TEACHERS’ CHALLENGES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS IN RURAL PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SALATIGA

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

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TEACHERS’ CHALLENGES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS IN RURAL PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SALATIGA

ABSTRACT

It is believed that rural education has a legacy unique challenge as compared with that of their urban and suburban counterparts. The challenges are also found in the place and the implementation of English program in primary level. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the challenges encountered by English teachers in teaching English for young learners in rural public primary schools in Salatiga, Central Java. To answer the question, semi-structured interview is used with eight participants from eight primary schools in four sub-districts (Argomulyo, Tingkir, Sidorejo, and Sidomukti) in Salatiga. It launches by briefly discussing the place of English in national curriculum for primary school in one hand and the execution of English program in rural schools on the other hand. Throughout the research, the researcher obtained three challenges and those were: (i) the status of English as a local content subject creates conditions which is less supportive for the teachers to teach English, (ii) most of the teachers are coming from non-English educational background which influence their competencies in teaching English, (iii) socio-economic status from parents plays a big role in students’ motivation and achievement in learning English.

Key words: Teaching English for Young Learner, rural schools, teachers’ challenges, curriculum, teachers’ competencies, parents’ socio-economic status.

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, teaching English to young learners (TEYL) has been implemented in some schools since 1994 (Supriyanti, 2012). However, the implementation of TEYL is not obligatory. English at primary school is not a compulsory subject, but a local content subject. English at primary school as the local content subject is proposed by the policy of Ministry of Education and Culture Number 0487/4/1992, chapter VIII, which states that primary schools can add the basic subjects in the school curriculum, providing the lesson as long as it is not
contrary to the national education goals. Also, the policy is followed with the Decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 060/U/1993 dated February 25, 1993 about the opportunity of the English program as a local content in primary school that can be started in the fourth grade.

Decentralization of education in Indonesia has made local governments to independently decide the extent of the curricular scope, including the use of some learning hours for local contents (Musthafa, 2010). As a result, many districts and city governments are interested in TEYL due to the decentralization policy. This is evidenced by the increasing number of primary schools which offer English classes at the primary school level. Now, primary schools in Indonesia offer English subject as a local content beginning at the fourth grade (aged nine to ten). Yet, many other primary schools teach English at earlier grades (starting from aged six to seven) (Sikki, Rahman, Hamra & Noni, 2013). Hence, it becomes a new trend in which primary schools offer English instruction since the first grade.

However, due to many factors like geographical, social, economic, political, or cultural which cause diversity in educational access, children in urban areas enjoy the high quality education in which they almost have everything the best education could offer, qualified teachers, and supporting parents. For children in urban areas, English has a very important role related to the progress of knowledge and science. However, other less privileged children, especially who are living in rural areas are happy enough to have access even to the basic education seeing that factors in supporting good education are not available for them, for instance less qualified teachers, less parents’ support, and limited educational facilities. Besides, the status of English as the local content subject also influences that for these children English has no role to
play. Inequality of access to English at primary level, especially the division between urban and rural areas and amongst urban schools, has been underlined by several researchers (e.g. Butler, 2009; Gimenez, 2009; Ho, 2003; Y. Hu, 2007; Nikolov, 2009). There has been a huge increase in the private sector in many countries, which increases the gap between rich and poor, since wealthier parents are able to send their children to private schools or for private English lessons (Enever & Moon, 2009; Hoque, 2009; Lee, 2009). Based on the factors influencing the educational diversity in Indonesia, including geographical, social, economic, and parents’ contribution towards English young learners, it is essential to explore more about the challenges faced by English teachers while teaching in those schools. The challenges might be very different from schools located in the main city, where parents and students are aware of the role of English. The challenges risen as the consequences of the policy might influence the quality of teaching and student success in learning English.

This research is a qualitative study of some public primary schools in rural areas in Salatiga. Many studies have been conducted to investigate teachers’ challenges in teaching to young learners. However, few research has been undertaken to investigate how teachers’ perspectives in TEYL as the implementation of language policy, especially in Salatiga. This study aims at investigating primary school teachers’ challenges in teaching English when the position of English is a local content subject in the curriculum. This paper seeks to contribute to this area of research and offer a better understanding of teachers’ problems and challenges. It will provide some positive suggestions for teachers, policy makers, parents and professional educators as to improve English language teaching quality especially in primary schools in rural area, not only in Salatiga context but in other areas that face
similar dilemmas. Hence, the problem and question in this study is: What are teachers’ challenges in teaching English for young learners in public primary schools in rural areas in Salatiga?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have described the significance and outcomes of the introduction of English into primary schools, specifically in terms of the gap between policy and implementation. Some of the issues seem to be common across countries while others are more local. This review will focus on the policy issues (macro-level) and its consequences to the English teaching most closely linked to the aims of the study (micro-level).

