TEACHERS’ PERCEPTION OF DIFFICULTIES IN
TEACHING ENGLISH FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS IN
SD KRISTEN SATYA WACANA

THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Sarjana Pendidikan

Venda Vista Tuhumury
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Teachers’ perceptions of difficulties in Teaching English to Elementary Students in SD Kristen Satya Wacana

Venda Vista Tuhumury

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, English becomes an International language that is used as a tool to develop some important aspects of life (Lauder, 2008). Knowing this issue, parents in Indonesia enroll their children to the school where English becomes a compulsory subject as early as possible starting from elementary even preschool. However, the teachers find it difficult to teach English for young learners. The aim of this study was to find out teachers’ perception of difficulties in teaching English at SD Kristen Satya Wacana. An in-depth interview of a sample of English teachers in SD Kristen Satya Wacana (3 participants) was conducted, focusing on teachers’ difficulties in teaching English. There were seven major difficulties faced by the participants in teaching English for elementary students. Those were the abolishment of bilingual class, Students’ background knowledge, the lack of time in English teaching, Classroom management, Children’s characteristics, slow learners VS fast learners, the role of parents.

Keywords: perception, difficulties, young learners, English

A. INTRODUCTION

SD Kristen Satya Wacana or known as SD LAB is one of private schools in Salatiga. It was officially opened on January 4th 1971 cooperating with YPTKSW in Salatiga. Now, SD LAB becomes one of favorite schools in Salatiga that provides seventeen experienced teachers and adequate facilities. Moreover, knowing that English becomes more popular in this globalization era, SD LAB also provides bilingual program where all subjects use English and Indonesian as medium of instruction. However, since there is government regulation (K13), bilingual program is deleted. Then English becomes a compulsory subject starting from the first grade until sixth grade that takes 70 minutes per week per class.
Nevertheless, the headmaster does not simply provide English lesson without any supporting aspect such as experienced English teachers and complete facilities.

SD LAB has five trained English teachers because they were mostly graduated from English Education Program. They are AP, DPR, MCYD, MMDI and RSS. One of them, Mr. RSS had a chance to continue his study for a Master Degree taking ESL Language Instructor in Sebelas Maret University.

Since they have five English teachers, SD LAB has assigned those teachers in different classes. For the first grade students, Ms. DPR takes responsibility in teaching the English subject in two classes (1A & 1B) while Ms. MCYD is teaching English in two classes in the second grade level. Afterwards, Miss MMDI has been assigned to teach English in the third grade with three classes (3A, 3B, 3C). Then, in the fourth grade level, there are two teachers; Mr. AP and Mr. RSS. Mr. AP is an English teacher in 4A and Mr. RSS has been assigned to teach English in 4B. Mr. AP also has responsibility in teaching English in the fifth grade level with two classes (5A & 5B). Then, for the sixth grade classes (6A & 6B), Mr. RSS is the English teacher.

In teaching English, they usually use a book entitled “BEST” as their handbook. However, in teaching, they often develop the material by themselves. Indeed, they frequently use their creativity to create their own material so that the students would find it easier in learning English. Then, they also often utilize school’s facilities such as LCD projector or white board to make the lesson more attractive.
In my experience as a pre-service teacher in SD LAB, some of the students have good background knowledge of English. For the first grade students, it was quite easy to teach reading because all the information was written on the reading passage. Moreover, some of them have lot of vocabularies in English. It is shown when I taught them some vocabularies about class supplies. Some students could easily say the English word. However, I found it difficult when I should teach structure. Moreover, they had a tendency to play with friends or draw something on piece of paper. They also tended to be busy with their stationeries and ignored the explanation. Therefore, I could say that teaching English to elementary student is not easy. Based on my experience, the question of this study was, “What are teachers’ perceptions of difficulties in teaching English for elementary students at Satya Wacana Elementary School?”

The purpose of this study was to find out teachers’ perception of difficulties in teaching English at Satya Wacana Elementary School.

By investigating SD Kristen Satya Wacana teachers’ perception of difficulties in teaching English, the current study could make several contributions to develop the current state of knowledge in teaching English for elementary students. First, the study shows the difficulties faced by elementary teachers. It may make teachers are more aware of those difficulties. Second, the findings of the study may provide useful information for teachers by suggesting possible solutions to deal with elementary teachers’ difficulties. Third, since the teachers get the information to deal with their difficulties in teaching English for elementary students and hopefully they can apply it in their teaching and learning
process, the students could get opportunity to learn English more effectively. Fourth, since the researcher of this essay is trained to be a teacher, the information of this article can be useful for her as a guidance to teach later.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this globalization era, mastering English is important for countries where English is not their mother tongue because this language is used all over the world. English as an International and global language is seen as an instrument to develop some aspects of life such as politic, science and technology, education, information technology, international trade and industry (Lauder, 2008). Based on this fact, it is important that English is included in the local content of school-based curriculum in non-English speaking countries. Indonesia is one of the countries that have realized the importance of English in developing the economic growth which help them to compete with other countries in this globalization era. Therefore, according to Madya et al (2002) since 1995 primary schools in Indonesian are formally allowed to provide English subject to fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. Yet, now many schools in Indonesia provide English subject in primary school starting from first grade and even kindergarten students.

