THE DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN THAILAND FACED BY
INDONESIAN STUDENT TEACHERS OF SEA-TEACHER PROJECT BATCH 4

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ABSTRACT

THE DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN THAILAND FACED BY INDONESIAN STUDENT TEACHERS OF SEA-TEACHER PROJECT BATCH 4

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The study focuses on the difficulties in teaching English in Thailand specifically on those occurring in three phases of teaching: planning, implementation and assessment. This study used narrative inquiry as the research design. The data was collected by using questionnaire and interview which were conducted to seven Indonesian student teachers of SEA-Teacher Project Batch 4. The aims of the study are finding out kinds of difficulties in teaching English in Thailand as well as identifying factors causing the difficulties and ways to deal with them. Findings of the study reveal that there are twelve difficulties in teaching English in Thailand which are classified into three groups: planning, implementation and assessment. The factors causing the difficulties were curriculum, students, classroom environment, facilities, and student teachers. To solve the problems the student teachers took some efforts: a) consulting the school mentors; b) sharing experience with other student teachers; and c) doing self-reflection of their teaching.

Key words: Difficulties, Student Teacher, SEA-Teacher Project

ABSTRAK

KESULITAN DALAM MENGAJAR BAHASA INGGRIS DI THAILAND YANG DIHADAPI OLEH GURU MAGANG DALAM *SEA-TEACHER PROJECT BATCH 4*

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Penelitian ini berfokus pada kesulitan mengajar bahasa Inggris di Thailand khususnya yang terjadi pada tiga fase mengajar: perencanaan, implementasi dan penilaian. Penelitian ini menggunakan *narrative inquiry* sebagai desain penelitian. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan kuisioner dan interview yang dilakukan kepada tujuh guru magang Indonesia dalam *SEA-Teacher Project Batch 4*. Tujuan dari penilitian ini adalah menemukan jenis-jenis kesulitan dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris di Thailand, serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan kesulitan dan cara untuk mengatasi kesulitan tersebut. Temuan penelitian ini adalah bahwa ada dua belas kesulitan dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris di Thailand yang diklasifikasikan ke dalam tiga kelompok: perencanaan, implementasi dan penilaian. Adapun faktor yang menyebabkan kesulitan adalah siswa, lingkungan kelas, fasilitas sekolah dan guru magang. Untuk mengatasi masalah tersebut guru magang mengambil beberapa upaya: a) melakukan konsultasi dengan guru pembina; b) membagikan pengalaman dengan guru magang lainnya; dan c) melakukan refleksi diri.

Kata Kunci: Kesulitan, Guru Magang, *SEA-Teacher Project*

INTRODUCTION

The most popular language used today is English. There are many countries especially in Southeast Asia using English as a foreign language where English merely takes part in the field of Education. Hence, in order to facilitate the students with English as the demand of modern era development, teacher takes a very crucial role in teaching the language. Furthermore, teacher must be competent and professional in educating and guiding the students to be a successful EFL learner.

Therefore, in 2014 Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) established a program namely Pre-Service Student Teacher Exchange in Southeast Asia (SEA-Teacher Project) that aims at improving the quality of education in Southeast Asia. Through this program, some countries in Southeast Asia including Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines cooperate to give an opportunity to pre-service student teachers to experience teaching especially teaching English in countries within Southeast Asia.

To join this program, many universities from the three countries particularly from Indonesia provide their student teachers some equipments before teaching overseas. Besides knowledge and skills of teaching, the student teachers are also equipped with other necessities such as pre-departure training and online orientation of SEA-Teacher Program by SEAMEO. With all preparations that have been done, however, Indonesian student teachers are still challenged to teach English in other country especially in Thailand. There are some difficulties that might have been faced by the student teachers while doing the internship. One of the factors contributes to the difficulty is the students who were lack of motivation to learn English.

