FIVE CRITICAL PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT) AND THEIR POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

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Abstract: Learning a language is a hard work, teachers will also do hard works to facilitate their students accomplish their objectives and targets. Therefore, the writer tried to sum up all her experiences in English language teaching for the past five years about all problems which might be faced by teachers and their possible solutions. This study is a descriptive study which discusses the data through words and documentation technique. The data were taken from observation and documentation technique. It was found that there are five critical problems in English language teaching. They are (1) Students' Low Motivation, (2) Big Classes, (3) Limited Resources, (4) Teaching Strategies, and (5) Teachers' Teaching Skill.

Keywords: Critical Problems and English Language Teaching (ELT) and solutions

Abstrak: Pembelajaran bahasa menuntut kerja keras, tenaga pengajar juga dituntut untuk bekerja ekstra dalam memfasilitasi siswanya untuk mencapai tujuan dan target mereka. Oleh karena itu, penulis mencoba untuk merangkum seluruh pengalamannya dalam lima tahun terakhir mengenai pengajaran bahasa Inggris dan permasalahan yang timbul di dalamnya beserta solusi yang mungkin dapat diterapkan. Studi ini merupakan studi deskriptif. Pengumpulan data diambil dari hasil observasi dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian ini adalah ditemukannya lima pemasalahan penting dalam pengajaran Bahasa Inggris, yaitu: (1) Motivasi siswa yang rendah, (2) Jumlah Siswa yang banyak, (3) Bahan ajar yang terbatas, (4) Strategi pengajaran, dan (5) Kemampuan mengajar guru.

Kata kunci: Critical Problem, English Language Teaching (ELT) dan solusi

1. BACKGROUND

Education is something which has important roles in ones' lives. Education can formed many kinds of job fields in this world. Engineers, doctors, parliament members, nurses, lawyers, and even presidents are those who have formed by the education because by having the education have helped them to be like what they expect. The main factor from education is the doers, they are teachers. Teachers are the ones who transfer the knowledge to the students. And according to Hornby (1995: 425) teacher is the one who teaches especially at schools. Teachers might have different functions and duties based on their professional qualifications. In this case,

the writer is an English teacher who has been teaching English for five years. Therefore, this paper will discuss English language teaching more than others. Other reason is the Government of Indonesia has put English as a compulsory subject at school starting from kindergarten up to university level. It is purely done to achieve what Indonesia wants, that is to have a better human resource, in order to be able to compete with people from other countries. In addition, English has been acknowledged by most countries in the world as an international language. Consequently, English has to be used in international communication both orally and in written communication, for general as well as specific needs. Then, it is the duty of English teacher to transfer their knowledge about English

to their students. The English teacher must be able to get their students to love English. In other word, the teacher must be able to enable the students use English orally and written as their means of communication.

However, to reach this aim will not be as easy as flapping our hands. Many aspects should be considered when teaching and learning process takes place. The aspects can be internal and external aspects - teachers, students, and headmasters are included as internal aspects – the psychology of teacher or students must be acknowledged in order to run the process well. The external aspects can be from the society surrounds the schools, the budget of school, etc. If those aspects above are not really well managed, they can raise problems. And even if it has already managed, it does not guaranty that there will no be problems.

As Vroman (1990), stated that People commonly think that child and adult language learning are fundamentally the same. Actually, learning language will be much different for children and adults. This can be caused by many factors. The linguistic data to which children are exposed appear to be insufficient to determine the linguistic knowledge that children eventually attain. The gap between available experience and attained competence forms what has been called the logical problem of language acquisition. Then, it is suggested that the gap is bridged by an innate Universal Grammar: a system of knowledge of what human language can be and innate domain-specific procedures for arriving at a grammar. However, adults may also learn foreign languages. Abstractly, the logical problem of adult foreign language learning is the same as for childhood language learning. Unfortunately, foreign language learning differs in degree of success, in the character and uniformity of the resulting systems, in its susceptibility to factors such as motivation, and in previous state of organism: the learner already has knowledge of one language and a powerful system of general abstract problem-solving skills

It is also possibly assumed that the innate system that guides child acquisition no longer operates in adult foreign language learning (or, more weakly, that its operation is partial and imperfect). This would easily explain why foreign language learning is often a difficult and ultimately unsuccessful task.

