

INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS: A CASE STUDY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN KUNINGAN

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Abstract: This research investigated (1) the use of instructional media by the teachers in teaching English to young learners; (2) the problems that they encounter in using instructional media; also (3) problem solving of the media utilization challenges. This study was conducted in elementary schools in Kuningan. To collect the data, the researcher employed observation and interview techniques. The result of the study indicates that there are five types of instructional media which are generally used by the teachers, comprising: (1) boards; (2) realia; (3) pictures; and (4) books. Each of them is used in various ways. The teachers faced challenges in both process of selecting and using instructional media. The strategy used to solve the problems during selection process was utilizing available media. Meanwhile, to overcome the problem during the use of instructional media were by requesting technician help, borrowing instructional media supply from other class and preparing back-up instructional media.

Keywords: *Instructional media, media utilization, media selection, problem solving of media utilization challenges, young learners*

Introduction

In Indonesia, teaching English to young learners is a part of curriculum. It is based on Ministerial Decree No.22 Year 2006, dated May 23rd 2006, which states that English subject can be given to elementary students as a local content. This decree results in the existence of English in elementary schools which is taught starting from the fourth grade for two credit hours every week.

In teaching English to elementary school students, teachers deal with young learners whose characteristics are different from adult learners'. Several children characteristics are regarding their cognitive development and attention span. The cognitive development stage is stated by Piaget (1972) as cited in Pinter (2011, p.9). He believes that in each stage children have quality of thinking which "is relatively consistent across different tasks". For elementary schools students, their

cognitive developments lay on concrete operational stage. In this stage, children begin to think logically and use their experience to solve problem. Nevertheless, they are only able to solve problem which “are applied to concrete examples and objects in real life” (Pinter, 2011, p. 12). Another characteristic is attention span. Attention span is defined as the amount of time in seconds the child remains on task without distraction (Mustafa, 2008). In learning, attention span can be seen when children pay attention to the teacher or focus on the learning. Musthafa (2010) argues that unlike adults who have long attention span, children only have attention span less than 15 minutes.

Knowing those characteristics of children is an essential requirement for the teacher in creating effective instruction (Musthafa, 2010). Effective instruction is “an instruction that enables students to acquire specified skills, knowledge, and attitudes.” (Reiser & Dick, 1996, p.3). In relation to this, Curtain and Dahlberg (2000) as cited in Musthafa (2010) argue that the instruction should be built “on topics and contexts that are relevant to the young learners.” Besides, students’ experience should also be considered in choosing teaching method, media and assessment (Barratt-Pugh and Rohl, 2000, cited in Musthafa, 2010) in order to conduct effective instruction.

Besides knowing children characteristics, using appropriate instructional media is one of the key principles in creating effective instruction (Reiser & Dick, 1996). Instructional media itself is defined by Scanlan as all materials that can be used by the teachers to conduct teaching learning activities and support students in reaching instructional objectives.

Harmer (2007) states that there are several types of instructional media that can be used by teachers:

- The students themselves

The students are “the most useful resources in the classroom” (Harmer, 2007: 176). By using the students themselves, teacher can do many things in the classroom.

- Realia

Realia is defined by Nunan (1999: p. 313) as “objects and teaching ‘props’ from the world outside the classroom that are used for teaching and learning”. So, it can be inferred that realia is unmodified real things inside or outside the classroom which is used by the teacher for teaching learning process. Realia can be used as starting point to introduce the lesson and/or understanding concept of the material.

- Pictures

Pictures or graphic materials refer to “non-photographic and two dimensional” materials which is utilized by the teachers to convey messages to the students. This kind of material includes drawings, charts, graphs, posters, cartoon, etc.

Pictures are utilized for several purposes. Harmer (2007) explained that pictures can be used for multiple ways comprising: (1) drilling, (2) communication, (3) understanding, (4) ornamentation, (5) predicting, and (6) discussing

- Coursebook

Coursebook is a form of print media. It contains material or verbal information through print. It can also be used as basic instructional guide by the teacher.