According to Thonginkam (2003), most Thai people have lack of needs to learn English. "Apart from English is required by the schools for students to learn, there are no other needs at all why students should strive to have contact with or master English" (Thonginkam, 2003:9). This kind of thinking leads to the absence of motivation for learning English. As the consequence, Thai students have low level of English proficiency. According to Education First (EF) report in 2015, Thailand's

rank of EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) is 62nd out of 70 countries where the score was 45.35 (out of 100) and was labeled as "very low proficiency" (EF, 2015). This score is lower than the EF EPI score of other countries in Southeast Asia especially Indonesia which ranked 32nd with the average score 52.91 (ibid, 2015).

Referring to the rationale above, the researcher is interested in conducting a research entitled the difficulties in teaching English in Thailand faced by Indonesian student teachers of SEA-Teacher Project Batch 4.

Furthermore, this study aims to answer three research questions: a) What are the difficulties encountered by Indonesian student teachers in teaching English in Thailand? b) What factors cause the difficulties in teaching English in Thailand? c) How do Indonesian student teachers deal with the problems they faced in teaching English in Thailand?

Based on the research questions, this study attempts to: a) find out kinds of difficulties encountered by Indonesian student teachers in teaching English in Thailand; b) identify factors causing the difficulties in teaching English in Thailand; and c) identify how Indonesian student teachers deal with the problems they faced in teaching English in Thailand.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
The Role of English in Thailand

In Thailand, English acts as a foreign language. Despite that fact, English dominates every aspect of the county's life. Particularly, English plays a pivotal role in education, science, technology as well as in business fields (Bancha, 2010). In the field of education, English is compulsory as it is the first and the most important foreign language to be taught in schools.

Not only does English take part in education, but English is also needed in business and economy area. Chinkumtornwong (2005, cited in Okihara, Keyuravong and Tachibana, 2006, in Bancha, 2010:5) noted that:

"English has played an important role in promoting trade because: free trade policies have increased competition and provided an opportunity for trade and commerce with neighboring countries. There has been more cooperation and investment from foreign countries in Thailand which has increased additional pressure on Thai business to deal in English with new foreign partners."

Curriculum of Thailand

The latest curriculum of Thailand is The Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008. It was formulated in the purpose to replace The Basic Core Curriculum 2001 which is believed to bring difficulties in being implemented by the teachers (Fitzpatrick, 2011). "The new core curriculum is aimed at enhancing capacity of all learners, who constitute the major force of the country, so as to attain balanced development in all respects—physical strength, knowledge and morality" (MOE, 2008:4).

One of learning areas in The Basic Core Curriculum 2008 is foreign language learning. In relation to the learning area of foreign language, it is stated that English is the foreign language which constitutes basic learning content prescribed by the Basic Education Core Curriculum (MOE, 2008). It means that English is compulsory to be taught in school. Meanwhile, for the others foreign languages such as French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Pali and languages of neighboring countries, "it is left to the discretion of educational institutions to prepare courses and provide learning management as appropriate" (MOE, 2008:252).

Teaching Competency Standard

Teacher standards refer to principles on teaching that "should be comprehensively understood and applied in the practice of the teaching profession" (Bonavidi 2013:11). Every country has its own teaching standard which can be varied and different from other countries.

According to Bacani (2010:47), "Indonesia defines a competent teacher as one who meets the components of the four major competencies defined by the country's

Teacher Law." There are four major strands of Indonesia's teaching competency standards mandated by the National Education System Law No. 14 of 2005, those are: pedagogical, personal, professional, and social. In another side, Bacani stated that (2010:68). "Thailand defines a competent teacher as one who has to maintain professional standards in terms of knowledge, experience, performance, and code of conduct." There are four major strands of Thailand's teaching competency standards including professional, knowledge, experience, and personal competence.

Pre-Service Teacher Education

Regarding with pre-service teacher (PTS) education program, Roberts (1998 in Bonavidi, 2013) suggests a *problem solver model* of teaching. It reflects to the model of PTS education program that "should enable its students to be life-long learners, learner-centred teachers, capable curriculum developers and reflective teachers" (Macpherson & Aspland 2003 in ibid, 2013:11).

