An Exploration of the Teaching Culture of English in Elementary Schools: A Case Study at SD 13/I Muara Bulian

Siti Munawaro¹, Hilda Rahman²*, Hana Dwi Imaroh³, Uci Syafitri⁴, Rizky Ardiansyah⁵

Universitas Islam Batang Hari
(Correspondence Email : hildarhn@gmail.com)

Abstract
Integrating English cultural elements at an early stage is recognized as an effective strategy to improve students' language skills and encourage a more positive outlook toward learning foreign languages. This research investigates how English culture is applied at SDN 13/01 Muara Bulian, focusing on instructional approaches, student engagement, and the challenges experienced by educators. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, data were gathered through direct interviews with the English teacher. Findings reveal that the school fosters a dynamic learning atmosphere through diverse techniques, including storytelling, thematic activities, and the use of educational media. Teachers modify their strategies in response to classroom dynamics and students' learning capacities. Challenges such as limited teaching resources and students' varying proficiency levels were also noted. The study concludes that incorporating English culture in elementary education can play a significant role in developing students' cross-cultural communication abilities.
Keywords: English culture, primary education, English language teaching, storytelling, cultural language learning.

INTRODUCTION

English is recognized as a universal language, as it is widely used in many countries as the primary means of communication. Moreover, English is considered one of the most important international languages to learn and master. In several countries, particularly those that were once British colonies, English serves as a second language that must be learned alongside their national language. In Indonesia, although classified as a foreign language, English holds a significant role in daily life, especially within the education sector. The importance of English proficiency is reflected in government policies that have introduced English instruction early in the education system, particularly at the elementary school (SD) and Islamic elementary school (MI) levels. This began with the implementation of the 1994 Basic Education Curriculum, in which English was included as a local content subject taught from the fourth grade of SD/MI. Although the 2013 Curriculum currently applied at the elementary level does not mandate English as a compulsory subject, schools are still allowed to offer English instruction through extracurricular programs. Thus, English remains an essential component of basic education. This situation challenges teachers to continuously innovate in developing varied teaching techniques to attract students' interest in learning. Active student participation in the learning process largely depends on the creativity of teachers in designing teaching methods and media that align with the characteristics of their learners.

English language instruction at the elementary school level should be designed to be enjoyable and appropriate to the developmental stage of the students' age. When students are actively engaged in the learning process, they are more likely to understand and retain the material being taught. Teachers can encourage student participation through activities such as simple role-playing, speaking in English, or creating small projects using the English language. Vocabulary and sentence structures should be introduced within contexts that are relevant to the students' daily lives, such as school, home, or their surrounding community. A creative and appropriate approach can turn English learning into a fun and meaningful experience for young learners. At this stage, English education plays a crucial role in establishing a strong foundation for students' language skills, which will continue to develop over time. Proficiency in English can open up better career opportunities and enhance human resource quality, particularly in fostering intercultural communication. Therefore, English learning is a vital component of today's modern education system. However, students face various challenges in learning English, depending on their background, learning environment, and the teaching approaches used. Developing English language skills requires consistent practice along with interactive teaching methods. These methods may include role-playing, group discussions, and real-life simulations, all of which support students in building their English proficiency more effectively.

Instructional media serves as a means of delivering information that stimulates the learning process, whether from teacher to student or vice versa. Through the use of instructional media, students can access various sources of information, visualize the concepts being taught, and engage with the learning material in a more interactive and dynamic manner. The integration of media in English language learning at the elementary level can enrich students' learning experiences, enhance their engagement, and strengthen their understanding of the language in an enjoyable and effective way. In the development of English teaching methods, the teacher's role is crucial. To ensure that the learning process runs effectively and achieves its intended outcomes, teachers must provide engaging and appropriate instructional media. The right media can help students grasp the material more easily and foster interest and motivation in learning English.

Based on the aforementioned background, this study aims to examine in depth the teaching culture of English at the elementary school level by identifying common issues encountered in the learning process. The main areas of focus include: (a) the teaching methods implemented, (b) the selection of appropriate methods according to students' conditions, (c) the adaptation of methods to student characteristics, and (d) the evaluation of both teaching methods and learning media.

