

THE PRACTICE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING USING CAMBRIDGE PRIMARY CURRICULUM IN SDK KALAM KUDUS SURAKARTA

Anisa Nur Pratiwi

Yogyakarta State University
theanisapратиwi@gmail.com

Abstract

Considering the importance of English in today's rapid globalized world, the number of schools whose curriculum are adhering to an international curriculum has increased in Indonesia. One of the international curricula is Cambridge Curriculum set in sequence from Cambridge Primary for primary schools to Cambridge ICGSE for high schools. As Cambridge Primary students are justified to speak naturally in English, this article described the practice of English teaching inside English as a Second Language (ESL) class for the 3rd grade in SDK Kalam Kudus, Surakarta. The main inquiry areas were teaching approaches, materials, activities and assessment. Actual data were collected through in-depth interviews, intensive classroom observations, and teaching learning document collection in the forms of learning objectives and students' work. The findings revealed that teaching and learning approaches followed the principle of metacognition and active learning in which a student-centre classroom was emphasized, while the teacher was autonomous to design the teaching approach. Classroom activities referred to course book exercises as the main materials which were made up with a balance combination of receptive and productive skills. Interactions between teacher and students were positive. Students demonstrated eager learning and participation as well as high competitive atmosphere. Assessment was divided into formative assessment which was carried out every meeting by the teacher and summative assessment which was taken in the end of a learned chapter and school term.

Keywords: English language teaching, Cambridge Primary Curriculum, English for Primary School

Abstrak

Mengingat akan pentingnya bahasa Inggris di era globalisasi yang cepat ini, jumlah sekolah yang kurikulumnya mengikuti kurikulum internasional telah bertambah di Indonesia. Salah satu kurikulum internasional adalah kurikulum Cambridge yang dirancang dari kurikulum Cambridge Dasar untuk Sekolah Dasar ke Cambridge ICGSE untuk Sekolah Menengah Atas. Karena siswa Cambridge Dasar dibiasakan untuk berbicara secara natural dalam bahasa Inggris, artikel ini mendeskripsikan praktek pengajaran bahasa Inggris di kelas bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa ke dua (ESL) untuk siswa kelas III di SDK Kalam Kudus, Surakarta. Wilayah kajian utamanya adalah pendekatan pengajaran, materi ajar, kegiatan dan penilaian. Data aktual diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi kelas secara intensif, dan kumpulan dokumen belajar mengajar dalam bentuk tujuan pembelajaran dan pekerjaan siswa.

Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan belajar mengajar mengikuti prinsip metakognisi dan pembelajaran aktif dimana pembelajaran terpusat pada siswa ditekankan sedangkan gurunya mendapatkan kebebasan untuk mendesain pendekatan pengajaran. Kegiatan-kegiatan kelas mengacu pada latihan-latihan yang ada di buku paket sebagai materi ajar yang dibuat seimbang kombinasi antara kemampuan reseptif dan produktif. Interaksi antara guru dan siswa positif. Siswa menunjukkan semangat belajar dan partisipasi serta atmosfer persaingan yang tinggi. Penilaian dibagi menjadi penilaian penialaian penilaian formatif yang diadakan di setiap pertemuan oleh guru dan penilaian sumatif yang dilaksanakan di akhir bab pembelajaran dan akhir semester.

Kata kunci: *Pengajaran bahasa Inggris, Kurikulum Cambridge Dasar, Bahasa Inggris untuk Sekolah Dasar*

1. Introduction

Nobody would like to deny the distinction of English today as a major effect of globalization. English proficiency level is used as a parameter to define a better prosperous job and a better access to more qualified education system (Rini, 2014). This trend eventually leads individuals into equipping themselves with decent English proficiency.

To start with, some countries have introduced English to young learners by either school subject or a means of communication. In the past, learning English for young learners at pre-schools and primary schools was criticised as premature foreign language learning. The view then diminished when research in second language acquisition came up with an argument called critical period hypothesis. This argument initiated many English as foreign and second language countries including Asian countries to facilitate their students with increasing exposure to English from primary education to attain both fluency and accuracy (Nunan, 2003). A perspective to connect with English fell into an optimistic perspective that speaking English was essential.