The nine fundamental characteristics of adult foreign language learning which can be a harmful factor for them to learn a foreign language, they are:

1) Lack of Success

Normal children inevitably achieve perfect mastery of the language; adult foreign language learners do not. Any model which entails uniform success - as child first language acquisition models must is a failure as a model of adult language learning. Lack of inevitable perfect mastery is, of course, a characteristic of general adult learning in fields for which no domain-specific cognitive facility is thought to exist, especially in areas of substantial complexity. Not everyone with an opportunity to learn chess will become a world-class chess player; not everyone who is exposed to geometry becomes skilled at geometry proofs; careful schooling and years of experience do not guarantee that

one will be a competent auto mechanic. Lack of guaranteed success in adult foreign language learning of course would follow from a theory which holds that it is controlled by general human cognitive learning capacities, rather than by the same domain-specific module which guarantees child success in first language acquisition. Frequent lack of success in adults, against unfound success in children, is a serious obstacle to the view that the same process underlies child and adult language acquisition.

2) General Failure

Not only is success in adult foreign language not guaranteed, but complete success is extremely rare, or perhaps even nonexistent.

3) Variation in Success, Course, and Strategy

Among adults, there is substantial variation in degree of success, even when age, exposure, instruction, and so forth are held constant.Adults not only generally do not succeed, they also fail to different degrees. This fact is so evident that it has ever been thought necessary to demonstrate it by faunal academic study. Rather, the assumption of variation in attainment has fonned the basis of a whole tradition in second language acquisition scholarship – the attempt to correlate something else with this wide variation in success. It also fonus the basis of the TOEFL and Michigan Test industries. Again, the similarity to general adult skill acquisition is· striking, as is the difference from child language development, where there is no such

variation. The lack of variation among fust language learners requires that the child language acquisition theory "must be embedded in a theory of Universal Grammar that allows only one grammar ... to be compatible with the sorts of sentences children hear".

4) Variation in Goals

Adult foreign language learning is a type of general problem solving. Cognitive models of general problem solving involve setting goals. Then, it is to be expected that different people will view the problem to be solved in different ways and will set different goals in a given domain. For children, the "goal" – if one can even speak of it as such – is predetermined by the language faculty and not under learner control.

5) Fossilization

It has long been noted that foreign language learners reach a certain stage of learning and that learners then permanently stabilize at this stage. Development ceases, and even serious conscious efforts to change are often fruitless – happen to adult foreign language learners. In children, of course, there is no fossilization (short of success). It is not entirely clear exactly what to make of this difference. What triggers fossilization in foreign language learners is not understood.The reason why 'defossilization' seems so difficult is also mysterious. The phenomenon of fossilization is at least anecdotally known in other areas of human learning's There seems to be little systematic psychological study of

fossilization. Nonetheless, since the phenomenon is so frequent in foreign language learning, and unknown in child language development, it constitutes a serious obstacle to the assertion that adult and child language acquisition are fundamentally the same.

6) Indeterminate Intuitions

In a substantial number of cases, even very advanced non-native speakers seem to lack clear grammatically judgments. The unclear character of non –native intuitions has even prompted some scholars to suggest that a third class of grammaticality judgments – *indeterminate* – is needed in the description of learner language.

7) Importance of Instruction

Children clearly do not require organized formal lesson to learn a language. Meanwhile, the adults need formal or organized instructions to learn language.