The implementation of English language instruction does not always run smoothly in every educational institution. Various factors, such as the teaching approach and the diverse characteristics of students within a classroom, can influence the effectiveness of the learning process. Therefore, this study is conducted to explore the culture of English language learning at SDN 13/I Muara Bulian, with the aim of contributing to the improvement of English education quality at the elementary level.

This research focuses on analyzing the teaching methods used, assessing their effectiveness in the classroom context, and exploring the evaluation processes carried out by teachers, as well as student engagement in English learning. By gaining a deeper understanding of the actual conditions and practices in the field, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of English language teaching practices at SDN 13/I Muara Bulian.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using purposive sampling as the strategy for selecting participants. This method was chosen because it is considered effective in providing an in-depth and comprehensive description of English teaching culture at the elementary school level. The approach is deemed appropriate as it allows the researcher to explore various aspects of the teaching and learning process, including the classroom environment and learning dynamics.

Rather than focusing solely on the outcomes of English language instruction, this study also emphasizes the ongoing process, including teachers' perceptions and the challenges they encounter during instructional activities. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with English teachers who are directly involved in the teaching process. The interviews were semi-structured, using a set of guiding questions while remaining open to natural conversational flow, thereby allowing for the emergence of additional information beyond the predefined topics.

Teachers were given the opportunity to share their teaching experiences in narrative form regarding English instruction in the classroom. All interviews were carefully recorded and transcribed for further analysis. In addition to interviews, the researcher also conducted documentation and literature review to reinforce the field findings. The literature was drawn from scholarly journals and research articles accessed through platforms such as Google Scholar, selected based on recency, topical relevance, and source credibility.

Overall, the research methodology was designed to capture the complexity of implementing English language teaching practices—not only from a technical perspective but also from the point of view of teachers as key agents in the classroom. Through a thorough qualitative approach, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the significance of integrating cultural elements in English language teaching at the elementary level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings obtained from interviews conducted with teachers at SD Negeri 13/1 Muara Bulian, as well as from a literature review of various relevant scholarly journals and research articles. The findings are presented using a descriptive qualitative approach and are organized based on the main themes identified

during the data analysis process. Each finding is systematically explained to provide an in-depth understanding of the research focus.

The findings of this study are presented in a narrative form that directly reflects the experiences and perspectives of the teachers, and are analyzed in relation to relevant theoretical frameworks from supporting literature. The discussion is carried out in a critical and analytical manner to highlight the alignment, discrepancies, and contributions of the field findings to academic discourse and curriculum policy implementation. Through this approach, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the practices and culture of English language learning at the elementary school level.

a). The teaching methods implemented.

Based on the interview results, Mr. Said implements various instructional strategies in the classroom, including the lecture method and storytelling. This variety of approaches reflects his adaptive ability in delivering learning material to make it more understandable and accessible for students.

The storytelling method is an effective instructional approach for enhancing listening skills, particularly when supported by visual media such as cartoon puppets. This method integrates the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Essentially, storytelling is an interactive learning model that emphasizes active student participation throughout the learning process. During these activities, students are encouraged to develop their thinking and imagination. Their ideas and creative expressions are appreciated, which fosters intrinsic motivation to continue learning. Storytelling has proven to be an effective method for developing children's language abilities, especially in listening and speaking. In addition to improving language competence, the use of storytelling also plays a role in instilling moral values in children. This approach has long been utilized by teachers to enhance students' language skills, particularly in terms of listening and oral communication, at the elementary education level.

Mr. Said stated that ''the use of the storytelling method can enhance the effectiveness of the learning process, as it allows teachers to tailor instructional content to the characteristics and needs of the students''. This interactive and contextual approach not only makes the learning process more engaging but also facilitates students' comprehension and retention of the material presented.

b). The selection of appropriate methods according to students' conditions.

In determining the appropriate teaching method, Mr. Said first evaluates the classroom context targeted for instruction. He takes into account the grade level—especially when teaching lower elementary students—and assesses the students' initial abilities through the administration of a preliminary test or pretest.

A pretest is an evaluation conducted prior to the commencement of instruction, aimed at identifying the extent of students' prior knowledge of the material to be taught. In this context, the pretest functions as a tool to assess the effectiveness of instruction and measure students' readiness to engage with new content. Teachers typically administer

pretests routinely at the beginning of each new learning topic to gain an initial understanding of students' comprehension levels.