Macro-level Factor: The Policy

The first point to note is that there is a variation in government policy from one province to another and even within the same province in Indonesia. The current curriculum in English language education program in Indonesia only focuses on the teaching at junior and high school levels since English is not a core subject at primary level (Yuwono, 2005). As English becoming a local content, the Ministry of Education and Culture has not published a national curriculum for English in primary schools and the responsibility to develop the curriculum lies with the regional or provincial government or local school (Lestari, 2003). For this reason, the local content curriculum in one part of Indonesia might be different from the local content curriculum in other parts, either in terms of the objectives or the content (Kasihani, 2010). Even though there is no national curriculum for English program, the national government has provided competency standards for the English language education
and learning for primary schools which are aimed to inform teaching and learning goals. Such lack of clarity in the policy can cause considerable confusion, particularly at regional or school level. As the result, English teachers in primary schools are struggling in developing and choosing appropriate materials and methods to be used in teaching.

Another factor is the number of hours per week dedicated to English. As a local content subject, English is allotted two 35-minute lessons per week in grades four, five, and six of primary schools (Supriyanti, 2012), yet several schools start teaching English from the first grade. The low number of hours per week surely limits the students’ chance to learn English and teachers cannot cover all materials in the syllabus. Government policy on primary level certainly creates gap, especially the divide between urban and rural areas.

Micro-level Factors

Education in Rural Areas

The first factor in micro-levels is rural area itself. As an area, which is far from the main city, the population of this area is also different from others. According to McCormack and Thomas (2003), rural environments can be geographically, culturally, socially, personally, and professionally isolating. In spite of mobility and socio geographic shifts, rural schools still tend to facilitate large minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations (Lichter, 2003). In this area, education only stops until primary level. It is not an obligatory to continue to secondary level or even college for children. As a result, rural schools are found weaker in instruction compared to their urban counterparts, seen in the eyes of general
public (Taneri & Engin-Demir, 2011). Chruch, Elliot, & Gable (2001) concluded that children living in deprived families get lower achievement scores in schools, lower college enrollment, and graduation rates rather than children who are living in wealthy families. As long as the children graduate from the primary level, no matter the scores they get it is enough. Sense of competition is not seen in rural area. It is different from urban schools where the schools and environment there fully support the education for the children. Children in urban areas are required to compete with their peers to be the best. Yet, the environment in rural area still cannot support the children to get the best quality education.

**Teaching Profession and Its Challenges**

Factor on the challenges faced by teachers is not only based on the policy or the environment. Teaching profession can be one of the factors that leads the teachers to the challenges. There are two main problems related to the quality of English teachers in primary schools proposed by Yuwono & Harbon (2010), first, most of English teachers in primary school do not have qualifications in English education; second, those English teachers who do have an English education background were not trained as primary school English teachers. Currently, teacher education programs in Indonesia only prepare training for English teachers in teaching in junior high and high schools levels, and not in primary schools, since the national curriculum for English language education in Indonesia only focuses on junior high and high school students. It means that teachers have not been well prepared for the enactment of the new policy. Consequently, many primary schools may offer English program without having the required teachers or facilities to support it (Rachmajanti, 2008). Since
there is no exact curriculum to lead their teaching, they can keep teaching as long as there is a textbook. The teachers believed that the textbook can be considered as a substitute for a curriculum. Teachers’ belief that the textbook could provide resources to fill the gaps in their knowledge and competencies has been argued by Krammer (1985) and Ball & Feiman-Nemser (1988). Also, in most cases, English teachers in Indonesia depend only on textbooks and syllabus but often without having understanding of the idea behind those materials or methods. In other words, many of them still have the so-called ‘new-textbook old-method’ attitude (Dardjowidjojo, 2000). Therefore, teaching profession particularly in primary school contributes problems that must be solved.

**The Practice of English Program in Primary School**

Another factor that is encountered by the schools in running an English program is the availability of resources. According to Lestari (2003) primary schools in Indonesia that include English in their curriculum commonly do not have appropriate and sufficient teaching and learning facilities to support teaching and learning process. Dardjowidjojo (2000) pointed out that the big class size is the obvious factor that contribute to the ongoing problems in English language teaching in Indonesia. Other reasons for the problems are students do not have enough time to practice speaking English in class (because their teacher is more concerned to teach the grammar and syntax rather than speaking) and the absence of authentic and good learning materials as it stated by Musthafa (2001). Many schools lack instructional resources. Visual or audio–visual aids are not available and as a result, the majority of teachers use a ‘chalk and talk’ method when teaching the students as it stated by
Faridi (2011). To manage with the problem of lack of teaching resources, most teachers use a textbook known as *Lembar Kerja Siswa (LKS)* as the only resource for their teaching (Lestari, 2003). Even so, many of the English textbooks available on the market are low in quality, as it is found by the many spelling and grammar errors also some pictures that are ambiguous for the students (Sukamerta, 2011).