- Boards

Boards refer to chalkboard/ blackboard, whiteboard and interactive whiteboard (IWB). Like pictures, boards also are used for several purposes. Harmer (2007) describes that teachers can use boards as (1) notepad, (2) explanation aid, (3) picture frame, (4) public workbook, (5) gameboard, and (6) noticeboard.

- Overhead Projector (OHP)

By using overhead projectors, the students can see in front of the class the material which is written or drawn in a transparent. The transparent will be projected by using projectors.

- Flipcharts

Another instructional media that may be used by the teacher is flipchart. Flipchart is an instructional media which contains big sheets of paper. It is mostly used to write down some important points in group discussion (Harmer, 2007). Several benefits of flipchart are portable, accessible, and easy to use.

- Computer-based presentation technology

Harmer (2007) said that this instructional media has two vital components. They are hardware and software. The hardware needed for this instructional media are computer and LCD projector. This instructional media combine both audio and visual material. By using computer-based presentation technology – or so called multimedia presentation— enable the teacher to convey much larger information to the students (Blythe-Lord, 1991, Kemp & Smellie, 1989, and Wittich & Schuller, 1973).

Utilizing the appropriate instructional media is required because of several benefits. One of the benefits is to enhance students' motivation. By using instructional media e.g. showing pictures and having the students heard music, the students give more attention to the teachers, moreover, their curiosity is increasing towards the subject (Reiser & Dick, 1996). Other benefits are stated by Ruis, et al (2009) comprise (1) solving lack of experiences problem for the students, (2) reaching everything out of the class, (3) creating direct interaction between the students and environment, also (4) integrating experience from the concrete to the abstract information.

On the other hand, research studies about the use of instructional media by the elementary school teachers have been conducted. One of them is carried out by Abdo and Semela (2010). The former is a researcher from Hawassa University,

Ethiopia, while the latter is from University of Tübingen, Germany. They conducted the study in Gedeo Zone in Sourthen Ethiopia. The study shows that the teachers in elementary schools are infrequent using instructional media in teaching learning process. Some factors influencing the use of instructional media by the teachers comprise availability of instructional media, manageability of classroom tasks and administrative supports.

Considering benefits in using media in teaching learning process, the researcher conducted the study which intends to find out:

1. How the teachers use the instructional media
2. Problems that the teachers encounter in instructional media implementation.
3. Strategies to solve the problems in using the instructional media.

By knowing them, it was expected that the teaching learning quality can be improved and local goverment gives more attention to instructional media availability in all elementary schools.

This study used case study design which was aimed at capturing certain phenomenon and real situation existed in elementary schools without any direct involvement of the researcher. It is relevant to Yin (2002, p. 1) who argues that case study method is “preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.”

This study was conducted in three different elementary schools in Kuningan, West Java. The schools have different level of accreditation, location and facilities. The participants were three English teachers from those schools. There was no special requirement for the teachers involved in this study, except using instructional media in teaching learning activities.

To collect data, observation and interview were employed. The observation was non-participant observation, in which the researcher was only a complete observer. The observation was purposed to identify what instructional media utilized by the teachers and for what purposes those instructional media used in teaching learning activities. This observation was conducted three times for each teacher. Meanwhile, interview was employed formally and informally. Formal

interview was conducted mainly to find out the problem occurs related to instructional media utilization and how the teachers solve them. In the meantime, the informal interview was employed to check whether or not the information obtained from observation was appropriate. However, since they are in-depth interview, the questions could be developed as needed.