8) Negative Evidence

The negative evidence can be seen by the errors made by the adult learners. Among teachers and learners of foreign languages there is· general agreement that negative evidence is at least sometimes useful, and sometimes, though not always, necessary. Experimental evidence is inconclusive, but suggests that correction, in particular, may be helpful. As shown by theoretical work, some of the errors made by foreign languages learners suggest that they hold hypotheses requiring negative evidence for disconfinuation. Despite the lack of very convincing empirical evidence, even scholars who argue for essential similarity of first and foreign language acquisition are forced cautiously to conclude that the unclear findings of empirical studies on the efficacy of correction "do not mean that correction plays no role in language learning. and that one may expect that research will "uncover specific situations in which error correction may be effective" (Dulay, Burt and Krashen cited in Vroman: 1990)

9) Role of Affective Factors

Success in child language development seems unaffected by personality, socialization, motivation, attitude, or the like. This is consistent with the view that the process is controlled by the development of an innate domain-specific faculty, and it contrasts strongly with the case of general adult skill acquisition, which is highly susceptible to such "affective factors".

There is a universal consensus among second language acquisition researchers, as well as among language teachers and students, that such factors are essential in foreign language learning. Since the early seventies, beginning with the work of Gardner and Lambert cited in Vroman: 1990 numerous empirical studies have shown significant correlations between affective factors and proficiency. The situation is, to be sure, very complicated; affect itself is complex and hard to measure; different groups and different situations show different sorts of correlations; explanations are in short supply; Still, the central role of affect in foreign language learning is absolutely indisputable.

During my five years teaching experiences in elementary school, which can be classified less experience if not good experience in teaching. I have found some problems in teaching English in my English language teaching classrooms. I have already done some treatments toward the problems I faced in order to minimize bad or negative effects to my teaching and learning process and my students' achievement or output. To discuss all problems is not really possible, then, I only select five problems, which I think really urgent to be shared, since I do believed that all English teachers will face these problems as well. The problems are (1) students' low motivation; (2) big classes; (3) limited resources; (4) teaching strategies; and (5) learning facilities. Therefore, in this descriptive study, I briefly discussed those previously mentioned problems along with their possible solutions.

2.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned above, there are five problems which will be discussed in this paper. Here, I will explore the problems and their solutions based on my teaching experience in my Englishclasses.

2.1   Students' Low Motivation

Motivation is vital in language learning. It makes language learners positive about their own learning. It also creates the drive in them to acquire the targeted language, enjoy the learning

process, and experience real communication. Moreover, experience of success and satisfaction has a strong connection with motivation. By realizing their improvement and achievement, students always gain the feeling of success. In order for language students to become satisfied with a lesson, it is required to produce a stress-free classroom and develop integrated-tasks lesson. It is necessary that there is a trust between a teacher and the students so that much communication in a targeted language is developed.

According to Komiyama (2009), there are two basic forms of motivation, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is typically driven by factors outside of the learners; extrinsically motivated learners study English to please their parents, have good score in English, and please the teachers, but not because they find learning English is interesting or enjoyable. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is free from the influence of external factor such as rewards or punishment. Intrinsically motivated learners study English because they find it interesting and enjoyable; therefore, motivation comes from inside and self-determined.

I found that most of my students are lazy to come to classroom when they are asked to memorize vocabularies, make sentences in some patterns or tenses, and bring dictionary when they have English class. I saw that they think learning English is boring and useless activity because they will always do the same activity during the classroom activities and will not use their English if they only stay in Indonesia since they can use Indonesian to communicate one

another. They can only stand to learn and stay in classroom because they want to be able to get into the next class or to graduate from the school – external motivation – however, it will not help the students to have good achievement in English lesson and to reach the basic aim of teaching English as mentioned above. Then, I determined myself to show them that English is fun and useful thing. It means teachers will deal with students' intrinsic motivation which can be grown up by the efforts of teachers to show them that English is enjoyable, fun and useful. Many ways have been suggested by experts to grow the students' intrinsic motivation, as what *CAR styles of learning* argued by Komiyama (2009), *enthusiasm in teaching* argued by Stronge, Tucker, and Hindman (2004), and *Livening up the class by the use of games* suggested by Carvantes, E. P. (2009). Then, I tried to do what suggested by those three experts by giving my students language games enthusiastically and relate them into English lesson.

