

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter comprises five sections. Section 1.1 describes how the urgency of conducting this research arises from fact that many English teachers in primary schools in Indonesia teach using methods that are not meaningful. Section 1.2 and 1.3 state the expected outcomes of the research, i.e. the portrayal of methods used by teachers under study. Section 1.4 clarifies some disputable terms. Section 1.5 describes in brief what this whole research paper consists of.

1.1 Background

Most English teachers in primary schools in Indonesia are teacher-centered, equip mere Grammar-translation method, and neglect meaningfulness when conducting instructional process (Grassick, 2007). The methods used by the teachers are in opposition with a method believed to be ideal for English classes for young learners, the child-centered method. This paper portrays teaching methods used in English classes for young learners in two schools in Western Bandung—whether they are in line with child-centered method.

When it comes to teaching English to young learners, some experts believe that that special method for teaching English to young learners, i.e. child-centered method, is highly required. Cameron (2001) believes that it is because children only go for meaning and they are not yet able to construct understanding in foreign language lesson. Children need some years to realize that it is important to

acquire correct understanding of what other people are talking about. Unlike adults who are able to ask for clarification when they do not understand a teacher's instruction, children would rather interpret their teacher's instructions the way they want without necessarily checking whether their understanding of an instruction is correct or not. If children do not understand what sense they should get from a classroom activity, they will not learn. That way, language learning should be made meaningful so that children would be help to reach the learning objectives aimed. Child-centered method makes sure that teachers provide access to meaning in the students' learning process.

Another expert, Paul (2003), believes child-centered method demands teachers to comprehend how children learn and develop. Paul finds that EFL teachers in Asia rely much on teacher-centered method, in which teachers control the class in authoritarian manner. Paul assumes that teacher-centered method is not suitable for teaching young learners because this method is a consequence of teachers' absence of knowledge about children's mental development. From Paul's and Cameron's points of view, it is apparent that knowledge about children, either their mental development or how they learn, completes the aspect of meaningfulness as the core element of a child-centered method.

In reality, the use of teacher-centered method in teaching English, especially in Indonesia, has been viewed problematic. As surveyed by Somantri (2003), many students scored only five or below in the English test of National Exam 2003 for Senior High schools; meanwhile, only some could obtain perfect score, yet are not able to speak English at all. Zamroni (2000, cited in Somantri,

2003) believes that this problem arises because many teachers prefer to deliver teacher-centered teaching that demands teachers to act as the only source of information who deliver teaching materials orderly and clearly. Due to various reasons, such as limited time or information on how to design a course, teachers in Indonesia ended up copying materials from school textbook and giving them away without being adapted into any meaningful activities. Consequently, the students are clueless about when and where they should use particular expressions; even worse, they do not have any idea why they should learn English at school. This shows that many teachers are still lacking information of how to implement meaningful and contextual classroom activities—activities that are highly accommodated in child-centered method.

Considering such cases, it is urgent to notice how Indonesian students learn English in the very first place, i.e. in elementary school level. The result of the research is expected to portray what methods the teachers under study implement in classroom instruction, whether the methods are in line with child-centered method. From this description of what happens in English teaching process to young learners in Indonesia, i.e. in Western Bandung area, potential models of how teaching young learners' classes should be are certain to arise.

1.2 Research Questions

There is one research question addressed in this study, i.e. “What methods do the teachers under study employ in teaching English to Young Learners?”

1.3 The Aims of the Study

At the end of the research, the researcher would be able to identify what methods the teachers employ in teaching English to Young Learners.

1.4 Clarification of Key Terms

In order to avoid misunderstandings of the issue discussed in this research paper, several key terms as defined as listed below.

- 1) Child-centered method refers to a method specially designed to suit the needs of young language learners and provide meaningful learning process.
- 2) The term 'young learners' refers to elementary school students grade 4-6, aged nine to twelve years old.
- 3) Verbalizing activity is a classroom activity in which the students mouth particular words, without necessarily understanding the meaning of the words.

1.5 Organization of Content

This paper consists of five chapters: introduction, theoretical background, research method, discussion, and conclusion and suggestions. Each chapter emphasizes on different focus.

The first chapter clarifies how the methods used by many English teachers in Indonesia leads to a problem where many Indonesian students are unable to use English for communication. The description of the problem shall highlight the urgency why it is important to track down how English subject is taught since the lower level of education, i.e. in elementary school level, through this research.

The second chapter, theoretical background, provides a discussion about some theories about teaching English to Young learners. Departing from what defines a ‘method’, more information about what a child-centered method is and how to relate the method with children’s characters would follow.

The third chapter, research method, clarifies how the research will be conducted and analyzed. This chapter clarifies why the research needs to utilize classroom observation checklist, interview guidelines, and syllabus and lesson plan documentation. Afterwards, some notions of what construct a child-centered method will be delivered as categories to analyze whether or not the methods used by teachers under research are child-centered.

The fourth chapter, discussion, gives detail portrait of how three teachers in two different elementary schools in Western Bandung area taught their students. The result will be matched to some elements that a child-centered method should have, based on synthesized theories about child-centered method, and thus whether or not the methods used by the teachers under research are child-centered is hoped to show.

The last chapter comprises conclusion and suggestions. The conclusion part briefly states the answer to the research question about what methods the teachers under study employ. Some suggestions to improve teachers’ reference to methods of teaching English to young learners will be delivered to the teachers under study as well as to the next researchers.