In analyzing the data, it used steps proposed by Creswell (2008) which are: (1) collecting data, (2) preparing data for analysis, (3) reading through the data, (4) coding the data, (5) and coding the text for themes and description to be used in the research paper

Data Presentation and Discussion

- **Types of Instructional Media Used by the Teachers and Its Utilization**

From eight types of instructional media classified by Harmer (2007), there were only four types of instructional media which is utilized by the teachers in this study. They comprise: (1) boards; (2) realia; (3) pictures and (4) books. Each of those instructional media was used for variety purposes. The purposes also were taken according to Harmer (2007). To begin with, boards were generally used as notepad, explanation aid, picture frame and public workbook. Next is realia. This kind of instructional media was used for both engaging and eliciting the students in teaching learning activities. Different from realia, pictures had different purposes in the instructions. Based on the findings, the pictures were employed by the teachers to drill vocabularies, present meaning also to discuss the lesson. Last instructional media, which is book, was utilized by the teachers to do give exercises to the students about the lesson and to be used as source for the material.

- **Teachers' Selection of Instructional Media**

Reiser and Dick (1996) believed that in selecting instructional media, the teachers should consider three main factors comprising: (1) practicality practicality (including availability, cost efficient and time efficient); (2) students'

appropriateness (appropriate to students' characteristics and learning condition) and (3) instructional appropriateness (appropriate to material, instructional goals and activities). Related to this, the findings show that only T3 whose instructional media was appropriate to those three factors. In the meantime, T1 and T2's instructional media were generally only suitable with practicality and the instructions. Meanwhile, they were not really suitable with the students' characteristics. For clearer description, it can be seen in following table.

Table 1 Teachers' Selection of Instructional Media

Description	T1			T2			T3		
	Observation								
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
Appropriateness of instructional media with student's characteristics							√	√	√
Appropriateness of instructional media with the instructional goal	√	√			√	√	√	√	√
Appropriateness of instructional media with the material	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Appropriateness of instructional media with the activities	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Appropriateness of instructional media with learning condition							√	√	√
Practicality of instructional media	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

- Teachers' Problems in Selecting and Using Instructional Media

Based on the data, problems were encountered by the teachers not only in using instructional media but also in selecting them. In selecting instructional media the problems encountered by the teachers were limited time, limited cost allocation, availability of instructional media, appropriateness of instructional media, and teachers' negative belief towards instructional media.

Problems were also experienced by the teachers in the process of utilizing media. The teachers often encountered technical problems, for instance running out of supply and the dysfunction of high-tech instructional media used. The last was personal problem. It dealt with the difficulty experienced by the teacher in explaining content in the instructional media.

- Strategies to Solve the Problems in Selecting and Using Instructional Media

Due the existence of various problems in both selecting and using instructional media, the teachers had several ways to overcome them. The first, to

overcome problems in process of instructional media selection – regarding limited time and cost, unavailability of media in the school—all of the teachers had the same action, which is using the readily-available instructional media in the school. With all of the inadequacy in their school, they tried to optimize the instructional media provided to help the students reach the instructional goal. However, types of instructional media by the teacher differs each other. This was affected by teachers' education background and experience.

In the meantime, to solve or even avoid technical and personal problems, which were the problems they faced in using instructional media, the teacher gives effort by preparing back-up instructional media and asking for technician support. Furthermore, in order to make the teacher unable to utilize instructional media, especially the high-tech one, the teacher asked for special training or workshop for utilizing media by certain responsible party.

Conclusion

Utilization of instructional media by the teacher in elementary schools in Kuningan still needs improvement. It is proved from lack of instructional media availability in the school also lack of utilization of various instructional media. Besides, the appropriateness of the instructional media to students' characteristics was less considered by the teachers.

Moreover, the problems encountered by the teachers both during selection and implementation were seemingly because of insufficient instructional media availability and the teachers themselves. Thus, it is expected that the local government to give more attention at supplying instructional media in all elementary schools in Kuningan equally. Besides, for the teacher, it is also expected that they are be able to use the available instructional media without taking aside students' characteristics. Furthermore, they are also expected to learn utilizing high tech instructional media in order that they can explore them to enhance quality of instruction.

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