Related to teacher education in Indonesia, Luciana (2004:34) argues "there are at least three areas that need to be worked out: a) micro teaching, b) teaching practicum, and seminar on teaching." Firstly, in terms of micro teaching as a prerequisite subject for teaching practicum at schools, the student teachers are required to have critical look at various teaching models and be creative with their own model (Luciana, 2004). Secondly, teaching practicum is defined as an essential experience for all pre-service teachers (PSTs) (Cochran-Smith 2004b in Bonavidi, 2013) since it gives the opportunity to the PSTs to work with students in real classroom settings (Bonavidi, 2013). The last but not least, seminar on teaching is one of the important aspects to be worked out. Through the seminar, "the student teachers can establish a small academic community to have a shared dialogue concerning teaching-related issues" (Luciana, 2004).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study applies a new kind of qualitative research namely narrative inquiry. Furthermore, this study focuses on the descriptive type of narrative investigation. The subjects of the study are seven Indonesian pre-service student teachers whose major is English Education joining SEA-Teacher Project Batch 4 and being placed to teach English in schools in Thailand. They are from Pakuan University (UNPAK), Lambung Mangkurat University (UNLAM), State University of Yogyakarta (UNY), PGRI University of Yogyakarta (UPY), and Mataram University (UNRAM).

In collecting the data, there are two significant techniques to be employed in order to get useful information for the success of the study: questionnaire and interview. As in this study there are two kinds of data, quantitative and qualitative data, the data analysis is divided into two ways. First, to analyze the quantitative data, mean score formula is used. Second, the qualitative data are analyzed by using narrative method as suggested by Riessman (1993, cited in Giovannoli, 2012). The procedures of the analysis are divided into three stages: a) telling, b) transcribing, and c) analyzing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

There were twelve difficulties in teaching English in Thailand faced by Indonesian student teachers of SEA-Teacher Project batch 4. In terms of planning, the difficulties are designing lesson plan, deciding teaching material, and designing appropriate classroom activities. In terms of implementation, the difficulties are explaining material, giving instruction and feedback, creating good rapport and encouraging class atmosphere, controlling the students, finding appropriate and interesting media, giving activities for students, and managing the time for conducting classroom activities. In terms of assessment, the difficulties are designing the

evaluation sheet or rubric for assessing students' learning and assessing students' skills.

There were two main factors that caused the difficulties in teaching English in Thailand: a) external factor and b) internal factor. The external factors include the curriculum, the students, the facilities, and the classroom environment. Meanwhile, the internal factors are the student teachers' characteristic as well as the student teachers' lack of preparation and readiness in teaching in Thailand.

There were some efforts or initiatives taken by the participants to solve their problems in teaching English in Thailand. Firstly, to deal with the difficulties faced by the participants in planning session, the student teachers consulted their mentor especially to ask for guidance to design the lesson plan. Some student teachers also asked their buddy (Thai apprenticed teacher) to help them to plan their teaching. Secondly, to deal with the difficulties in implementation session, the student teachers obviously did improvement of their performances of teaching by increasing knowledge and skill as well as looking for other references about how to conduct a better teaching. The last, in relation to assessment session, the student teachers found difficulty in designing the evaluation sheet or rubric for assessing students' learning. Thus, the effort to solve the problem was adopting rubric from internet or other teachers' lesson plan for assessing their students learning.

Discussion

Conducting teaching practice is not easy. Many difficulties may occur during the planning, implementation and assessment sessions.

a. Planning session

Designing lesson plan is very crucial before conducting the teaching as "it reflects technical activities the pre-service student teachers should be doing in the classroom" (Bonavidi, 2013). However, designing the lesson plan including deciding the material, designing appropriate classroom activities, and finding appropriate and interesting media for teaching is quite challenging for student teachers from Indonesia

who did internship in Thailand. One of the factors was because the fact that having teaching oversea requires Indonesian student teachers to learn curriculum which is totally different from their home country's curriculum. Noom-Ura (2013) similarly revealed that one of the problems perceived by the teachers in teaching English in Thailand was related to curricula. It was stated that "one of the problematic areas was that teachers did not understand the details of the curricula" (Noom-Ura, 2013: 143). This indicates that having acquaintance and knowledge about curriculum and its implementation in teaching is important as the guidance to design the lesson plan.