Many primary schools have started English teaching for their students not because they think that the students need it or the schools are interested in English teaching as it stated by Jamilah (2008), however due to parental pressure and a desire to increase the school’s prestige (Suherdi & Kurniawan, 2005). From the description of the practices of English language teaching in primary schools above, it is clear that many primary schools do not have the qualified teachers and resources needed to run an English program. School principals may assign English teaching to classroom teachers who do not have English teaching qualifications, in order to be seen that they run an English program in their school.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Context of the Study**

This study was conducted in Salatiga, a small city in Central Java, Indonesia. As a city which is entirely bordered with Semarang district, Salatiga has an area of ± 56,78 km² and four sub districts namely: Argomulyo, Tingkir, Sidorejo, and Sidomukti. There are 66 public primary schools and 22 private primary schools in this town. The schools are spread throughout the area in Salatiga starting from in the urban areas until rural areas. For some private schools, English becomes the main subject of the school or even the language of instruction in teaching since private...
schools use their own curriculum and books. However, English is only a local content of public schools in this city, following the government policy. These schools also use workbook *(Lembar Kerja Siswa)* developed by *Kelompok Kerja Guru (KKG)* Salatiga. This workbook is used as the main source for teachers and students in learning English.

**Participants**

In this study, two schools were chosen from each district with eight English teachers as the participants. The schools were: SD Kutowinangun 09 and SD Tingkir Lor 02 from Tingkir, SD Randuacir 01 and SD Tegalrejo 05 from Argomulyo, SD Dukuh 01 and SD Dukuh 02 from Sidomukti, and SD Salatiga 08 and SD Bugel 02 from Sidorejo. Each school has one English teacher. The English teachers come from various backgrounds. Some of them graduated from English Language Education Program, some of them are from different the majority, which have no relation with English teaching. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of teachers in the sample. The range of age was 23 – 40 years old; six were female and two were male.

*Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Length of teaching</th>
<th>Educational Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SD A</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>English Language Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SD B</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>Primary School Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SD C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Primary School Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>SD D</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Islamic Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>SD E</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>English Language Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>SD F</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>English Language Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>SD G</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Primary School Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>SD H</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>Economic Education</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teachers had different length of teaching experience. Some teachers have taught more than 10 years and some of them have only taught for less than 10 years or even 3 months. Only three out of eight English teachers came from the English Language Education program from a university in Salatiga, and the rest of them came from various educational backgrounds. Three of them graduated from Primary School Teacher Education, one came from Islamic Teacher Education and one came from Economic Education.

**Instruments**

The main goal of this study is investigating the perceptions of English teachers on the challenges in teaching English to young learner at public rural primary school in Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia. In order to achieve this goal, a qualitative study was conducted to provide culturally specific and contextually rich data. In this regard, as Moll et al. (1992) stated, “Qualitative research offers a range of methodological alternatives that can fathom the array of cultural and intellectual resources available to students and teachers within households” (p. 132). Purposive sampling was used as only some public primary schools located in rural areas in Salatiga could participate in this study. The choice of the schools depended on the location. Schools that are located in farthest area of each sub district were selected to be the sample. The following questions provide a sample of the questions included on the interview and used for data analysis:

1. What do you think about teaching English in primary school?
2. What do you think about teaching English in rural school?

3. What do you feel after teaching English?

4. What is your biggest fear as English teacher in rural school?

5. What are the common challenges you find while teaching in this school?

6. What kind of rural challenges do you find after teaching in this school?

7. How far is the implication of students’ social economic background to the ability to learning English?

8. What do you think about the status of English in primary school?

9. What do you think about the English curriculum for primary school?

10. What do you think about the use of workbook?

11. What kind of teaching strategies do you use?

12. What kind of resources available in the school as for supporting your teaching?

**Data Collection Procedure**

The data for this study was collected through interviews. The interview data was the main data used in this study and a semi-structured interview was used to give more opportunities to develop participants’ accounts of their teaching. According to Burns (2000, p. 424), a semi-structured interview ‘permits greater flexibility and permits a more valid response from the informant’s perception of reality.’ The interviews were based on a common set of questions with some follow-up questions as the issues were raised by the teachers so that their knowledge and beliefs could be explored in details (Bogdan, 2007). The interviews ranged from 20 to 30 minutes and were undertaken in Indonesian as the researcher is a native-speaker of Indonesian. A
teacher from SD Tegalrejo 05 was chosen as a participant for piloting process as the school is located in a rural area. The interview was done in 33 minutes with some follow-up questions to explore teacher’s perspectives.