Knowing this issue and the importance of English, many parents tend to enroll their children in bilingual school or a school which has a good English program. Therefore, English to Young Learner (EYL) programs are increasing nowadays (Enever & Moon, 2009; Gimenez, 2009). English is the first choice of parents for their children to study (Garton, Copland, & Burns, 2011, p. 5). Today, schools in
Indonesia offer various program of English that can help the students to learn English effectively. Schools become the place where they learn both their mother tongue and their second language that is English. In SD Kristen Satya Wacana, since the first grader, the students have been introduced to English even though the teachers still use their mother tongue as a medium of instruction. This is a good step for the school preparing the students to compete in globalization era.

However, teaching English to young learners is not merely a matter of giving them authentic language task in the classroom. Teaching English to young learners requires the teacher to have specific skill and intuitions that is different with adult teaching. Brown (2001) states that young learners cannot understand something abstract such as grammar. Moreover, they also have short attention spans. Therefore, it probably indicates that teaching English to young learners is not easy.

1. Increasing Interest of Parents

Nowadays, parents decide to send their children to the bilingual school because English becomes an International language that is used as a tool to develop some important aspects of life (Lauder, 2008). According to Shang et al (2007), there are three reasons for parents to enroll their children to the bilingual school. First, parents believe that they should let their children learn English as early as possible to become a “dragon or phoenix” because of early English-language learning. In addition, Oladejo (2006) stated that parents hope that exposure their children to learn English as early as possible could increase children’s skill in English for academic achievements or better career
opportunities. Second, since Government promoted English learning from the third grade of elementary school across the country (in the context of Taiwan), parents started to enroll their children in formal English learning even before the official commencement age. Third, because of globalization era, parents need to lengthen the exposure of English learning for the purpose to increase children’s English communicative competence. Parents will let their children learn English as early as possible, even when their children are still in Kindergarten.

In Indonesia, even though English is seen as a foreign language, English is one of the most favorite foreign languages used and taught at Indonesian schools. According to Marhum (2009) on his paper titled “English Language in Indonesian School in the Era of Globalization”, recently, the introduction of RSBI (Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional) and SBI (Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional) across province in Indonesia has led to the significant growing interest of school students to learn English. It has changed parents’ mindset toward the importance of English Language education in this globalization era. Therefore, a lot of parents send their children to RSBI or SBI because parents want their children to have a good command of English. Marhum also said, even parents also send their children to the private English School because they thought that learning English through the formal education at schools was not enough.

2. Characteristics of Young Language Learners

Generally, it is difficult to group age ranges that represent young learners. Ellis (2013) argued that young learners are those children between the age of five until eleven. For Indonesia, it is equivalent to learners in primary school.
According to University of Cambridge handbook titled Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) Young Learners (YL) (2010), children have certain characteristics; they mostly use limited language on their conversation creatively. They have a capacity for indirect learning where they have a tendency to respond to meaning and situation rather than to language. Moreover, in daily life, they need to feel relaxed or safe. When they feel unsafe, they usually become more active or even cry. Moreover, they tend to be more comfortable in learning a language through social interaction, whether it is with peers or the teacher. Basically, children’s characteristics are based on individual learning styles, their previous learning experiences, L1 background, motivation and attention spans.

In addition, Harmer (2007) in his book “The Practice of English Language Teaching” says that young learners are able to understand meaning even though they do not understand the individual words. They learn the meaning through intonations, gestures, facial expression, actions and circumstances. They also frequently learn indirectly rather than directly. This phenomenon is explained by Harmer saying that, “they take in information from all sides, learning from everything around them rather than only focusing on the precise topic they are being taught”. Their understanding is not obtained only from the explanation, but also from what they see, hear, touch and interact with. In addition, Harmer also states that young learners are difficult to grasp abstract concepts such as grammatical rules. Halliwell (1992) explains this issue further. She argues that “the children’s capacity for conscious learning of forms and grammatical patterns is still relatively undeveloped”
Young learners also love talking. According to Harmer (2007), he mentions that young learners are keen to talk about themselves. They could easily respond to learning that uses themselves and their own lives as main topics in the classroom. Based on my experience, young learners would actively participate in the class when the lesson included something that related with their daily activities, hobbies, or their favorite movies. Then, Brown (2001) concludes by explaining some important aspects that teachers should know in teaching English to young learners that are associated with their characteristics. Those are as follows.

a. Young learners understand something concrete. They face difficulty in understanding abstract terms such as grammar and rules. Therefore, patterns, examples, and repetitions are needed.

b. Young learners have short attention spans, so it is important to create interesting, lively, and fun activities. Therefore, teachers should be animated, lively, and enthusiastic in teaching and make sure that students are curious with the lesson.

c. Teaching English to young learners needs sensory input. It means that the lesson should contain physical activities, projects and hands-on activities, pictures here and there, and non-verbal language.

d. Young learners are often innovative and also sensitive. Accordingly, the teachers should be patient and supportive to build self-esteem, be firm, and make the students participate in speaking as much as possible.
3. The Qualification of Elementary Teachers

However, the factor that can affect the success of EYL program is the schools need to provide well-trained teachers as role models in the class. Teacher is the key point in any child’s education. Often, teachers have taught adolescents or adults, but they do not have any special training on how to teach children (Kirkgöz, 2009). Teaching young learners is quite different with teaching older learners. According to Cameron (2001), children lose interest more quickly, and they are less able to keep motivated on tasks they find difficult. They also do not have the same access as older learners to meta-language that teachers use to explain about grammar or discourse. Based on my personal experience in teaching practicum as a student-teacher at SD Kristen Satya Wacana (2015), when I taught the first grade students, I found that students were mostly busy with their stationeries, talked with their friends even fought in the class. Therefore, I tried to use songs, pictures and everything that could attract students’ attention.