In Indonesia where the position of English is not a compulsory subject, the trend of learning English shifts into two ways. First, learning English in the early age even toddler is being a vogue. Second, international and national plus schools are such magnets attracting pool of Indonesian students to attend them because they accommodate students' needs of English. Schools operating international curriculum are claimed to give English benefit because of intensive use of English. Students from schools offering English as a language to communicate are stereotyped as role models of competent English learners. This stereotype is closely related to a contextual environment that supports English acquisition without desperate efforts.

In fact, there are many schools in Indonesia adopting an international curriculum. One of the worldwide curricula is Cambridge. There are approximately 190 Cambridge schools in 2016 ranging from international schools and national schools. The number is dominated by schools which adopt Cambridge as the only curriculum. Thusly, these schools are pronounced as international schools. The number is followed by schools which take dual curricula: Cambridge and Indonesian curriculum. Both curricula are taught separately. This type of school is known as a national plus school operating an international program (Schmidt, 2016). The number is predicted to grow rapidly within years ahead.

As a type of an international curriculum, Cambridge curriculum integrates life and learning essential aspects to prepare students for higher education, more carrier opportunities, and real life. With its learner-centered approach, Cambridge learners are targeted to

develop responsible, confident, reflective, innovative and engaged characteristics. Besides, independent learning, critical thinking, research and communication are promoted through classroom activities. Some aspects are globally called for and most of them align with what Indonesian government put on basic competences of English subject.

Unfortunately, the trend of implementing an international curriculum is not carefully examined by many education practitioners. This research interest does not sound like a desirable subject of inquiry. Consequently, available and supporting reports are limited in collections. Within Indonesian context, there are scarcely noticeable data of Cambridge curriculum implementation and its impact. Such study, if conducted successfully, can endow positive contribution to the field of English teaching and learning under an international gradation in primary level. As we know, learning a second language from childhood will serve as a foundation for future language learning.

Linked to the acknowledgement of international curriculum outcomes, primary schools need to upgrade their English teaching system by improving the quality of English teaching in order to survive and vividly to help students prepare their future. One of the ways is by learning from other successful English teaching practices and adjusting their strength points to classroom needs.

1.1 Teaching English to Young Learners

Language learners including young learners (ages between 5 and 12) have their own language learning needs, emphasized language aspects, and targeted cognitive skills (Harmer, 2007). Young learners are associated with unconscious language learners who pick up the language for granted by imitating the language, repeating what they have memorized, ignoring certain abstract concepts and activating their prior knowledge to comprehend the meaning (O'Grady, 2005). Children who have more learning trials are more prepared for more tasks and upgrading language patterns (Cameroon, 2001). Considering young learners characteristics, Brown (2001) pays attention on five categories: (1) intellectual development; (2) attention span; (3) sensory input; (4) affective filter; (5) authentic, meaningful language.

The best method for teaching English should be adapted to accommodate students' language needs, creativity and individual goals. Savignon (2002) suggests that the selection of approaches and materials should match with the goals and content of teaching based on learners' needs analyses. Learners should be assessed qualitatively rather than quantitatively. Qualitative evaluation implies a message of encouraging and representing learners' achievement. Projects such as essay writing, in-class presentations, portfolios assessment, collection and evaluation of learners' poems, reports and stories must have been conducted to assess learners' functional competences.

It is still believed by many English teaching practitioners that communicative language teaching has been serving as the most appropriate method to learn a foreign language. The goals of each language teaching have inclined to master communicative competences consisting of the following language knowledge: (1) students can use the language for a range of different purposes; (2) students can maintain the communication through communication strategies; (3) students can vary the use of language according to the setting and participants; (4) students can produce different types of text correctly (Richards, 2006).

Littlewood (2002) differentiates two primary activities for communicative activities: pre-communicative activities which are associated to control activities; and communicative activities which are greatly related to free activities. As the name suggests, pre-communicative activities are structural whose main purpose is to produce language that is acceptable

grammatically rather than to communicate meanings effectively. In some stages of these activities, teachers put the integration of language forms and their potential functional.

In term of assessment, teachers need to specify their means of measurement in order to meet validity and reliability of assessment. There are several rules that act as an alarming caution for teachers when formulating assessment for young learners (Puskas, 2016):

- 1) The area to be assessed should be defined clearly.
- 2) Assessment should have measurable results.
- 3) You should only assess children's skills and knowledge if you have taught those specific skills and knowledge.
- 4) Assessment should be carried at specific times during the learning process.
- 5) Teachers should focus on the child as a whole person, therefore it is crucial to take into consideration skills and abilities other than the ones connected with using a specific language item.
- 6) Assessment should be seen from a learning-centered perspective.
- 7) Assessment should not be limited to testing.
- 8) Both children and parents should understand assessment issues. They need to know what is being assessed and how.