After doing the piloting process, the researcher found out that the participant could raise many issues only by being asked with one single question. Therefore, the researcher asked some follow-up questions for further explanation from the teacher. It turned out that the information given was rich enough so that the researcher put the result of piloting as one of the data.

The researcher continued to collect the data after transcribing the piloting result. During the data collection, the participants were ensured that their personal information was kept confidential. The researcher was using the same interview questions addressed in the piloting process. As soon as all data were collected, the researcher began to transcribe the result of the interview. Any personal information given was changed into pseudonymous to keep the confidentiality of the participants. The interview sessions were varied from 23 minutes to 35 minutes for each participant.

**Data Analysis Procedure**

The process of data analysis is identified as a complex and challenging part of qualitative research. As Spencer, Ritchie and O'Connor (2003) pointed, "It requires a mix of creativity and systematic searching, a blend of inspiration and diligent detection" (p.199). The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim for accurate analysis and interpretation with the help of Express Scribe. Then they were all read. Interesting passages were marked with brackets and labeled. Important
patterns were determined in the light of the research questions and descriptive codes were used. To illustrate, COC (Challenges on Curriculum) was used as a code for ideas and experiences of the English language teacher regarding on the curriculum challenges in rural settings. The data were then translated and presented in English.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data gathered from the interview were analyzed qualitatively, by identifying the challenges face by English teachers in rural areas, and grouping them into three main categories. They include challenges regarding to (i) the status of English in national curriculum, (ii) English teachers’ competencies, and (iii) students’ social economic status, which will be described in this section.

Teachers’ Challenges Regarding to the Status of English in National Curriculum

The status of English as a local content has consequences on how teachers’ understand the status of English in the curriculum. In this study, the teachers claimed that the status of English as a local content was disadvantages, since the school gave less support to the local content as compared to the other main subjects. According to Jamilah (2008), the status of English as a local content subject was confirmed in the 2004 curriculum. Later, the status of English changes from a local content subject to be an extra subject in 2013 curriculum. The following quote demonstrates the practice of 2006 curriculum in rural primary schools.

This school use 2006 curriculum. It means that I have only seventy minutes a week to teach. This is different from other teachers who have more than seventy minutes a week to teach. They have enough time and the materials could be explained well to the students. (Participant 1/SD A)
According to Participant 1 it is revealed that 2006 curriculum used in primary school does not support English education for young learners. It can be seen by the time allocation in a week, which is only seventy minutes, and teachers only meet the students once in a week. Other teachers also deal with the same problem about time allocation. They think that it is not enough to teach 2 x 35 minutes in a week, because students will forget what they have learnt in the previous meeting. As a result, teachers have to review the previous materials in the following week and it takes much time. Participant 1 also elaborates the practice in her school.

It is hard to meet only once a week. I have to do some administration stuff in the beginning of the class, then I have to review previous lesson because my students always forget about it. The reviewing session cannot be fast since it is rural school. Then I have to explain today’s material slowly and waiting them to take note. Taking note is the most time-consuming part. After that, my students will practice through exercises. However, mostly, I could not finish the teaching cycle because of the lack of time. Whereas, I have to finish all materials in the syllabus by the end of semester. (Participant 1/SD A)

The problem is worsened with other class teachers who are likely to use other teachers’ time, especially English teachers’ time, to teach main subjects. Most of the teachers in this study experience the moment when it is his/her time to teach, but the previous teacher has not finished teaching yet. As a result, the time for teaching is reduced. Harwanti (2014) also supported this. She explained that most of classroom teachers think that their subjects are more important rather than English. As a result, they are likely to use the time to put more emphasize in teaching other subjects which is included in the national examination. Almost all primary schools in rural areas experience the same thing with Participant 1. Most of them believe that government should add more time for English lesson, in order to create an effective English lesson.
The government has made some effort to enhance the English teaching in primary school, by upgrading the national curriculum. In order to improve the quality of 2006 Curriculum, the government then created 2013 Curriculum, which is implemented in some schools in Indonesia. It is hoped that the newest curriculum will increase the quality of English program in primary school. One of the participants agrees with the government’s policy.