Another factor that also contributed to the difficulties in planning session was that the lack of understanding of the students' need. It is stated that "PSTs (pre-service student teachers) should be aware of, and seek ways to understand, their students' different backgrounds to plan their instruction" (Bonavidi, 2013:12-13). Therefore, it is necessary to know the students as well as the classroom condition teacher in order to be easy to plan and conduct teaching maximally.

b. Implementation session

Implementing the teaching is more difficult than planning the teaching as in this stage teachers must be able to carry out the teaching successfully. Most difficulties such as explaining the material, giving feedback and instruction to the students, controlling the students and creating good rapport and encouraging class atmosphere and giving activities for students caused by the students factor which includes students' lack of mastering English, students' personality, students' lack of understanding and readiness of learning.

The finding is in line with Bancha's finding (2010). The most problematic factor causing the difficulty in teaching English was that the students were low-proficient in English. Bancha (2010: 60) stated that "students' low proficiency causes unsuccessful classroom activities." The finding from Noom-Ura's study (2013) also supported the findings of the current study. Noom-Ura (2013: 143) stated that "students were the problematic factor in the success of the teaching."

The difficulties found in the implementation session also caused by learning environment which includes overloaded class and time limitation of teaching. Additionally, the internal factors including the student teachers' lack of readiness in teaching and the characteristic of the student teachers such as having small voice also contribute to the difficulties.

This finding indicates that teachers should be aware of their weaknesses and try to look for initiative to deal with it. Teachers should have the ability to act as professional in their field and be aware of possible problem that may occur during the teaching and learning process. This refers to professional competence (Bacani, 2010).

c. Assessment session

In assessment session, there are two kinds of problem that encountered by the student teachers while doing the teaching practice in Thailand. The problems include difficulty in designing the evaluation sheet or rubric for assessing students' learning (knowledge and skills) and assessing the students' skill. The difficulties were caused by the student teachers' lack of experience in teaching.

This finding is quite the same as that stated in Noom-Ura's study (2013). Noom-Ura (2013 p.143) found that "teachers had a moderate level of problem about assessment especially in assessment of students' skills". However, the difference is that in the current study there is another difficulty which is related to the assessment session faced by the participant in teaching English in Thailand that difficulty is designing rubric for assessment.

In sum, there are many difficulties faced by the student teachers while doing internship in Thailand. Most difficulties happened in implementation session. To solve the problems in teaching English in Thailand, the student teachers constantly consult their school mentor to ask for advice and suggestions. Another way is sharing their experience to other student teachers who did teaching practice in the same school in order to find solution for their problems. They also tried to learn from their

previous experience about what should and should not be done while teaching English in Thailand.

The initiatives taken by the student teachers were effective to solve their problems in teaching English in Thailand.

> According to Hedgcock (2002:301 in Bonavidi:2), being 'grammatically, sociolinguistically, discursively and strategically' proficient in using English language, and having knowledge about language learners, language learning and classroom instructions are characteristics of good language teachers.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

This study concluded that student teachers faced a numbers of difficulties while teaching English in Thailand. The factors causing the difficulties came from external factor and internal factor. The external factors include the curriculum, the students, the facilities, and the classroom environment. Meanwhile, the internal factors are the student teachers' characteristic as well as the student teachers' lack of preparation and readiness in teaching in Thailand. To solve the problems in teaching English in Thailand, some efforts were taken that are consulting the school mentor, sharing with other student teachers, and doing self-reflection to do a better teaching.

Suggestion

Some suggestions are provided in this study as follow.

a) Student teachers should be well prepared before teaching oversea. The preparation may include expanding knowledge and skills of teaching, learning the curriculum of the country as well as learning the culture and language of the country.

b) For institutions including universities and other institutions of education, it is suggested to: a) provide more support such as intensive orientation or training

and b) provide motivating leadership and a supportive surrounding for student teachers.

c) For the further study, it is suggested that the research is taken in specific level of education such as elementary school or lower secondary school or others in order to get more specific findings about difficulty in teaching English in Thailand. Moreover, the further study may focus on specific source of problem in teaching English oversea. For instance, it is better to investigate in detail the difference between the curriculums used by different universities in order to see its contribution to the difficulties in teaching English.

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