Although brief, this evaluation is strategic in nature, as its results allow teachers to identify specific difficulties students may face in understanding certain concepts. Consequently, teachers can begin the learning process from students' existing knowledge and build upon it by linking it to new concepts. This approach supports the development of a logical and systematic learning sequence—starting with the reinforcement of prior knowledge, introducing new material, and progressing toward the mastery of new concepts. In practice, the pretest plays a vital role in instructional planning. It enables teachers to design more targeted teaching strategies. When the pretest results show that most students already possess a strong foundational understanding, the learning process is likely to be more effective. Conversely, if the results are poor, it serves as an indicator that the teacher must implement more fundamental and intensive instructional approaches. Another key function of the pretest is to help teachers identify which learning objectives have or have not been achieved by the students. This allows for a more accurate determination of where to begin instruction. Generally, the content of a pretest emphasizes core material that students are expected to have already mastered prior to the introduction of new lessons.

"I usually conduct a pretest to identify students' initial level of understanding before delivering the core material, which allows me to adapt my teaching methods to the individual needs of each student. By mapping students' learning readiness, I am able to design differentiated instructional strategies based on their specific conditions, enabling the learning process to be more effective, targeted, and responsive to the diverse range of abilities in the classroom." Stated Mr. Said.

c). The adaptation of methods to student characteristics.

Audio-visual media serve as an essential tool in the learning process, as they effectively combine visual and auditory elements to stimulate various cognitive aspects of students. These forms of media include images, videos, animations, and sound, all of which help students grasp abstract concepts in a more concrete and engaging manner. The diversity of these media supports the creation of dynamic learning experiences, enhances memory retention, and boosts students' motivation and engagement.

Visual media is a means of delivering messages or information in a technical and creative manner, presented through images, graphics, and well-organized layouts, so that the intended message and ideas can be effectively conveyed to the audience. In the context of education, the use of visual media can make the learning process more engaging, efficient, and effective. The use of visual media is especially relevant in teaching young children, particularly elementary school students, as they are still in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development. Therefore, anything conveyed by the teacher needs to be validated by students through direct visual experience. Visual media serves as a learning resource that presents educational content in an attractive format—combining images, text, animation, and movement—tailored to the developmental level of the learners. Thus, visual media holds significant potential to capture students' attention, enhance their engagement in learning, and create an enjoyable and stimulating classroom experience.

The statement aligns with the perspective of a teacher, Mr. Said, who stated: "The characteristics of students in the classroom vary—some are visual learners, others are audiovisual. So, I adjust accordingly. I observe which type is more dominant because we don't focus on just one student. If the majority are visual learners, then we present visual media. The rest can be adjusted as needed."

d). the evaluation of both teaching methods and learning media.

Evaluation in education holds a role that is equally crucial as the learning process itself. When learning is understood as a process of behavioral change in students, evaluation serves as an essential tool to assess the extent to which such changes have occurred. Evaluation is a systematic process that involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to determine the level of achievement of learning objectives by students. A well-designed evaluation system provides educators with a clear picture of the quality of the learning process. This information can then be used to plan more effective and targeted instructional strategies. On the other hand, consistent and objective evaluation can also serve as a source of motivation for students, encouraging them to continuously improve their skills and learning outcomes.

In the learning evaluation process, Mr. Said implements a formative approach regularly through weekly quizzes. He explains that after delivering the material, each subsequent session begins with a short quiz consisting of five questions. The purpose of this quiz is to assess how well students remember the previous lesson and to serve as an indicator of the effectiveness of the teaching methods employed.

The quizzes are administered before the lesson starts, especially since English classes are only held once a week. This approach allows the teacher to measure students' retention of the material and evaluate the success of the learning methods used, such as the integration of visual or audiovisual media.

In addition, Mr. Said also conducts reflective evaluations through direct questioning. He asks the students things like, "Do you still remember what we learned last week?" or "Do you remember the video I showed last week?" Based on the students' responses, the teacher can determine whether the teaching methods applied are effective in helping them understand and retain the material. If the majority of students are able to recall the lesson content or media used, the method is considered successful and can be continued in the following sessions.

