Promoting English Education along Indonesian Coastal Zone

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Abstract. Coastal zone has a number of potentials to develop, including tourism industry, and English mastery is required to support it. Maritime tourism industry needs to be developed to achieve Indonesia’s goal as a global maritime axis. English as a universally accepted language plays an important role in promoting tourism. However, not all Indonesian people, including those in coastal zones, speak the language. It is therefore important to promote English education in the areas. This has actually been attempted with the inclusion of English as part of the national curriculum of secondary schools. Questions arise whether English education along the Indonesian coastal zone, particularly along the borders, has satisfactorily achieved its goal. Through questionnaire and observation, this study surveyed the problems of English education in Indonesian coastal areas to give the overview of English language teaching condition in order to give beneficial contribution to English education along Indonesian coastal zone. Based on the problems found in the investigation, some suggestions are made to promote English education along Indonesian coastal zone.

Keywords: English education, coastal zone, maritime tourism

1. Introduction

The Indonesian government’s idea to transform Indonesia into “global maritime axis” is a significant action forward since Indonesia is the largest archipelagic state in the world, which has thousands of islands and extends over almost 6 million square kilometers. To actualize the idea, some efforts can be made in enhancing all sectors in coastal areas so that all parties in the outer islands of Indonesia can benefit. One of the important sectors that need to be exploited and prioritized in coastal areas is educational sector, as it is a tool to raise the degree and quality of the nation [1].

Education is a human right; the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia article 31 stipulates that every citizen has the right to receive education and the government has the obligation to fund it. Unfortunately, the educational development in most coastal areas is relatively slow. Statistics of Kepulauan Seribu regency, the coastal area closest to the capital of Indonesia, shows that 78.72 % of population 10 years of age and over do not complete in primary school [2].

English education plays an important role in coastal areas since they represent maritime tourism object which attract foreign tourists to visit. Coastal areas as centers of tourism industries have some potentials to develop [3] and English mastery is needed to support the sustainable development of tourism in the areas. Yet, the majority of people in coastal areas, particularly those in Indonesian borders, are not able to use English as a medium of communication due to their low level of English proficiency.
English in Indonesia is actually included in school curriculum [4] and becomes a compulsory subject in school [5; 6] in order to respond to demands of society, among which is for the sake of tourism industries. It is considered as a good means of communication and an essential part of Indonesian school system [7]. However, students of coastal communities, especially those in remote areas, are still entangled by some challenges and backwardness in relation to the mastery of English.

Therefore, English education in coastal zone needs to be developed to face the challenges of international tourism. It is also essential as it is in line with the government’s commitment to promote connectivity by developing maritime tourism. One way to promote English Education in coastal zone is by analyzing the problems in English language learning in coastal areas to get an overview of the existing English learning conditions. The focus of the study is on the problems in developing English education to give beneficial contribution to English education along Indonesian coastal zone.

2. Method

This study was a descriptive research which drew on semi-structured interviews with English teachers of 4 coastal zones in Indonesia; 1 teacher of Sumba Island, 2 teachers of Morotai Island, 1 teacher of Kalimantan Island, 3 teachers of Flores Island, and 4 teachers of Karimunjawa Island. The interviewees of the first four islands are English teachers of Sarjana Mendidik di Daerah Terdepan, Terluar, dan Tertinggal (SM3T) program. It is an Indonesia education program in which teachers are sent to "3T regions" (the frontier, outermost and remote regions) to promote equity in education across the archipelago. Moreover, the subjects also involve English teachers in different secondary schools in Karimunjawa island, 2 private schools (one Islamic junior high school and one Islamic senior high school) and 2 state schools (one junior high school and one vocational high school). The focus of the interview was on the curriculum used, the teaching-learning process of English, and problems faced by teachers in English teaching and learning. The teachers are graduates of English department. In addition, an observation was also conducted in Karimunjawa Island to know the English teaching and learning process in the classrooms.

3. Result

In Indonesia, English teaching and learning are parts of the government’s attention to facilitate the students to acquire English. Nowadays, there have been two English curricula which are implemented in the secondary schools in Indonesian educational system; the 2006 curriculum and the 2013 curriculum.