I think 2013 curriculum is better than 2006 curriculum. English might be not the additional subject anymore, but English becomes an extra subject. It means that teachers have more opportunities and time to teach English. They can teach English every day with no limitation. They will not be bothered with time allocation in a week. They can teach 3 hours, 4 hours, and it depends on them. They can teach anything that does not appear in the workbook. It is fun, isn’t it? (Participant 5/SD E)

Although her school did not implement 2013 curriculum, she has positive attitude towards the newest curriculum. She views that the newest curriculum provides more opportunities for teachers in improving the quality of English teaching. Teachers have a right to use more time to teach English and the materials’ coverage is wider than before. However, her idea is contradictory with Participant 4’s statement about the implementation of the newest curriculum in her school.

I use 2013 curriculum for teaching, since the government pointed my school to be one of the piloting subjects. However, I feel that English is not seen as an important subject anymore. Although we as an English teacher is given a right to conduct English lesson outside regular meeting, but there is no student who want to learn English. They have already tired studying from 7 to 2, and now they have to study English? No one who want to do that. (Participant 4/SD D)

Participant 4 explains that in the reality, students do not want to take extra class after school ended. The students are already tired with the lesson that they have taken before. As a result, they prefer to come back home, rather than taking an extra class. The situation is worsened by the socio-economic background from the students.
Although the policy encourages teachers to use time outside the regular meeting to improve English program, but it is not working in the field. Other teacher participants also addressed the same idea about the impact of the curriculum. They believed that the policy does not support the improvement of quality English teaching for young learners, especially in primary schools.

Other problem, which is raised regarding to the implementation of either 2006 or 2013 curriculum, is the school attitude on English. Most of the teachers points out that as the result of the policy, the school does not give much attention toward English, just like what the schools do on the core subjects. The school prefers to spend money to support teachers who teach core subjects rather than to support English teachers.

I think the school does not give much attention toward English. They think that English is only additional subject in the school so that there is no need to give attention on this. The school does not provide us with suitable books and material to develop the quality of English teaching. (Participant 1/SD A)

I once asked the principal to buy other English books to support my teaching references but the principal just ignored me and said that English is not the core subject, so workbook is enough for me. (Participant 6/SD F)

The school did not facilitate me with other references, so I just lean on the workbook. (Participant 2/SD B)

Based on the excerpt above, it can be concluded that most of primary schools in rural areas do not see English as an important subject. As a result, the school seems neglecting the need of books and other substantial things, which can help teachers to increase the quality of English teaching. Seeing that English is only a supplementary subject, while school budget is also limited, the school tends to support teachers who teach core subjects by providing more books to promote better teaching quality,
especially for subjects which are being tested in national exam. This finding is similar to Hawanti’s (2014) finding. She pointed out that the problem with the lack of resources for teaching English is often related to the school resources. Many schools in rural areas cannot afford to buy pictures, cards, or videos because their budget is not enough. The budget shortage means that the schools do not have the ability to provide appropriate learning resources for their students.

The lacks of acknowledgment of the schools in the importance of other references are also followed with the source book, which is known as *Lembar Kerja Siswa (LKS)* provided by the Salatiga government. The workbook is the main source for teachers to teach English. This is in line with what Lestari (2013) found. She pointed that in Indonesia, most English teachers in primary schools use a workbook (LKS) as the main resource for their teaching. All materials and exercises that being tested in final tests are commonly based on the workbook. However, the quality of the workbook, called *Etas* offered by *Kelompok Kerja Guru (KKG)* in Salatiga is quite low. Many teachers claim that the order of the materials given in every grade is not based on the students’ needs.

I was wondering why alphabet is given in 4 grade not in the first grade, whereas students in the first grade are supposed to learn about family. (Participant 2/SD B)

I think students in the first grade should be taught about number and alphabet first, because they have to write everything down in the test: How can they write properly if they do not know how to spell a word? (Participant 7/ SD G)

Based on the interview result above, it can be concluded that the materials given to the students are not arranged based on students’ proficiency. Both of the participants believe that some materials are given in higher grade, instead of giving it in the lower class. They think that the materials such as number and alphabet should
be given in the lower class, considering that students will use that knowledge in the next meeting. The inconsistency of the ordering of materials is also found in several grades. To elaborate more, the materials given should be re-arranged from the basic one, to the more complicated. Therefore, students and also teachers are confused with the materials.

Other teacher participants also share same ideas on the practice of the workbook. They realized that in spite of the content (materials given), the workbook is also weak on the instructions (instructions of the exercises). They found that there are many grammatical and spelling errors in the workbook. One of the teachers describes what she found on the book.

