indonesia's language policy for teaching and learning English in primary schools has changed recently. English is being adopted now in the curriculum of most elementary schools. English in Indonesian elementary schools is currently an optional subject that is offered as one of the local content subjects provided. There is no central curriculum to develop English as a local content subject and teachers in school are responsible for developing individually. Teacher education majors in Indonesia currently prepare pre-service English teachers for teaching in junior and high schools, but not in elementary schools. It is because the national curriculum for English language education in Indonesia only focuses on junior and high school level (Yuwono & Harbon, 2010). Many schools may offer English without the necessary facilities and teachers (Rachmajanti, 2008).

Teaching English as Foreign Language (EFL) aims to enhance the four main language skills. Many methods and approaches are used to teach English optimally and successfully. Besides that, several techniques and the inclusion of different materials are also used. Furthermore, including literature in the curriculum has interested many EFL/ESL teachers, educators, and researchers (Barzani, Meena, and Ali, 2021). On the other hand, the essential supporters and a growing body of research consider literature as a must and effective in the process as mentioned earlier. Incorporating literature would enhance language competence, cultural awareness, critical thinking, and motivation in a second/foreign language context (Barzani, Meena, and Ali, 2021).

Similarly, the utility of literary materials can trigger learners to share ideas within a classroom context while deriving a link between the text and real-life contexts (Rew & Moon, 2013). In addition, A'shour & Magdadi (2005) (as cited in Sallal, 2014) suggest that literary texts are identified as the most motivational element in language learning and improvement; they are also sources of natural interaction that increase learners' focus on the events and meanings. More importantly, such materials tend to be repetitive, enabling learners to be familiar with syntactical aspects, consolidate certain vocabulary items, and build predicting skills extensively (Wijaya & Helmie, 2019). The learners develop a lexicon, remembering and then reciting and chanting those forms. Literature also reinforces students' academic and cognitive skills, which will be needed every time the learner reads. However, the inclusion of literature has a challenge for a teacher. Most literary texts are selected due to their difficulty, linguistic richness, students' interaction and interest, and

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cultural issues that might be sensitive to some. Therefore, the principal teaching phase in ESL/EFL contexts is selecting suitable literary texts (Barzani, Meena, and Ali, 2021).

In Indonesia, teaching English through literature (literary text) in primary school has challenges because it does not have a curriculum. Especially English subject is only local content that does not have to include in primary school. A school that never implemented English in their learning must be difficult to provide teaching. So, this study aims to research the challenges in teaching English literature in primary school from a teacher's perspective and the strategies used to solve the challenges.

METHOD

The method used in this study is qualitative descriptive to describe the challenges faced by the English teacher in the English literature teaching process. The subject of this study was an English teacher of 6th grade in MI Nadlatul Ulama Malang. The researchers collected the data using unstructured questions via WhatsApp and met in person. An unstructured interview design was used in this study to gain more insight and answers into the subject's perspectives, experiences, thoughts, and perceptions. Unstructured interviews rely on social interaction between the researchers and the participant to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of interest from individual perspectives (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2019). Finally, the researchers analyzed the data based on the interview results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicated that the teaching of English literature taught in grade 6 elementary school began to discuss literary material with narrative text as a sub-material. The narrative text is one of the literary works created by the author in a constructive and sequential form that describes a sequence of events, either fictional or non-fiction (Hidayat, 2017). Literature material on narrative text for English students in Indonesian is taught from the beginning to the high level. It is because the narrative text contains a lot of moral values and can also entertain students (Jati and Somphithak, 2021).

The qualitative results revealed that learning English has only just started to be introduced to students at MI Nadlatul Ulama during the last two semesters. These conditions cause challenges for students and also teachers in the process of learning English literature. Based on the findings, the researchers found three challenges faced by an English teacher of 6th grade at MI Nadlatul Ulama in learning English literature. The three challenges are in the aspect of learning media, students' English skill gap, and the time of the English lessons.

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Challenges Faced by The Teacher
Learning Media

Our findings showed that the main problem faced by the English teacher at MI Nadlatul Ulama was the limitations of books as learning media. The problem regarding the learning media is following the teacher's statement during the interview. The English teacher stated: "*The textbooks are limited. It is only owned by the teacher. Therefore, students write from the material the teacher has written on the board.*" Based on the results of the interviews, textbooks were only owned by the English teacher. Meanwhile, students only rely on the material that the teacher has prepared. The prepared material can be in the form of notes written by the English teacher on the blackboard or PowerPoint media.