For example, I started giving my students vocabularies games based on their competence and invited them to do the games enthusiastically by moving or running in classroom. I divided the students into some groups, and I will only put one board marker in front of the class. Then, I will spell the words loud and the students must reach board marker as soon as they know the spelled words and write them and their meanings (without seeing dictionary) on the whiteboard. The group that can write the most words with fewer mistakes will be the winner. This vocabularies game is more enjoyable to use rather than only ask the students memorize the words. As the results, my students willingly

memorize the English words because they would like to be the winner in the next games. It proves me that motivation to be the winner can be one of the ways to grow the intrinsic motivation for students.

Of course, teachers have to be creative to explore more games, and design the classroom activities in enjoyable situation without forgetting the main job that is to teach how to use English in communication. However, games are not only for children, university lecturers can also apply games in their classroom by considering some factors

2.2 Big Classes

Teaching at school, especially schools which are in remote area, is still dealing with this big classes' problem. For instance, my school where I am teaching now provides me with this problem. There is only me as a single teacher and I have to share my knowledge of English with forty up to fifty students in two hours lesson. The question rises whether I am able to give the same service and attention to the whole students in my class or not. Another thing should be considered is the students' achievement, whether or not the students get better achievement. As it is found by Bandiera, Larcinese, and Rasul (2010) that the effect of class size on students' performance is negative; students do worse in big classes. Namely, a given student receives lower marks in courses with larger classes, everything else equal.

Fortunately, Harmer (2007: 125) suggests us some solutions in overcoming big classes students. There are a number of key elements in

successful large-group teaching: (1) Be organized; (2) Establish routines; (3) Use a different pace for different activities; (4) Maximize individual work; (5) Use students; (6) Use worksheets; (7) Use pairwork and groupwork; (8) Use chorus reaction; (9) Take account of visions and acoustics; and (10) Use the size of group to your advantage.

I have already done some of his suggestions. I tried to organize my teaching and learning process start from the preparation for all media which might be needed and the way of how I transfer the material on that day. I have established some routines in order to save time in managing classroom activities such as how the students setting and collecting their homework or whom they will be paired or grouped. By doing this I can do the teaching and learning process without consuming more time in grouping or managing the students. Finally, I also ask the students whom I think capable enough to help their friends to help me when I explain about grammar. Overall, it works well in helping the teachers who are teaching in big classes. However, teachers must also explore another way of how overcoming big classes' problems.

2.3 Limited Resources

Teaching and learning materials is one of the very crucial elements that have to exist to conduct teaching/ learning activities. Unfortunately, teachers always deal with the problems of how to provide good materials. There are many aspects which can influence limited resources that teachers can use to teach their students. For example, the school cannot provide its teacher and student's English textbook because of limited budget, and/or the teacher cannot have any additional resources for his or her teaching process because he/she cannot have any access on internet or other media. I myself have ever in such condition, where I have to struggle hard to find any worthy materials for my class. Actually, there are some ways can be conducted even teachers do not have any textbook. As suggested by Halliwell (1992: 122), a teacher can do three stages of creating materials (1) finding a unifying thread and purpose; (2) deciding what to include; and (3) counting the time needed for the class or program. All the stages mentioned above are the way of teachers to make and elaborate his or her own materials for classroom activities based on the curriculum given only. For example, I have known all objectives for the class as in curriculum given. My job is to find what materials or topics which are suitable for my students. Since my class is an elementary level, I will only focus on what children talk, think, read, and write about. Then, I can decide what to pick in my program later on. However, in designing the materials, teachers must think that the materials should require and facilitate learner self-investment. Materials that enable the learners to be interested in them, that can draw their attention, and that can attract the learners to learn. In addition, the materials should not be so far from what the students have learned, or i + 1 Krashen (1985).