2. Research Method

Taking into accounts of what have been explained in the introduction, the article was mainly designed to describe the execution of four English teaching aspects in a third grade national-plus primary school. The study was an exploratory case study in which primary English teaching features were observed and examined carefully. This nature allows participants to deliver their reflections and perspectives related to the research target.

There were five research stages that have been carried out in sequence. This procedure was adapted from a common case study flow designed by Hancock & Algozzine (2003). The first step in conducting this case study was figuring out the issue of ESL class of Cambridge curriculum in a primary school and its contribution to students' English mastery in Indonesia. It was detected that its English teaching inside the class remained mysterious as there were little data and research unveiled how English was delivered. Research objective was established, to describe teaching learning process in the class. It was then restricted into teaching elements that were considered to be the most provoking aspects in delivering materials.

Second, a set of rigid plan was arranged. Research subject and setting were selected based on a thoughtful consideration that the school and the participants have met the requirement of the needed data.

Next, data were collected and analyzed cautiously in order to get the most comprehensible and reliable ones. Results were then reported and organized into some clues based on their contribution toward the success of English teaching.

2.1 Research Setting

The study took place in a national plus school namely SDK Kalam Kudus. The school located in the heart of Surakarta city has run a dual curriculum, Cambridge Primary Curriculum and K-13 curriculum since 2013.

The study was conducted within two-month exhaustive observations and interviews. Students learned English twice a week on Thursday and Friday. Each meeting lasted for ninety minutes.

2.2 Research Subject

The study included a third grade class which had twenty four students, eighteen students are female and the others are male, an English teacher who was responsible for teaching the third grade, and a Cambridge coordinator who was responsible for monitoring the curriculum implementation. Participants were chosen selectively and purposively based on a consideration that those parties served as the closest informants to the research concern.

Third grade students were specially selected based on suggestion by Cambridge coordinator. She highly recommended the third grade class to be observed as the class was claimed to be the most observable one and students had already achieved the learning targets. It was then supported by USA Education Ministry that the third grade class was the initial step of developing further literacy ability.

Teachers were picked out selectively. They had to demonstrate good personality and excellent pedagogical skill. There were two teachers in the class, one subject teacher and one homeroom teacher. While the subject teacher was explaining the lesson, the homeroom teacher served as an assistant in helping the subject teacher managed learning situation.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Third grade English teacher	Female, first degree in English literature. She has been teaching English in an Cambridge international program since 2013.
Cambridge Primary Coordinator	Female, first and second degree in English Education. She was pointed as Cambridge Coordinator when the school run the international program.
Third grade students	Majority of them were originated from high family classes with rich exposures to English environment. They have travelled overseas and have taken an English course after school. They started speaking English in kindergarten and continued speaking it with their parents at home.

2.2 Data Collection Techniques

A case study allows multiple types of data which are normally qualitative, thus this study employed some techniques to gain rich information from many parties intensively involved in the field. Multiple data collections were used to strengthen findings and conclusions. Those techniques were observation, interview, and examining teaching learning documents. All of them were executed based on the needs of data to answer the research question. Stages of data collection were summarized in the following table.

Table 2. Data Collection Stages

1.	Preliminary observation Observed the teaching practice in English and science classes.
2.	Interview 1 Clarified the results of observation to Cambridge coordinator.
3.	Observations and video recordings Rigorously watched what happened in the class, recorded the lesson, and took some notes on major observation aspects.
4.	Interview 2 Explored teacher's perspectives and beliefs related to English teaching in the class. Materials, activities and students' characteristics were highlighted. The interviews were done after the observations.
5.	Interview 3 Explored students' opinions related to the atmosphere of English teaching and learning in the class. Activities, materials, teacher personality, peers personality were highlighted.
6.	Interview 4 Explored students' motivation in learning English and students' opinions toward the book they studied.
7.	Interview 5 Explored students' reasons related to certain behavior they exhibited in the class.
8.	Interview 6 Explored types of assessment that were typically used by the teacher.
9.	Interview 7 Explored various teaching supports provided by Cambridge Curriculum.
10.	Examining teaching and learning documents Checked students' progress during learning in the class. Documents were in the forms of students' work, English as a Second Language for the third grade Cambridge Primary Curriculum guideline.