In line with previous studies that showed the limited facilities in the English learning process is a challenge for schools and teachers. Many elementary schools include English in their curriculum but are not accompanied by adequate facilities and support for the learning process. As a result, the teacher only uses written and oral learning methods (Hawanti, 2014). The book's limitations impact the unsatisfactory process of learning English literature at the school. It supports the claims of Hawanti (2014) that the problem of lack of adequate preparation and facilities has indeed become a central problem in the policy of learning English in elementary schools in Indonesia (Helmie & Susilawati, 2018). In addition, it is increasingly significant that an official curriculum for teaching English in elementary school is lacking and needs to be improved. Learning English in elementary schools in Indonesia will have unsatisfactory learning outcomes. (Hawanti, 2014).

Students' English Skill Gap

Another problem is the diverse student responses to learning literature. The researchers found that grade 6 students at MI Nadlatul Ulama had skill gaps in learning English with literature as a sub-material. The teacher showed the students' skill gap based on her perspective: "*When viewed from the student's perspective, some children are pessimistic because they from grades 1-5 do not learn English. They do not understand English vocabulary. Even so, some students were enthusiastic and understood the material because they had an English tutor at home.*" The study demonstrates a correlation between the lack of introduction to English to the students and the English learning process itself. English is complicated for students who only study English for two semesters at school. It is challenging for them to accept literary texts because of the lack of English vocabulary. In comparison, children who already have a basis for learning English before being taught at school respond positively.

This study is in line with earlier research that discussed English learning and showed that one of the challenges English teachers in elementary schools must face is the skill gap between students. (Prastha, Larasati, and Yoshinta, 2022). According to Songbatumis (2007), students who are better at following the English learning

process have easy access to learning English. Apart from studying at school, they can improve their English proficiency through several opportunities they can do, such as private lessons, foreign movies, computer-assisted language instruction, and other media. (Songbatumis, 2007). Our findings also showed the students' English skill gaps through assignments given by the teacher. There is an assignment to make a literary text through narrative text as a sub-material. The teacher gives homework to students to write short texts according to the material that has been taught. This assignment also relates to the student's understanding of the basic grammar used to write texts.

Regarding the assignment result, the teacher said the students' results were not optimal. Some students can already do it on their own, but it still needs to be improved. Several other students used Google translate to write the whole story with lots of errors. That data contributes to a clearer understanding of the existence of skill gaps among grade 6 students at MI Nadlatul Ulama in learning English literature with narrative text as a sub-material.

The Time of the English Lesson

Our findings showed that the difficulties experienced by some of the students also affect the efficiency of learning time. It is by what the teacher said: "*Students have difficulty translating the texts, so they need my help one by one, which takes time. Meanwhile, the meeting time is only one hour.*" In other words, the teacher felt this English class hour is less effective in conveying the material. It is because students still need help from the teacher to translate the text word by word while the study time lasts only 1 hour in each meeting. This finding should be taken into account when considering how to get satisfactory learning results when the time itself is limited. Previous studies suggested that the time allocated for the process of learning English in the 2013 Curriculum as local content was reduced and caused several problems (Kaltsum, 2016).

The Strategies Applied by The Teacher

Regarding all of those conditions, the English teacher did several ways to increase students' interest in learning English literature. It is expected that students will easily receive the narrative text material. One of them is the teacher delivering material using PowerPoint. The teacher stated that: "*I also used PPT in several meetings. The children's responses were positive and interesting when I used PPT.*" Based on the interview, the teacher changed the method of presenting material from only using the blackboard to using PowerPoint as well. It is intended to increase students' interest in learning because there are many interesting animations in it.

This study found a correlation between the use of PowerPoint and students' interest. A previous study by Noviaji (2011) showed that using PowerPoint presentations effectively motivated students to learn English and got them involved in

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the process of teaching and learning. There were many animated images in the content. It also made students more enthusiastic and respond positively.

In addition, based on the teacher's interview, she continues to accompany students when students have difficulty or are confused about accepting the material provided. The teacher also gave positive feedback to students to keep them enthusiastic about learning English literature. The teacher evaluates and provides examples of how to make short stories properly according to the narrative text material in English literature. Therefore, students can find out where they are lacking.
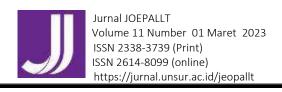
CONCLUSION

Teaching English especially literature in primary school is a challenge in Indonesia because it does not have a curriculum to develop it. It is of course a problem for a school that never applied an English subject. The researchers found three challenges faced by an English teacher of 6th grade at MI Nadlatul Ulama in learning English literature. There are the lack of learning media, students' English skill gap, and less time teaching in class. Some strategies are used to make teaching done effectively. To increase students' motivation, the teacher delivered material using PowerPoint not only on the blackboard. The teacher also accompanies when students have difficulty or are confused about accepting the material provided. It would be helpful if the school added additional learning like courses after school so that the students can learn more English since they have less time to learn in class. In addition, it is hoped that the provision of study books for students so that the learning process takes place optimally.

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