2.4 Teaching Strategies

Methodologists had provided us many approaches in teaching language in non-English speaker classroom students – Grammar Translation, Direct Method, Audiolingualism, and Task – Based Learning (TBL). However, all of those approaches, methodologies, or techniques will not be fully applicable in our real teaching context. I have experienced that one teaching strategy will not be so effective in all language classrooms that I have. For instance, class 'A' will be so enthusiastic to be involved in certain language games but not for class 'B' which will be more interested in drawing or art works. Teachers who are not really aware of this event will not know that class A and B need different treatment or teaching strategies. Therefore, it is the roles of teachers to be able to select and adapt the appropriate teaching strategies based on their classroom context. Teachers also need to be up to date person or need to read more in order to get more information about ways of teaching.

In addition, teaching may be simply described in terms of three stages, each characterized by different demands on the teacher: before teaching, during teaching, and after teaching. As Lefrancois (1997) stated that before teaching stage involves the activities of establishing goals, determining students' readiness, selecting instructional strategies, collecting required materials, and planning for assessment and evaluation. Then, teaching stage involves the activity of implementing instructional strategies. The last stage after teaching involves the activities of assessing effectiveness of teaching strategies, determining extent to which goals have been met, and reevaluating students' readiness. I can say that to have good, appropriate, and applicable teaching strategies is done in the preparation before teaching by considering some aspects from the students, teachers, school, and etc.

2.5 Teachers' Teaching Skill

It cannot be avoided that one of the causes in educational problems is the teachers' teaching skills. Teachers are always lazy to improve their own personal and professional skills in transferring the knowledge or teaching their students. I have found this as a real problem in my school. Most of the older teachers do not want to join trainings any longer, they prefer to stay with their conventional teaching way. In fact, conventional teaching way will not give best effect in students' achievement. As the world changes, human must change too. Therefore, there must be some ways out to solve this problems if not it will be harmful for our education. Actually, many ways can be done to improve the teachers' teaching skills.

According to Murray (2010), the teacher can do some ways to have professional development or teaching skills. Teacher development opportunities can take many forms. Some are individual or informal while other occasions are collective or structured. For instance, teacher can improve their teaching skills by reading journal articles about teaching English, or writing the article in journals. After having more journals to read or write, the teacher can do collaborative techniques, which are share

journals. Teachers can also use seminars, workshops, and conferences as the other techniques to improve their teaching skills because in seminars, workshops, and conferences will discuss and share about the newest teaching techniques. However, there is no single recipe for professional development that works for everyone, but finding your motives can pursue us in professional development.

3.   CONCLUSION

It is obviously seen that education faces many problems. The problems may come from the teachers, students, parents, headmasters, government, etc. However, every problem must have its solution. Now, it is the case of personal intention whether we want to do the solution given or let the problem on its own way. One thing for sure, education will not succeed if the education problems are not solved.   Therefore, we, as teachers, must be aware of all problems occur in our teaching and learning process and try to find their solutions.

Teacher must get along with their students. In order to develop a mutual relationship with their learners, teachers need to understand students who are from different backgrounds, have different interests, future goals, aims for English learning, and most importantly, different personalities. Once they understand them better, teachers are able to apply specific teaching and communicating strategies tailored to each student, thereby creating a trusting relationship between a teacher and student. Once a relationship develops, the classroom will become comfortable and enjoyable enough for students to learn positively from the teacher without any hesitation.

In addition, the classroom size and the size of group are to be carefully considered. Language learners tend to feel frightened to make a speech in front of a big group. Thus, teachers need to aid students who need support and encourage them to understand that no one can be as perfect as native speakers. In addition, teachers are required to teach all the students the importance of having respect for one another in a classroom so that each of the students can actively participate in lesson.

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