Teacher is a key point of student academic success, so the teacher should effectively and clearly deliver their knowledge to the students. Musthafa (2003) asserts that primary students need enough exposure, support, engagement, and teachers’ confidence and capabilities to be successful learners. As teachers, Defianty and Nafisah (2008) on their paper titled “Portrait Of Eyl Teachers: Their Competence and Performance” added that a competent elementary teacher should understand how young learners learn. They tend to like pictures, physical movement, and real things. Therefore, EYL teachers should be able to formulate a good lesson plan as their guidance. Unfortunately, the teacher has mastered
English but without the knowledge in teaching English for elementary school. According to Chodijah (2008), a widely reported problem is gap between the supply of qualified teachers and their requirement as programs expand. Chodijah also mentioned that some countries have to rely on teachers who are not trained to be young learner teachers.

Moreover, teaching young learners is not easy because based on Holešinská’s study (2006), the teacher should pay attention on some factors that affect students’ motivation in class such as physical appearance of the classroom. It forces the teacher to use attractive A.V.A a lot where the students can hear, see and listen. Then, the atmosphere in the lessons (classroom) is also important to keep students’ motivation. Teachers should know how to make children feel comfortable in teaching and learning process. It means that teachers should make activities that involve children in, so they will not feel bored. Besides, when the students have finished their assignments, the teacher should appreciate their effort to finish it. It does not matter how good or bad their works are, but at least they have tried. Moreover, teachers also should pay attention with their attitude towards children.

The teachers also should be able to support their communication with the students through the use of gesture, facial expression, and action because these give them clues to the meaning of what they hear or read. This helps them to become familiar with the scheme of their second language which is different with their first language (Tough, 1984)
4. Research Result from Previous Study

Previous study which investigated EYL teachers’ competence and performance that is done by Defianty and Nafisah (2008) where data were collected through observation, questionnaire, and interview of 4 respondents showed surprising results. Every respondent had goal in their teaching but they lack of objective. For example, a respondent had a goal to introduce past tense, and then she explained the whole formula of past tense. Yet, from the observation result, the students did not understand why they should know the formula and how to use it. It is too difficult for the students understanding grammar or formula of certain tenses.

Unfortunately, three other respondents claimed that they depended on the textbook and the result was they neglected the procedure of teaching young learners such as techniques, stages, and sequences of instruction. They applied similar techniques for every lesson. Even though they relied on the textbook, one of the respondents used various techniques in giving instruction such as using song and games. Then the result was the class was more relaxed and fun, as the children enjoyed the activities. In addition, the respondents lack of understanding how to assess young learners in the classroom. They also overused Indonesian Language during instructions and they made it even worse by doing grammatical mistakes when speaking English.

5. Common Difficulties in Teaching English for Young Learners

From the previous study, it shows that teaching young language learners is not easy. The teacher may find difficulties in teaching English to primary level. In
this case, primary teachers are required to be more aware in teaching young learners by considering their natural behavior. Cameron (2001) reminded us that teacher may find difficulties in keeping the students concentrate in the class because they tend to lose their interest more quickly and they are easier to get distracted by other things. When they do not concentrate with the lesson, they will play with their stationary or even talking with their classmates. Moreover, from the previous study, it shows that EYL teachers may find difficulty in teaching grammar because they do not have the access as adult learners in learning discourse or abstract concepts like grammar (Harmer, 2000). Teachers should think harder how to teach basic grammar without making the students realize they are learning grammar because they find it difficult to learn grammar formula. Furthermore, class size also becomes one of teachers’ difficulties since Indonesia tend to have a large class. According to Baker and Westrup (2000), teachers may have difficulty in teaching large classes because since young learners need to have interactive activities, they do not have enough space to move during the lesson. Moreover, desks and chairs are fixed or difficult to move. It makes the teachers need extra time to arrange the desk and chair whenever they want to create fun activities for young learners.

Based on the above study, there has been no research on the teachers’ perception of difficulties in teaching English for elementary students. Therefore, this study was designed to find out teachers’ perception of difficulties in teaching English at SD Kristen Satya Wacana
C. THE STUDY

1. Method of Research

Since this study aimed to describe and understand teachers’ perception of difficulty in teaching English for elementary students, this study used descriptive research which produces a straightforward description of participants’ experiences in words as similar to what the participants said as possible. A descriptive research is adopted which collect qualitative data. Then, the study described teachers’ perceptions of difficulty in teaching English for elementary students at SD Kristen Satya Wacana. Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge (1998) stated that qualitative research “focuses on description and interpretation and might lead to development of new concepts or theory or to an evaluation of organizational process” (p.6).