The 2006 curriculum (known as School-Based Curriculum) was designed to facilitate every unit of schools to develop the process of teaching and learning innovatively according to the condition of the schools and society [8]. In English language teaching, the process of learning involves building students’ knowledge of field, modeling of texts, joint construction of texts, and independent construction of texts.

The 2013 curriculum or K-13 was designed to achieve not only communicative skills, but also ability to think clearly and critically, ability to consider the moral aspects of an issue [9]. The teaching-learning process, including English, should take five steps of scientific processes: observing, questioning, exploring and experimenting, associating and analyzing, and communicating. However, for the time being, the K-13 is only implemented in some schools as pilot project.

The curriculum has been developed to answer the existing problems, and both curricula have positive intention in English language teaching in Indonesia. They are intended to develop the students’ English competence to face real-life situations. However, achievement of such goal would depend on many factors (teachers, facilities, materials, and others) which support the success of English language education.
4. Discussion

Regarding to the curriculum, all schools studied implement the 2006 curriculum and the 2013 curriculum. The latest curriculum is only applied in the first grade of each school (grade VII of junior high and grade X of senior high schools). The 2006 curriculum has not been optimally implemented, yet for some reasons such as limited schools’ teaching media and infrastructure, lack of quality human resources or teaching staff, unavailable training for teacher professional development, remote access of education source, and unavailable fora of teachers of English. In addition, the interview shows that the teachers still have to adjust to the 2013 curriculum. They have not sufficient knowledge or experience on how to implement the curriculum in the teaching and learning process. It is because they seldom or even never attend training or English Teacher Working Group (MGMP) to improve their knowledge of the curriculum. Their absence was due to the distance with the training location in which it usually needs some days to reach by land transportation. If they are present, they then will leave their students for some days, which is another issue they cannot overcome because of the limited human resources in the schools.

The government should play more significant role in enhancing teachers’ competence of English and in applying curriculum 2013 in remote areas like Karimunjawa Island. Centers for facilitation should be provided in the areas so that they do not have to leave the students. The government programs such as SM3T program and “Guru Garis Depan” (“front-line teacher”) program can be alternative solutions to this problem. Before they are placed in the selected areas, they can be trained first on the curriculum and how to implement it, so they can disseminate their knowledge and skills to the existing local teachers.

The characteristic of the curriculum 2013 is integrated theme, which means that one subject should be related with other subjects [10]. This integrated thematic system is actually good since the teachers are able to integrate the teaching materials more creatively with other subject, for example with Maritime Education. By combining those materials, the students are expected to have better understanding of their environment and it will be useful for their life.

There is also an issue of availability of qualified English teachers in coastal borders. The result of interview with SM3T teachers reveals the limited number of qualified English teachers in the areas. For example, an SM3T teacher based in a junior high school in Wulla Waijilu, East Sumba Regency, East Nusa Tenggara mentioned that there was only one English teacher for 275 students (9 classes). In addition, two schools of Morotai Island Regency only had two English teachers, one of which was actually a bank clerk who was seconded to teach English, without sufficient English competence. Similar thing happened in Bengkayang Regency, West Kalimantan. Three schools in Flores Island also had limited number of English teachers. There was even a school without permanent English teacher, except the occasional SM3T teacher. Then through tracing documentation, it was found that the number of English teachers at Karimunjawa island schools is also minimum. These teachers hardly join any professional development training or teachers’ fora due to distance and limited access of fast transportation.