I often find grammatical errors and spelling errors on the book. Sometimes, I have to correct it during class session so that students know the correct one. I also found that many exercises given do not provide the picture or even all choices in the multiple-choice questions are wrong. (Participant 3/SD C)

According to Participant 3, it is known that the workbook is not good enough to be the main source for teachers, as well as students. With the high number of grammatical and spelling errors which are found in the workbook, the teachers are likely to correct the errors during the class lesson, so that there will not be misunderstanding between students and teachers later on. Of course, it will take much time in class and reduce the effectiveness of the lesson. The reality is consistent with Sukamerta’s (2011) finding about the quality of workbook, which is available and being used by schools. He stated that the textbook which is used by teachers and students are low in quality for example, many spelling and grammar mistakes and pictures are ambiguous for students are evidenced. Other teachers’ participants also complained about the quality of the workbook. Since all students have the workbook
and the book is the only source for them to learn English, it is important to pay attention more on the quality of the book.

To conclude, there is a gap between the governments’ policy on the English curriculum and the practice of English program in primary schools. The result of the interview shows that the implementation of either 2006 curriculum or 2013 curriculum has not solved their challenges in teaching English. The situation is getting worse by the schools’ attitude toward English, in which they do not see English as important as the other subjects. The status of English as an additional subject creates polemic for English teacher.

**Teachers’ Challenges Regarding to their Competencies as English Teachers**

According to the results of the interviews, many English teachers in rural primary schools do not have a formal training in English education. Rather, many of the English education teachers are graduates from other disciplines, such as primary school teacher education, religion, and economic. Generally, many school principals do not hire English teachers at all. As an alternative, they ask the class teacher to teach the English classes. Research about English teaching in primary schools revealed that most of the teachers in primary schools in Indonesia are not qualified and that the majority of them have insufficient command of English to be able to teach effectively (Kasihani & Chodijah, 2002; Mursalim, 1997; Suherdi & Kurniawan, 2005). Most teachers who are assigned to teach English are not prepared for the teaching they need to do. Their pedagogical knowledge might not sufficient for teaching English as they do not have an English background relevant for teaching
English. Some of the teachers confess that at first they are assigned to be class teachers and teach all subjects except English. However, after the previous English teachers are delegated by the government to be class teachers, they are chosen to replace the previous English teachers’ position. Although they do not have qualifications as English teachers, the schools’ principals still chose them to handle English program.

I first taught in third grade as a class teacher. Then I am assigned by the principal to replace Miss Yudha’s position, the previous English teacher since the government asked her to be a class teacher. (Participant 3/SD C)

I replace Miss Lupi’s position, the previous English teacher, because she teaches grade four in order to follow government’s decision. (Participant 7/SD G)

This finding shows that many teachers in this study did not start their teaching careers as teachers of English to young learners and is consistent with previous research in some countries such as Vietnam and Japan (instruction of English is made; for example, in countries such as Vietnam and Japan (Lee & Azman, 2004; Hoa & Tuan, 2007; Butler, 2007). Other teacher participants state that they did not apply to be an English teacher at that time. However, the school asked them to be an English teacher.

Since English is just a local content subject in primary school, the government does not really care about the quality of English teacher in the school. So, teachers who are not graduated from English Language Education, are also given chance to teach English, just like me. Whereas, it is important for students to learn English from teachers who came from English Language Education program. As a teacher, I just follow the government policy. (Participant 2/SD B)

Other teacher participants pointed out that as the result of the policy, schools in common was also less care in providing English teacher. The schools thought that
any teacher could teach English, as long as they were graduated from good university, no matter what major they took.

I do not know how the policy works but I applied for teaching subjects outside English, but the school gives me responsibility to teach English. I have no ability to teach English, since I graduated from FKIP (Faculty of Teacher Training and Education), as primary school teacher, not English teacher. (Participant 3/SD C)

I graduated from FKIP (Faculty of Teacher Training and Education) as primary school teacher. My mother once taught English and other subjects in here. Then my mother told me to apply in here as English teacher. I told her that I cannot teach English, but she said that teaching English in elementary school is very easy. So, I applied and I was accepted. Now, I am still wondering why this school accepted me, whereas I have no qualification in teaching English. (Participant 2/SD B)

As the result of the practices, most of the teachers in this study feel anxious in managing English program. They think that they are not competent enough to teach English. They are afraid in giving the materials to the students. The following quote describes what they feel while teaching English.