2. Participants

Purposive sampling was used in choosing the participant in this study. The subjects of this study were three English teachers (from five English teachers) in SD Kristen Satya Wacana that had certain criteria that could give richer data. The first criterion was they were teaching English from 1 until 3 grade students who have different characteristics. They also have been teaching English for more than 5 years in SD Kristen Satya Wacana. Therefore, they have enough experiences in teaching English for young learners. Moreover, after observing their teaching during my teaching practicum, I found that the participants faced different kind of students where they have different technique to overcome the problem in the class.
3. Research Instruments

The data were collected through in-depth interview to achieve a richer picture of perceptions. According to Boyce and Neale (2006), “In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspective on a particular idea, program, or situation. The in-depth interview had greater flexibility for the participant to change the order of the questions to provide opportunity for follow up questions (Patton, 1990) as cited in “Research made simple” by Zacharias (2013). This study developed and used ‘interview guide’ where there were list of open-ended questions that need to be covered during the conversation. The first two questions were to find out participants’ background education and how long they have been teaching English in SD Kristen Satya Wacana. The next questions aimed to get information about the difficulties faced by the participants during their teaching. Then, the last question was to find out how they deal with the difficulties in teaching English for elementary students. The language used in this interview was in Bahasa Indonesia because it was easier for the participants to express their thoughts through their mother language. Then, the data was coded and classified to be followed up with the interpretation and analysis.

4. Data Collection

This study used in-depth interview and there were some steps to do the interview. First, the study decided which questions were most appropriate for the participants. The questions in this interview were structured around asking the
teachers to reflect their difficulties in teaching English for elementary students. Then, the researcher were contacted the participants explaining the goal of the interview, scheduling an appointment and agreeing on where the interview will be accessible for the participant. During the interview, the information given by all participants were noted on a book. Besides taking note, a digital recorder was utilized to make sure that the context in which an utterance was said did not lose.

5. Data Analysis

After the data was collected, it was analyzed using the following procedures. First, the data recorded from the participant were transcribed. Then, it was coded based on the difficulties mentioned by the participants. After that, it was classified into some difficulties that were analyzed to get empirical result for the teachers’ perception of difficulties in teaching English for Elementary Students in SD Kristen Satya Wacana.

D. DISCUSSION

The information collected from the participants was analyzed qualitatively. Based on the transcript of the depth-interview section, the difficulties faced by the participants are the abolishment of bilingual class, Students’ background knowledge, the lack of time in English teaching, Classroom management, Children’s characteristics, slow learners VS fast learners, the role of parents.

Difficulty 1: The abolishment of bilingual class

Since the bilingual class program was abolished by the government, the teachers interviewed found difficulty in enriching English to the students. All
participants deplored the abolishment of bilingual class because it limits their time to explore English to the students. Below were the quotations taken from the interview:

Bilingual class program was deleted after English lesson is prohibited by the government, so our knowledge about English is used only in English hour and it cannot be maximal because I cannot enrich knowledge to the students.

(Participant 1)

70 minutes are not enough for English class. However, first when we still had bilingual class here, when we could use English in Math, Science, or social that is much easier for us to teach English to the students. Whether they like it or not, they would use English every day. It is much easier and faster.

(Participant 3)

From those quotations, we can assume that they regretted the abolishment of bilingual class at SD Kristen Satya Wacana, because they argued that they could not enrich students’ ability to communicate in English. Actually, according to Genesee (2004), bilingual program is education that aims to promote bilingual competence by using both languages as media of instruction for significant portion of the academic curriculum. In Indonesia, the bilingual education was implemented since 2004 and gained the popularity for about 8 years assigning 1300 schools categorized as international standardized schools in 2012 (Kedaulatan Rakyat, 14 January 2013). During those years (2004-2012), SD Kristen Satya Wacana used English and Indonesian as media of instruction in all subjects.

Here the teachers would probably take advantage of the chance to enrich English knowledge to the students. That is why one of participants stated that it
was easier and faster for the teachers to teach English because the students learnt English every day. This might give positive result when the elementary students can learn English every day. As Genesee (2004) explained that bilingual education gives opportunity for extended exposure afforded by an early starting grade. He also added that it may be best for implementing bilingual education early so that children become accustomed to both languages early on and they also can take advantage of language learning opportunities that are afforded outside school. However, in 2013, the bilingual class program in Indonesia has been banned because some parties believe that this program has discriminated the poor from the rich because international standardized schools are mostly enjoyed by the rich. Therefore, since the new government regulation that officially banned bilingual program, participants’ opinion could be a proof that it gives disadvantages for the participants in enriching English to the students. They believed that bilingual program gives a big portion for English to be taught in SD Kristen Satya Wacana. They argued that whether the students like English or not, they have to learn English everyday as it was the medium of instruction in every subject. Moreover, they thought that it is easier and faster for them to teach English through bilingual program.