In conclusion, structured and continuous evaluation, as implemented by Mr. Said, not only serves to assess students' understanding but also acts as a reflection tool for teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching strategies. Therefore, evaluation plays a vital role in creating a more adaptive, meaningful, and quality-oriented learning process.

In the English learning process at SD Negeri 13/1 Muara Bulian, Mr. Said implements a more contextual and communicative approach, actively utilizing visual and audiovisual media. The teaching culture he adopts includes various methods such as storytelling, weekly quizzes, and instructional strategies tailored to the learning styles and characteristics of the students. This strategy reflects a learning orientation that encourages

active student engagement, fosters creativity, and strengthens speaking and listening skills directly.

On the other hand, Indonesian language instruction is generally still dominated by a conventional, text-centered approach. Teachers tend to rely on lectures, reading from textbooks, copying notes from the board, and assigning tasks such as summaries or written exercises. The primary focus is on developing reading and writing skills, while oral skills like speaking and listening often receive less attention. Furthermore, the evaluation methods used are mostly summative in nature, such as written tests or assignments at the end of a lesson.

The use of supporting media in Indonesian language learning is also still limited. Teachers emphasize grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph writing, using a relatively uniform approach that lacks adaptation to students' diverse characteristics.

This comparison shows that English language teaching in elementary schools tends to be more modern and interactive, emphasizing practical use of the language. In contrast, Indonesian language instruction still needs improvement in terms of adopting more contextual, varied, and adaptive approaches, so that students not only understand the structure of the language but are also able to use it actively and creatively in their daily lives.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study, drawn from teacher interviews and an in-depth review of relevant literature, indicate that English language learning at SD Negeri 13/1 Muara Bulian is characterized by a student-centered, contextual, and communicative approach. The teacher, Mr. Said, utilizes diverse instructional methods such as storytelling, the use of visual and audiovisual media, formative evaluations through weekly quizzes, and the adaptation of teaching strategies based on students' individual characteristics and prior knowledge. These strategies promote active student engagement, enhance motivation, and improve language retention, particularly in listening and speaking skills.

Evaluation plays a key role not only in measuring student outcomes but also in enabling the teacher to reflect on and improve instructional effectiveness. The formative and reflective evaluation processes help guide instructional planning and ensure that learning is meaningful and tailored to the students' needs.

In contrast, the teaching of the Indonesian language tends to rely on traditional, text-based methods with a predominant focus on reading and writing. Instruction is often uniform and lacks the incorporation of dynamic media or differentiated strategies that accommodate varying learning styles. Evaluation practices are generally summative and conducted at the end of lessons, limiting opportunities for timely instructional adjustments.

The comparison reveals that English instruction at the elementary level has adopted more interactive and modern approaches that prioritize practical language use. Meanwhile, Indonesian language instruction requires further development in terms of method variety, media integration, and responsive evaluation practices. This highlights the need for innovation in Indonesian language teaching to foster more active, engaging,

and learner-oriented experiences that not only develop linguistic structure but also promote communicative competence in everyday contexts.

REFERENCES

Arsyad, A. (2017). Media pembelajaran. Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada.

Byslina, M. (2016). Pentingnya pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah. Jurnal Warta, 5(1), 1–2.

Magdalena, I., Susanti, R., & Hidayat, A. (2020). Pentingnya evaluasi dalam pembelajaran dan akibat memanipulasinya. Jurnal Pendidikan dan Sains, 2(2).

Rohayati, P. (2023). Penerapan metode storytelling dalam meningkatkan kemampuan menyimak di kelas II sekolah dasar. Journal of Innovation in Primary Education, 2(1), 2.

Rosidah, A. (2021). Penerapan pembelajaran visual untuk meningkatkan pemahaman konsep siswa pada mata pelajaran IPS. Jurnal Cakrawala Pendas, 2(2), 3–4.

Siregar, N. A., Lubis, M. A., & Siregar, A. R. (2023). Hubungan antara pretest dan posttest dengan hasil belajar siswa kelas VII B di MTS Alwashliyah Pantai Cermin. Edunomika, 7(1).

Yuliasari, U., Rachmawati, F., & Rofi'ah, N. (n.d.). Implementasi metode pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di SDN Mondokan Tuban: Suatu analisis efektivitas dan tantangan. Jurnal Edukasi Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, 12(6), 2.