I am afraid for teaching English since I do not take English education. I am afraid that what I have explained to them is all wrong, in terms of pronunciation and grammar. (Participant 2/SD B)

Well, since I do not know how English, I am also new teacher in here and the school only provides me with workbook and this is the main source of the lesson, so I just rely on the workbook. I teach students as it comes. (Participant 3/SD C).

They also commented that as a local content subject, the responsibility for developing the materials lays with the teachers and the school, but that they did not believe they were able to do this because of the lack of English teaching qualifications and they had not received any guidance about how to develop the material. As a result, they teach English in a relatively unstructured way: ‘as it comes’ using
workbook provided. As Nur (2003:168) pointed out, where there is a lack of qualified teachers, ‘textbooks appear to have a strong positive impact’.

**Teacher’s Challenges Related with Students’ Social Economic Status**

The challenges that teachers faced while teaching in rural primary schools do not only come from the government policy on English program and teachers’ competence. Students’ parents also give much contribution toward the successfulness of English program in primary schools. Socio-economic disparities have been observed among researchers in recent years. Previous studies generally found that English as Foreign Language students’ social-economic status, normally measured by parental income, educational background, and/or occupations, are associated with the students’ academic English development and achievement at school (Carhill, Suárez-Orozco, and Páez 2008; Entwise and Anstone 1994; Fernandez and Nielsen 1986; Hakuta, Butler, and Witt 2000; Hampton, Ekboir, and Rochin 1995; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Todorva 2008). Based on the interview of the eight participants, all of them agree that social-economic status from student’s parents influence students’ motivation and success in learning English.

I think social-economic status of students has a great impact on students’ ability in learning English. Students who come from poor family tend to have less motivation in learning English. (Participant 3/SD C)

We all know that students’ social-economic background plays a big role in the success of students in learning English. When students come from low class social economic status, they will likely to have lower achievement in English. (Participant 5/ SD E)

Other participants also address the same idea with Participant 3 on the parental issue. They argue that if social-economic status of students plays important roles in
students’ achievement in learning English, especially for young learners. Seeing that all participants teach in rural primary schools, this factor also influences their teaching and of course become one of their challenges while teaching English. Most of the participants believe that students in rural areas usually have parents who come from low educational background. Participant 3 explains:

Since this is rural school, of course students who study here come from the neighborhood. Most of the students in here have parents who graduated from junior or senior high school. They even graduated from elementary schools. Only few of them graduated from university. (Participant 3/SD C)

Participant 3 believes that parents’ educational background really influences their socio-economic status and occupation. As a result, the parents tend to spend most of their time for working. This participant further explains:

Most of them work as a labor in factory; some of them are working as a seller in traditional market; some are not working. Only few of them work as a civil servant. Therefore, they only focus on getting much money to fulfill family needs. They do not have time to care about children’s education. (Participant 3/SD 3)

The other participants also share the same idea with Participant 3:

Mostly, students in this school live with their relatives. Most of them are living with their grandparents. Their parents work as labor and most of them are working as TKI in several countries. Of course, their grandparents could not help them in learning the material from the school. As long as their grandchildren go to school, it is enough for them. (Participant 8/SD H)

Parents spend their time to work as labors. If they have time to help their children with their homework, they could not do that, since most of them graduated from junior high school or even elementary school. How can they help their children with English lesson if they do not even know about English? (Participant 2/SD B)

Based on the excerpts above, it turns out that parents’ occupation determines the social-economic status that parents have. The higher education they got, the better job they would get. It will effect on their understanding of guiding their children at home, as well as providing good environment for children to learn. Most of parents in
This study are living in rural areas and working as labor. They spend most of their time in the working place and leave their children with their relatives. They think that it is teacher’s duty to educate their children, not their job. Therefore, they just hand in children education to school and do not care of children development in their education. According to Lee, (1998) another issue frequently stated is the lack of motivation and interest in English on the part of students, who might not see any need to learn English or simply do not see mastery of it as reasonable. This may be particularly acute in rural areas where students have few contact with foreigners and as a result little perceived need to learn and communicate in English (Ho, 2003).