**Difficulty 2: Students’ background knowledge**

As young learners, some students had limited knowledge in pronouncing, spelling or reading a word in English even in Indonesian context. Moreover, some students did not get English lesson when they were in Kindergarten. Therefore, it
forced all the participants to work harder in teaching English for elementary students. Below were the quotations taken from the interview:

It becomes harder for us when some students are difficult to read in Indonesian much less in English. In addition, they also have difficulty in writing both in Indonesian and English.

(Participant 1)

Students’ background knowledge is different. It is much easier for us if the students have learnt basic English in previous education. However, the fact is some students do not get basic English from previous school, so they need to struggle in learning English. It is difficult.

(Participant 2)

For those who already have background knowledge of English, I assume that they at least have learnt things such as family, fruit, vegetable, animal, color, things around school or class supplies, and occupation. Even, some students have mastered public places. Then, for those who do not have background knowledge of English, they even do not understand what English is. Moreover, they do not know how to pronounce in English. In addition, it becomes more difficult when the students do not have basic knowledge of alphabet in English. Thus, they find it difficult to read even write in English.

(Participant 3)

We may not resist the fact that young learners have different background knowledge. We also cannot conclude that all learners have the same background knowledge because they come from different places, families, and especially previous education. Yet, what is background knowledge? Biemans and Simons (1996) conceive of background knowledge “as all knowledge learners have when entering a learning environment that is potentially relevant for acquiring new knowledge” (p.6). It probably means that if, for example, we want to learn Math, we must have at least the knowledge of numbers. Unfortunately, not all students at SD Kristen Satya Wacana have the same background knowledge. Therefore, as
the teachers, all participants found it difficult to deal with this issue. Wei-Pei (2008) stated that teachers should be aware of the problems in dealing with situation where young learners arrive with a wide range of different background knowledge. There were some parents who are eager to have their children learn English as early as possible, so some of the children on their classes had started learning English at preschool. They at least had learnt basic English so that they could actively participate in the class. However, there were some students who had no idea about English before encountering it at primary school.

Here, all participants seemed confused while teaching English in the class where not all the students had learnt English. If they teach very basic English to the whole class, it probably becomes a boring teaching and learning process for those who had learnt English before. However, the teachers also could not follow those who have background knowledge of English because it may be difficult for students who did not get basic English yet. Moreover, it became worse that the fact not all students have gotten knowledge of reading or writing in both Indonesian and English. Therefore, this is a big job for the teachers to find the best way in teaching young learners where they have different background knowledge. If they cannot find the best way in teaching young learners, the teaching and learning process probably would not be effective.

**Difficulty 3: the lack of time in English teaching**

All participants complained the lack of time in English teaching at school because they have limited time to explore English to the students. Participant #1 stated:
70 minutes a week is not enough for me to explore English to the students. At least, 2 x 70 minutes, 4 hours a week, so it is not only stuck in introduction of vocabulary but it can be broader. I can create more games to hone their language focus.

(Participant 1)

70 minutes a week is less than enough for me. I cannot explore many things to the student especially in speaking. Usually, 70 minutes is mostly used for reading or writing. Speaking is only 10 – 15 minutes at the end of the lesson. For a big class, it is not enough and not effective enough.

(Participant 2)

For English, it is not enough if we only have 70 minutes a week. If we want to teach English knowledge to the student, we should have at least 140 minutes or 4 hours a week. However, if we really want the students to master speaking, reading and writing, that is still not enough. It is better for the student to learn English every day.

(Participant 3)

Since the government regulation (K13) has been implemented in many schools in Indonesia including SD Kristen Satya Wacana, the time allotted for English subject at schools was reduced. This gave a big challenge for both teacher and students to work harder in achieving the learning goal in limited time.

We all know that teaching elementary students is not easy. There are so many things to do when teaching young learners because we cannot teach them like we teach older learners. Therefore, we should have enough time for teaching English to elementary students. However, since the K13 has officially been implemented, SD Kristen Satya Wacana only had 70 minutes a week for English subject and according to all participants, 70 minutes was not enough. All participants wished for more extra hours for English subject. They seemed very critical about the inadequate time allocation for English teaching in the class room because they could not maximally deliver their knowledge to the students. They
even had to deduct the time for post activities in their teaching process. Moreover, they did not have enough time to do engaging games since young learners love game (Yolageldili & Arikan, 2011), expand the vocabulary knowledge and train the students to speak or write in English. One of the participants even wished for everyday English teaching at school. As Panggabean (2015) argued that learning less than two hours a week results in very little achievement. He even added that Indonesian learners find it difficult and take a very long time to acquire English because they do not use English as a habit. They only depend on less than two hours English lesson at school.

The other reason why all participants wished for additional time was because they sometimes spent their time to fix teaching instruments and aids or handle the misbehavior students. That is why they assumed that 70 minutes was not enough for them. They would probably have no time for outside activities, play interesting videos, or sing a song related to the lesson where the learners may love those activities a lot.