The data were gathered thoroughly through some data collection techniques, were analyzed, and were reported in the forms of narrative stories, photographs, videos and interview transcripts.

There were three types of validity applied: democratic validity, process validity and dialogic validity. To check the trustworthiness of the article, time triangulation was implemented by gathering several points of views from the teacher and students.

3. Results and Discussions

Kalam Kudus Christian Primary School (SDK Kalam Kudus) is one of hundred schools that has a clear vision of English teaching. That vision is to establish English environment. The school has decided to run a national plus school by authorizing an international program since the demand from parents to bring in an international education was enormous. The school has been a part of Cambridge primary schools since 2013. English as a second language (ESL) is one of three subjects studied by students.

The school had an open-minded view toward the quality of education. Cambridge program for primary school has been opened for all grades with around twenty four students in each class. The school has already been equipped with complete facility that supported teaching and learning process inside and outside the class. The class was managed purposively in which tables, desks, bookshelves and other classroom stuff were reachable by the students.

Based on the concentrated observations in ESL class for the third grade, the students exhibited confident and flowing conversations in English. Natural interactions in English occurred as expected. These learning outcomes resembled the target of learning English which were outlined by Cambridge Curriculum.

Students were raised in supportive English environment. Parents who strive for English excellence provide young learners with home literacy environment and indirect modeling by themselves and young learners' care takers. The hypotheses were proven true in this case. Students uttered in interviews that their parents made them read numerous books in English since entering primary schools and invited them to speak English at some times at home.

It was confirmed by the third grade students and the English teacher that students' parents introduced English to their young learners from pre-school. Cambridge coordinator added some information that parents' motive to take this Cambridge international program was to prepare their children to study overseas. Thus, students looked serious following the lesson in the class.

3.1 Curriculum Materials

Cambridge has complete and supportive materials for primary students. The materials were selected carefully, designed integratively and thematically and tailored naturally based on the essence of language usage. The students learned the materials from two books: (1) Cambridge Global English Learners's Book; (2) Cambridge Global English Activity Book.

Learners' book was about materials comprised for complete language aspects: (1) words and expressions; (2) use of English; (3) reading/writing; (4) listening/speaking; (5) pronunciation; (5) critical thinking. While activity book consisted of a wide range of exercises.

The teacher used the books as the main learning resources. Students would be assessed by their competence in absorbing the materials. In the end of school term, all students would have participated in Cambridge Primary Checkpoints.

For supplementary materials, the teacher adopted related materials from internet and modified what was essential for students' activities. However, teacher admitted that Cambridge Primary materials for English was sufficient.

Receptive skills served as the foundation of further productive skills. So far, students uttered that the materials were attractive and enjoyable. They loved the pictures, the colours, and the texts as well. They told that the theme in each chapter was suitable for their level.

3.2 Teaching Learning Approaches

According to Cambridge Primary guideline, teachers were free to select the most appropriate method for teaching. No single method was proposed. However, the approach should adhere to metacognitive approach and active learning principles.

Metacognitive approach was realized into careful planning, monitoring, evaluating and changing learning behaviour. The teacher did not devote too much energy on planning as the syllabus of learning and lesson plans had been formulated by Cambridge. The teacher as well as other teachers participated intensely in Cambridge annual seminar on improving teaching quality. So far, the teacher and Cambridge coordinator had no disapproving problems about teaching learning approaches. Students confirmed that they found no serious barriers in engaging with Cambridge approach.

Active learning atmosphere was practiced in every single activity that students have done in the class. Teacher emphasized greatly on understanding rather than mastering certain language patterns. The most noticeable action was when the teacher ensured all students

had already acquired the language by providing students with peer and individual work, approaching low achiever students, and willingly offering help for all students. The teacher said she needed to help students learn the root of materials and to foster their autonomous skill. It was typical situation for students to be adjusted to group work as well as individual work.

Also, Cambridge believed in spiral approach. When students repeated the materials for long period, it not only reinforced what students have learned but also took clear forward progress at each learning stage. It was amazing that third grade students could have communicated naturally and flawlessly in English. Students obeyed the rule to always speak English in the class. English has been established as the official language at class so that teacher would not respond to any language other than English. It was then believed by the teacher as one approach to sharpen students' English conversation and grammatical mastery.

3.3 Classroom Activities

Classroom activities met the mottos of Cambridge (learn, discover, and achieve) and the approach guidelines. Learning activities were designed thoroughly to ensure students have learned deep subject knowledge, conceptual understanding and high order thinking skills.