I think most parents just relying children education to school and teachers. They think that sending their children to school is enough. However, without the guidance of parents, children cannot develop maximally, especially in mastering English. As a teacher, I could not work alone. I still need parents’ contribution by assisting children development at home. (Participant 2/SD B)

The other teachers also have similar concerns with Participant 2:

I do not think that leaving children at home with their grandparents is good. Children still need their parents to help them learning materials that they have learnt in school. Their grandparent could not help with the homework that I gave since they do not speak English. (Participant 8/SD H)

Environment plays important role for children achievement in learning English. If children come from wealthy family, of course their parents will assist them with any substantial things, which can support the development of the children, especially for English. For example: parents will provide them with TV programs which use English as the language of instruction, or maybe they send their children to English courses to increase their ability. It will be different from parents who live in rural areas. Their main concern is getting money. Education for children is the duty of school. (Participant 3/SD C)

The rest of the participants also give similar opinion on how parents who come from low socio-economic status tend to put much effort to work rather than giving attention to children development in education. It is found that parental educational levels were significantly correlated with young learners’ comprehension
in the target foreign language, particularly English. This finding is similar to the study conducted by Enever (2011). It was found that both the parental indirect behaviors (the home literacy and language environment and indirect modeling) and parental direct behaviors (direct assistance with children’s studying and learning of English at home) were already significantly positively correlated with socio-economic status at the fourth grade level, European countries. Zou and Zhang (2011), a study conducted among secondary school students in Shanghai, also found that students’ English performance showed differences that varied by their parents’ educational levels.

Teachers in this study agree that they could not work alone. They still need parents’ contribution in assisting their children at home. Seventy minutes a week is not enough for them to make students understand English. In addition, the amount of exposure to the target language outside of school and the parental use of the target language at home are also found to be influential.

I only have 70 minutes a week to teach English. I usually give students homework so that they could learn from what they have learnt before. But, since their parents do not understand English, they cannot help them with the homework. As a result, students do the homework carelessly. The problem becomes worsen because students cannot practice English outside the class. The environment does not support them to practice. Therefore, they easily forget what they learnt. (Participant 6/SD F)

In short, English teachers in rural primary schools are not only struggling with curriculum and their competences in English, but also with the socio-economic status of the students. It is apparent from the analysis that the low socio-economic status of the parents hinders them to support their children to study English. For instance, parents may have less time to stimulate students to actively learn English due to their work. In addition, their low income renders them incapable of providing facilities to learn the language. As a result, the minimum stimulus lower students’ motivation.
This causes them to feel uninterested to learn English. For example, they underestimate the lesson, and do not pay attention to the lesson, as indicated by the low grades, and the high frequency of skipping homework. Thus, there is a clear relation between the low socio-economic status and students’ achievement.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to find out the teachers’ challenges in teaching young learners in rural public primary schools in Salatiga. The result of this study has indicated that the status of English as a local content subject contributes to problems for teachers in developing and delivering English program and to the quality of English teaching in rural areas in Salatiga. There are at least three findings that researcher found in the field.

First, there seems to be a gap between the policies of introducing English in primary schools and the school system itself. From the description of the current practices of English language teaching in rural primary schools in Salatiga, it is obvious that the status of English as a local content subject establishes a condition where it becomes less supportive for teachers to run English program effectively. This problem is compounded by the lack of teaching resources for English in primary schools, such as other sources to support textbook provided by local government. In short, there is a gap between the policy and the practice of English programs in rural primary schools in Salatiga.

Second, the implementation of the policy has created problems because the schools which implement the policy have not been adequately prepared. Most of English teachers are coming from non-English education background and have
limited pedagogical knowledge for teaching English in primary schools and they feel that they are not competent in teaching English. However, most of the teachers believe that they can keep teaching their students as long as there is a textbook. Most of the teachers believed that the textbook provides resources to fill gaps in their knowledge as it stated by Krammer (1985) and Ball & Feiman-Nemser (1988). Therefore, the situation is problematic as the teachers recognize the limitations of their knowledge but do not have the strategies or support needed to anticipate these limitations, other than the use of textbooks, since the schools also do not provide other sources to overcome the limitations. Another factor comes from socio-economic status from the students. Based on the interview, it is believed that parents who are aware of the importance of English usually come from higher socio-economic status and usually live in urban areas. It means that parents who are living in rural areas are not aware of the importance of English and hand in children education to the schools only. This surely affects students’ motivation and interest to learn English.

From the results of this study, there are three broad implications that can be concluded. Firstly, the government needs to consider the positioning of English language education for primary school in the national curriculum as well as the influence of schools’ knowledge and beliefs that English is to be taught effectively in the primary school curriculum. Secondly, teacher education institutions need to find a way to solve the problems experienced by the present teachers of English in primary schools. The non-English background teachers lack subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge relating to English and hence need professional development to address their problem with competencies. Lastly, it is a necessity for parents to contribute more in students’ improvement in school, not only just giving the
responsibility to school. However, this study is limited since it is only seeking for teachers’ challenges in teaching English in public rural primary schools in Salatiga. The result might be different if it is conducted in urban schools or in different places in Indonesia. Therefore, further studies related to the implementation of English program in primary schools in Indonesia is possible to conduct.
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