**Difficulty 4: Classroom Management**

Teachers have many roles in the classroom. However, the most important thing is how to organize the classroom or it is called classroom management. According to Rogers and Freiberg (1994), a lot of teachers put classroom management as an ever-present concern. In addition, Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1994) stated that classroom management is the most important factor, even above students’ aptitude in affecting students learning. Since classroom management is
important, teachers are suggested to learn more about classroom management. According to Kean University (2009):

Classroom management, as applied to teaching, involves everything that a teacher must do to carry out his/her teaching objectives. It includes preparation of plans and materials, structuring of activities into time blocks, direct teaching of skills and subject matter, grouping of pupils to provide for the most efficient use of teacher and pupil time, plans for transition periods—changing from one activity to another or from one place to another—pupil involvement and motivation, and adequate control of pupil behavior.

However, the participants found it difficult in dealing with classroom management. According to two participants, they mostly faced difficulty with classroom management because of noisy students.

Usually, when I warned some students to be silent, after 5 minutes they will make noise again. So sometimes I actually spend too much time in handling with noise children rather than teaching the English lesson.

(Participant 1)

Although I have made some class rules, it does not really work to some students. Some students will not care or forget with the rules and start to make a noise in the class. Then, I will always call the noisy students and tell them that they disturb other students.

(Participant 2)

These quotations indicated that in managing the classroom, the participants were distracted with noisy students. One of them even consumed too much time to deal with those students. McPhillimy (1996) states one of the issue regarding with classroom management is too-high noise level. Students who have a tendency to make noisy and hard to be handled were recorded as misbehavior students (Altinel, 2006). Misbehavior could possibly cause loss of attention and interest. Moreover, it could disturb the peace in the classroom that may bother
teaching and learning process in the class. As pre-service English teacher in SD Kristen Satya Wacana, I found that misbehavior students created noisy by complaining about their friends, talking loudly in the class, bothering friends and also cheating. Therefore, it is important for the teachers as good classroom managers to prevent misbehavior by eliciting students’ cooperation and involvement in assigned work (Good, 1982). The teachers need to create interesting activities and task so that they would focus on those activities without making noise in the class. Moreover, it is probably appropriate for the teachers to have discipline rule in the class that could force them to do not make noise while studying. When I taught English in SD Kristen Satya Wacana, I asked the students to raise their hands first before talking. I even asked noisy students to study outside the classroom if they could not stop making noise. However, it sometimes did not work well like what participant 2 said. Some students were easy to forget the rules and were not afraid to start making noise in the class.

Another reason that the participants found it difficult in dealing with classroom management was class size. For a big class where there were at least 25 students in the class, the participants had problems in managing the class. Baker and Westrup (2000) stated that it is difficult for teachers to teach in large classes because the students need interactive activities that must have enough space to move during the lesson.

Moreover, it is difficult when you teach young learners in a big class because it cannot be maximal in supervising all students. That’s why I arrange the chair in group, so at least I can see quite clear what the students are doing while teaching in the class.
Since the participants had big classes in SD Kristen Satya Wacana, they found difficulty in supervising all students in the class. They could not focus on individual students and their specific needs. They focus on the group as a whole. Therefore, according to Reece and Walker (1997), when the class is more than 20 students, such large group can lead to difficulties in dealing with individuals. Moreover, the study of Blatchford et al. (2003) showed that young learners in large classes are more likely to off task, especially in term of not paying attention to the explanation and not focusing on the task given. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to assume that managing large classes is more difficult than when teachers have small classes. As Blatchford and Mortimore (1994) explained that classroom management of behavior is easier in small classes. It may be easier for the teachers to manage the classroom effectively.

Teaching young learners may be challenging, rewarding or even surprising because it may have many unexpected events in the class room. As elementary teachers, all participants should not only teach English but they also need to control learners’ behavior in the same time. Then, without effective classroom management, it may be possible for the teachers to have little chance to teach successfully since classroom management is considered as one of the most important things in teaching.

Then, regarding with classroom management, Scrivener (2005) concluded some points that need to be carried out such as grouping and seating, activities, authority, critical moments, tools and techniques, and working with people.
Teachers must learn how to form groupings in the class and arrange and rearrange seating, so the children will probably have a new learning environment. They also need to set up activities, and how to monitor those activities without time consuming. Moreover, they also have to get ready with unexpected problems. Therefore, maintaining appropriate discipline is quite important for classroom management. However, Gower, Philips and Walters (2008) emphasize that teachers also need to consider the balance between being friendly and maintaining discipline (p.21).

**Difficulty 5: Children Characteristics**

Natural behaviors of young learners became common issues for the teachers in teaching English at SD Kristen Satya Wacana. In my opinion, as pre-service teacher in SD Kristen Satya Wacana, the students had different characteristics that led me into difficulty while teaching. Here, all participants also found difficulty related with children characteristics while teaching English.

The students will be more interest in learning English if I make funny stories, put many pictures that is famous nowadays for children, or make something that is close to their daily life. In addition, if we only use power point slide in delivering our lesson, it does not really work to the young learners. Even though you teach them 10 hours 10 times, it cannot be successful to them.

(Participant 1)

And the fact is that students have different characteristics. For those who are active enough in the class, I do not need to provoke them to get involved to the lesson. However, for those who are passive or timid, I need to have kind of approaches. Then call her or his name in the class to make them get involved to the lesson. They also tend to be silent when they face difficulties in English learning. It implies that whether I like it or not, I need to identify students’ characteristics first. Secondly, while teaching
and learning process, I cannot just sit and watch them doing their assignments.