Teacher opened the class by calling the roles and activated students' background. Students got enthusiastic to learn that could be observed from their high participation. They would raise their hands without being instructed by the teachers. The class often ended up with some students cried because they lose an opportunity to answer teacher's questions. This situation resembled positive learning atmosphere in the class which was closely related to a signal of learning.

Activities totally duplicated instructions on students' book and teaching guidelines. Teacher said that even though it was allowed to modify the activities, Cambridge teaching guideline has served as the most reliable source of managing subject delivery. There was once a doubtful speculation that students would not experience smooth transition and would get uninterested easily in learning because Cambridge materials were repetitive. Young learners who have short attention span might get bored in doing the activities. The practice turned out into more flowing conversations and mutual cooperation between students and teacher.

Activities such as peer discussion, group discussion, drawing, presentation, singing, and individual drill were the root of learning. Games were not found during the observation. It was then clarified by the teacher that students loved all activities including individual progress checking. Students told in the interview that all activities did not stress them out as the books helped them to gain the core of materials.

One example was when they studied about comparative language with dinosaurs theme. They were asked to draw their own imaginative dinosaurs and write the description. No students was reluctant to join this activity.

Receptive activities, activities which required focus and attention, were presented in texts. Students' literacy grew as they always encountered up-to-date passages that were their age. They loved spending time understanding the passage and answered questions which followed. Grammar was taught integratively but in a communicative instruction. There was no special grammar corner therefore students felt like language was not dominated by grammar.

3.4 Assessment

Assessment was aimed at proving what students have learned and at improving abilities predicted ability that students could perform later. Assessment fell into formative assessment and summative assessment.

Formative assessment considered students' daily progress that could be observed each meeting. Teacher considerably paid attention on each students' learning development and then designed specific questions addressed to either forward or backward students. The questions were both impromptu and planned.

Impromptu questions were given directly after the teacher has just finished delivering materials or in the beginning of the meeting. Typical questions were in the form of open-ended and close-ended questions to clarify, test, and challenge students' critical thinking skills. For instance, when teacher asked 'Chelsea, how do you describe the dinosaurs?', she clarified if the students did not misunderstand the question.

Summative assessment was administered in the middle of school term and in the end of school term. Students had multiple and short essay questions designed by the teacher. Besides, they presented a project for speaking skill.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

4.1 Conclusion

The article was aimed at describing real English teaching process in the third grade of Cambridge Primary School. Through the observations and interviews, the quality of English teaching could be categorized as excellent, the curriculum was proved as one of the most tangible and integrated curriculum within the needs of global world. The benefit of the curriculum was not only shared with the students but also with the teacher.

The teacher confessed that English as a Second language course in the curriculum has enabled her students to be confident to participate in conversation involved English without being forced to do so. Students were enthusiastic, natural, and spontaneous in responding to the questions by their teacher. It must be the result of rigid and supporting materials that the course provided. The materials were all ready to be implemented with their short-term and long-term plans.

Generally, what happened in the implementation of English teaching in SDK Kalam Kudus has met the features highlighted by Cambridge Assessment International Education. Even though the reality did not sound as perfect as the outline suggested that was because the school was in its journey to sharpen the identity of Cambridge School. Students have already exhibited highly desirable learning habits. Vividly, the students were confident in applying understanding to some situations and were engaged in active learning. Within four years working with Cambridge curriculum, the school has participated in Cambridge professional development programs such as seminars, conferences and short courses to discuss students' exam results, strategies to enrich teacher's classroom practice.

Language teaching principles believed that the joy of learning occurred when students were highly centered and valued. Motivation grew when students truly reflected on their learning needs and future learning targets to achieve. Students who were guided to always be reflective took parts in classroom activities designed to bridge them grasping knowledge, understanding and skills of the subject. Teacher served as the first hand to navigate the learning route. The rest was on students' hand. This principle facilitated students

4.2 Suggestion

Since curriculum plays an important role in students' language acquisition, it is then suggested that schools take careful consideration in selecting and designing the most appropriate curriculum. Curriculum should reflect the core of language materials, the best way to engage students in joyful and applicable learning, and reliable evaluation.

Teaching approach, language materials, and classroom activities must have been pondered not for granted. Teachers, school staffs, and English practitioners should be able to accommodate not only students' needs of English but also students' future skills of English.

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