The English teaching and learning process varies, depending on the provided teaching media and infrastructures as well human resources of English teachers. Based on the observation in some schools on Karimunjawa Island, English-speaking skill is one skill that is naturally supported by local potential since it has many tourist destinations. The teachers usually present the materials in textbook while the students have their own worksheets. The students practice speaking skill as in the theme-based dialogues while the teachers guide them to speak with proper pronunciation. Strengthening the students’ fluency and pronunciation, the teachers sometimes take them out for outdoor learning by meeting tourists and making small groups to practice English speaking. This activity essentially indicates that the teachers have great awareness to teaching speaking. Thus, it can give a great deal of practice in improving students’ basic interactive skills necessary for life [11]. However, the supporting intention to develop English-speaking skill is not in line with the students’ interest and motivation. Still, the students seem reluctant in doing this activity. The lack of background knowledge of English and confidence in using English also make them passive in and outside English classrooms.
The contribution in enhancing the students’ speaking skill also comes from people surrounding the schools on Karimunjawa Island. Some stakeholders of tourist resorts like hotel practitioners, travel agents, tourist guides and foreign tourists also occasionally come to schools to train the students to practice their English. However, lower intensity of their attendance and unavailability of formal agreement (MoU) with the stakeholders of tourist resorts made the contribution ineffective. Therefore, the role of local government to promote English Education to support tourist development in coastal areas should be improved. The government should accommodate all relevant parties’ interests and contributions by facilitating the existing formal institutions to enhance English education in order to promote tourist attraction of coastal areas internationally.

The process of listening learning poses similar problems; the lack of teaching media and infrastructure of learning is a common issue. The minimum teaching media and facilities of English language laboratory or, in most cases, the unavailability of English language laboratory at schools have hindered the teaching-learning process. The learning process of listening runs conventionally, in which the teachers play as the only spoken language models. The audio lingual method was forcedly applied with drills, reading aloud, and imitation. This classical, teacher-centered method must be implemented with the risk of mispronunciation and wrong imitation by the students due to the unavailability of original language source (native speaker). It happens due to instability of electricity power. The electricity is often off during the school hours. Nowadays, the problem has been slightly overcome with the existence of information technology, so the teachers and students can access the source of native language. They could install the application of electronic dictionary in their mobile phones, and audio application and correct pronunciation can be gained. However, the use of technology is still not maximized in the teaching and learning process because internet access is not very good. Reading and writing learning process is conducted conventionally in which the teachers only ask the students to open particular pages in the textbook and students’ worksheets, and ask them to do some exercises. It tends to create monotonous activity that make students bored and lack enthusiasm in learning. Teachers’ need to be encouraged to apply diverse teaching methods and provide authentic materials, so that students will be motivated to learn English.

To create good English learning process, basically the teachers in coastal zone need adequate and better infrastructure and facilities. The availability of authentic learning sources for teachers and students as well as learning media like computer, audio-visual instruments, and other learning facilities is a key to improve better quality of learning process. More importantly, teachers should be given easy access to English teacher professional development. When teachers are better equipped with the necessary skills, they can be expected to be more active, creative and innovative to improve their learning process; they are expected to utilize and integrate the local potentials in the curriculum, especially in promoting English education along the coastal zones.

Reflecting the benefits of learning English for better life, it is found that basically skills of English can be alternatively applied at any profession along the coastal areas. In this case, English is not only limitedly learnt at schools in formal classes, but also widely applied at any field of works that are accommodated by the stakeholders of tourism. Promoting English Education should be integrated with local potentials so that more relevant parties, including NGO’s, can better contribute to English learning projects. Other government programs (such as SM3T and GGD) should also reach the needy areas; prior surveys should be conducted to determine the needy areas.

5. Conclusion

From the findings, it can be inferred that schools in coastal zone of Indonesia, especially those at the borders, are not well-equipped with facilities and infrastructures. Besides, in general there is lack of English teachers quantitatively and qualitatively. These have hindered English education in the areas. Suggestions are to be made in order to promote English education along coastal zone to achieve Indonesia’s goal as a global maritime axis. Adequate facilities should be equally distributed, especially in remote areas with maritime tourist potentials. Schools should have better equipment and English
laboratory should also be provided. As the total number of competent teachers is low, more “front-line” teachers can be sent to the schools that need qualified teachers. Schools have to work together with government tourist office and/ or maritime tourist industries to develop the students’ English proficiency. Teachers in applying the national curriculum have to consider the local wisdom and the materials of teaching can be integrated with maritime education to provide authentic learning process. Teachers also need to improve their teaching methods to arouse students’ interest in learning language. Access to teacher professional development training is therefore needed.

6. References

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