(Participant 2)

Participant #2 also added that students will get involved to the lesson if the lesson is familiar to their life. Therefore, participant #2 usually uses videos and pictures to make the students interest with the lesson. First, when the students are interested with the lesson, it will be much easier for the teacher to deliver their knowledge to the students. She also mentioned that some students are too active where they tend to do whatever they want in the class. Some of them are too active to get teacher’s attention. Participant #2 stated that usually too active students like to bother their friends. They sometimes create a fake illness to make the teacher pay attention on them.

The teachers should know what are happening to them because it will make the students more interested with the lesson. This is like what Harmer (2007) says that young learners “take in information from all sides, learning from everything around them rather than only focusing on the precise topic they are being taught”. They need to make sure that the pictures or videos are not out of date. It means that the teachers need to pay attention to “their students’ current interests so that they can use them to motivate the children” (p.83). Therefore, the teachers are required to look for cartoons, toys or things that the young learners will probably love to be discussed.

Moreover, based on the participant, young learners were limited with their short term memory.
Young learners tend to have short term memory, so we cannot force them to study in a long time. They will be tired and the next day they will choose to be absent from class. Some students also tend to be indifferent with the activities in the class. They will be more interested with the lesson if the teachers give them such an interesting game and its reward. They do not need score as the reward. They will be happier if the teachers give them cute stickers or candies.

(Participant 3)

Previously, we had discussed that teaching young learners are totally different with teaching adult learners. Harmer (2007) argues that young learners have different characteristics and they also have different styles of learning from adolescents, adults, and even older children. Moreover, they also have very limited attention and concentration spans, so they can be easily get bored and lose interest. Therefore, it seems that we cannot teach young learners the same as we teach adult learners. Moreover, all participants’ thought indicate that teaching young learners will need a big effort, creativity, and much energy since they have such a unique characteristics that is impossible for the teachers to teach using an ordinary technique.

Moreover, with the things around them, the teachers need to create such interesting activities that could make the students get involved with the lesson. If the teachers do not have creativity to make the lesson more fun, the lesson would probably be easier to be forgotten since the young learners “have very short attention and concentration span (Scott & Ytreberg, 1993: 2). Then, Harmer adds that with their limited attention span, unless activities are extremely engaging, they can get easily bored, losing interest after ten minutes or so” (“The Practice of English Language Teaching” 82).
In addition, the participants argued that children were difficult in understanding grammar.

Young learners find difficulty in learning the structure of English. We cannot force them to understand what tense is or when we use ‘s’ when the subject is singular. The only thing that we can do is we need to make scheme which draw steps for learning structure without making the students realize they are learning structure. Yet, it is still difficult.

(Participant 1)

I know that teaching structure to young learners is difficult. Usually, I have provided some utterances to be read by the students. They have to read it in a full sentence. For example, they have to read “my favorite fruit is apple”. They cannot change it or reduce the words, but they can develop the sentence if they can. However, we cannot explain the structure why we use ‘is’ or ‘are’ if there are two fruits. We just teach them that it should be like that.

(Participant 3)

We all know that language cannot be separated with the structure or grammar. Unfortunately, participants’ opinions indicated that the teachers find difficulties in teaching structure to the students. According to Harmer (2007), young learners are difficult to grasp abstract concepts such as grammatical rules. It also supported by Halliwell (1992) saying that “the children’s capacity for conscious learning of forms and grammatical patterns is still relatively undeveloped”. However, it seems reasonable to assume that even though the students do not have enough ability in understanding the complexity of structure, the teachers should be able to teach the structure while the students unconsciously learn it.
Difficulty 6: Slow learners VS Fast learners

The participants hesitated in facing two different kinds of students that are slow learners and fast learners. Since the teachers had slow and fast learners in a class, they had to make sure that they would be fair enough in teaching those two different kinds of learners. Below were the quotations taken from the interview:

For slow learners, I have tried my best to help them in studying. However, sometimes it does not really work with them, so they do not get the best result of study. On the other hand, if the teachers pay more attention to the slow learners, I am afraid if the fast learners will get bored in the class.

(Participant 1)

When I want to teach faster, I am afraid the slow learners cannot follow the lesson. However, if I make the lesson walk slower, I am afraid the fast learners will get bored in the class.

(Participant 2)

Dealing with two types of learners, that are slow learners and fast learners in the class, likely creates a big dilemma. From the quotations above, the participants seemed in the position where the left side was the slow learners and the right side was the fast learners but they cannot choose. Two of them had the same right as students who were sent by their parents to learn in the school. However, it seemed that the slow learners became the obstacles in teaching and learning process in the class. The teachers should teach slowly for the slow learners, but they were afraid if the fast learners would probably get bored because the lesson was too slow for them.

We also could assume that slow learners were those who had difficulties in following the lesson and in understanding what the teachers explained. According to Karnes (1970), “slow learners are children who learnt at a less rapid rate than
the normal but not as slowly as the educable mentally retarded. Besides, Eastmead (2004) states that a slow learner is a child whose IQ is low enough to cause considerable difficulty in keeping up in the classroom. That is why slow learners would probably need extra time to understand the lesson. They seemed cannot be forced to learn as fast as those who can easily get the point of what the teachers have explained. It would indicate that actually slow learners can learn, but at a slower rate and may be with less understanding retention (Karnes, 1970).

As teachers, all participants should know how to help the slow learners in the fast learners who also need their attention. However, it, perhaps, became more difficult since all participants had a big size class where there are at least 25 learners in the classroom. They should find the best way to divide their attention to slow learners and fast learners. However, the teachers could not deny that slow learners need more attention because they have some difficulties. As Kernes explains that slow learners have learning difficulties such as poorer reasoning ability, shorter attention span, poorer retention, and less curiosity and creativity as compared with more able peers. These indicate that slow learners should be more supervised by the teachers. Even though it is quite difficult for them, the teachers as second parents in the school take a big role in helping the slow learners in studying.

**Difficulty 7: The role of parents**

Some parents could not accept his children’s weaknesses. They only knew that their children get English lesson and forced their children to be able to communicate in English. However, some parents did not understand that their
children were hard to learn English because their misbehavior in the class or their capacity in learning. Below were the quotations taken from the interview:

Some students are forced by their parents to be able to communicate in English, so parents give the students extra English lesson after school. However, they do not know that children also have certain capacity in learning. It causes some students look tired in the class and it reduces their performances in the class.

( Participant 1 )

Parents also have a big role in supervising their children in learning process because the students spend their time mostly in their house. Therefore, whether we like it or not, parenting has a big effect to the children. How they become pampered or independent children, polite or impolite depend on the parenting. If parents can accept children’s weaknesses it will be easier for the teacher to help. Yet, if there is no teamwork between school and the parents, it will be a trouble.

( Participant 2 )

As we know, parents’ interest in sending their children to the bilingual school was increasing since they realize that English becomes International English which is important in globalization era (Lauder, 2008). However, parents did not know that they should take part in supervising their children in teaching and learning process in the class. They also needed to know how their children are. They were responsible in building children’s behaviors that might affect their learning achievement in the school. Moreover, they could not simply send their children to the school without trying to find out their children improvement in learning. It would probably become a burden for the teachers who were given the trust to teach as well as educate the children without any help from the parents.

Since the parents wanted to their children to learn English as early as possible, they also needed to help the teachers in improving students’ achievement
in the school. They should know the weaknesses and the strengths of their children and probably had a discussion with the teachers, so both teachers and parents had the same perception as a basic to teach the children. We cannot deny that parents are significant in creating children behavior. Since children’s behavior is important in the learning process, the parents would probably be blamed if their children’s misbehavior becomes the reason of decreasing achievement of the students in the class. It indicates that parents should have routine consultation regarding how students’ behavior in the school. Moreover, whether it was positive or negative, parents had to receive it and try to find the best way to solve it.

Then, they also needed to know children’s capacity in learning. Some parents had a desire to make the children be the best in the class, so they gave the children extra lesson outside the school. Marhum (2009) said, even parents also send their children to the private English School because they thought that learning English through the formal education at schools was not enough (“English Language in Indonesian School in the Era of Globalization”). However, they did not know that it was hard for the children to have extra time to study. Then, the result was young learners would probably look tired and not enthusiast with the lesson in the class because they spent their energy to study. Unfortunately, it became a problem to the teachers because no matter how interesting the activity was, the children were not as good as if they were not tired.
E. CONCLUSION

The present study was designed to find out teachers’ perception of difficulties in teaching English at SD Kristen Satya Wacana in order to make a contribution to develop the current state of knowledge in teaching English for elementary students. The findings were collected from the difficulties mentioned by the participants on the interview section. The result reported that there were 7 major difficulties why the teachers argued that teaching English for elementary in SD Kristen Satya Wacana was quite difficult. Those were the abolishment of bilingual class, students’ background knowledge, the lack of time in English teaching, classroom management, children’s characteristics, slow learners VS fast learners, and the role of parents. Hence, the study suggest that the headmaster or even government should look back on the English teaching and learning process in Indonesia especially in SD Kristen Satya Wacana.

In terms of the difficulties faced by the teachers in SD Kristen Satya Wacana, some parties such as government, the headmaster, and also the parents were needed to decrease these difficulties. This study pointed out that government regulation on the 2013 curriculum which banned bilingual program became one of the reasons why the teachers got difficulties. School policies were also needed to be reviewed by the headmaster regarding the time allocation for English in SD Kristen Satya Wacana. However, the result also revealed that parents have a big effect on students’ performances in the class. Therefore, these parties were needed to discuss such problems further.
The findings also reported that natural behaviors from young learners also created another difficulty to the teachers. They argued that dealing with misbehavior children spend more time rather than explaining the lesson. Referring to misbehavior children, parents took big role with it. However, this study cannot go further with parents’ point of view regarding with this issue. This is due to the limitation of the topic that only focuses on teachers’ perception of difficulties in teaching English. If the study goes further with parents’ point of view, the study would probably give irrelevant information to the readers. Therefore, it is suggested for further research to discuss parents’ point of view regarding with teachers’ difficulty in dealing with misbehavior children.
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