

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENGLISH WEEK IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

Nowadays, English is used in almost all aspects of life. This concerns XZ school, a private school in Surabaya, Indonesia, to implement English Week program in order to provide more English exposure for the students. This descriptive-qualitative study, therefore, would like to find out the teachers' perception on the effectiveness of the implementation of English Week in the academic year of 2017/2018 in enhancing their students' efforts in communicating in English. In order to answer the major research question "What is the teachers' perception on the Implementation of English Week Program in XZ Primary School in the academic year of 2017/2018?", the writer interviewed twelve teachers consisting of 6 homeroom leaders and 6 English teachers. The result of the interview analysis indicates that teachers, both homeroom leaders and English teachers, have positive responses towards the Implementation of English Week Program in XZ Primary School in the academic year of 2017/2018. The research findings are elaborated as follows: (1) This is an excellent program which helps motivate students to communicate in English; (2) This program indirectly urges the teachers, both English and non-English speakers, to put some efforts to speak English with their colleagues and students; (3) Conducted consistently and regularly, this program makes the students willingly practice using English; (4) the program in general is relevant and practical for the students; and (5) this program helps students to develop their fluency and confidence in using English in various forms of communication.

Keywords : Language Policy, Input, Output Hypothesis

INTRODUCTION

English, being one of the essential international languages, has been used in almost all aspects: education, commerce, entertainment, information technology, science, health, and medicine. The trend shows that English nowadays, to some extent, is becoming a second language in big cities in Indonesia; it, therefore, has a more critical role in Indonesia. With this emerging phenomenon, some Indonesian private schools try their best to accommodate their

students' needs in English with various activities – extracurricular activities, English-related subjects, and English language policy.

In XZ Primary School, an established multilingual private primary school in Surabaya, English is one of the languages emphasized. As a result, the frequency of communicating in English is part of the teachers' concern in this school. The school endeavors to include English in the school's culture by conducting a program

called English Week. English Week is a two-week program which requires students to communicate in English outside their classes. Requiring students to use English at school during the English Week program is expected to make students accustomed to speaking English to their peers and teachers. This program is conducted every month. There are two objectives of the English Week program: (1) to encourage students to use English outside the classroom, and (2) to provide opportunities for the students to apply what they have learned in their English classes. The teachers will give stickers to the students who actively communicate in English all the time. These stickers can be exchanged with gifts displayed on the cupboard placed in a spot where students often pass by. The gifts, which are popular items among students such as cute stationery, UNO, and board games, attract students to obtain more stickers. The students are quite motivated to get more stickers since the number of stickers obtained determines the quantity and quality of the gifts.

Interested in knowing the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy of English Week, the writer conducted the present study to find out the XZ teachers' perceptions on the implementation of the policy of English Week at XZ School in the academic year of 2017/2018. This study, therefore, would like to find out the teachers' perception on the effectiveness of the implementation of English Week in the academic year 2017/2018 in enhancing their students' efforts in communicating in English. Further, this study aims at answering the research question: "What is the teachers' perception on the Implementation of English

Week Program in XZ Primary School in the academic year of 2017/2018?"

The primary question is then broken down into four minor questions as follows:

1. What is the teachers' opinion on the students' use of English to communicate outside the class during English Week?
2. What is the teachers' opinion on the students' use of English to communicate outside the class daily after the English Week Program?
3. What is the English teachers' opinion on their students' efforts to communicate in English?
4. What needs to be improved in the English Week Program in the next academic year?

Input and Output Hypothesis

People convey meaning and obtain information through interaction. Krashen, as cited by VanPatten & William (2015), believes that comprehensible input is input that contains language slightly beyond the current level of a learner's internalized language. Further, input could refer to the language exposure that a learner has (Gass & Mackey, 2014). In the middle of an interaction, learners might receive information about the correctness and incorrectness of their utterances, which is very important in learning a language (Gass & Mackey, 2014). Learners improve and progress along with the 'natural order' when they receive second language input.

Next, the process of giving information is called output. Swain (1995), in her Output Hypothesis theory, claims that the act of producing language (speaking or writing) constitutes, under certain circumstances, part

of the process of second language learning. Swain (in Gass & Mackey, 2014) further claims that language production forces learners to move from comprehension (semantic use of language) to syntactic use of language.

Moreover, comprehensible input and comprehensible output help a language learner to acquire the language better. Teopilus (2010) argues that without comprehensible output, the internalized input or intake, that has become the acquired knowledge, will be dormant knowledge. Dormant knowledge will slowly fade out if it is not used, and finally, it will become dead knowledge, and the learner cannot use it or retrieve it anymore. Teopilus (2010) further states that it is the duties of teachers to promote comprehensible input by providing their learners with much exposure to the target language and opportunities for them to use the internalized input to experiment with the target language to foster comprehensible output.

Input and Output hypothesis is relevant to this study since one of the aims of the English Week program is to apply what the students have learned in their English classes outside the classroom. Students are expected to keep using English all the time.

Language Policy

English Week program is one of the examples of a language policy established in XZ school. Actually, domains of language planning or language policy are needed in every aspect in our lives, including in the smallest part of a community which is a nuclear family. Wei (2014: 193) clearly states that “in a nuclear family with different

language backgrounds of the father and the mother, choosing a language or perhaps languages which are spoken daily is highly needed, especially for showing the identity of the family”. It is even more complicated when it comes to extended families (Wei, 2014).

Wei (2014: 194) also claims that “the school that the children attend also has significant influence on the children’s language preference and language practice as well as the parents’ language use. In XZ school which emphasizes on three main languages, English, Chinese and Indonesian, acquisition planning is highly needed. Acquisition planning is a language learning process especially in education which a national, state or local institution aims to influence (Wei, 2014).

Language planning and language policy regulate “not only which language is permitted in which domain but also with how a specific language should be used (Wei, 2014)”. The English Week program, one language policy established in XZ School, gives the students a lot of opportunity to obtain comprehensible input and to produce comprehensible output.

RESEARCH METHOD

This is a descriptive-qualitative study seeking for teachers’ perception towards the implementation of the English Week program. The participants of the study were 12 teachers, comprising 6 homeroom leaders and 6 English teachers in XZ school in Surabaya. Homeroom leaders were chosen as the representatives of the homerooms from each level.

The study used a semi-structured interview. In this semi-structured interview, the interviewer set five open-ended questions with follow-up questions to get further response from the interviewees. The interviewer recorded the interview with a voice recorder.

The research data, in the form of interview transcripts, were then analyzed in the following steps: summarizing the interview result and categorizing them. The results of the analysis were used to answer the research questions and formulate the conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

With regard to the six open-ended interview questions, the findings are elaborated in these five main points: (1) Students' Efforts to use English outside the Classroom during English Week Program, (2) Students' Efforts to Use English outside the English Week Program, (3) The Effect of English Week towards Students' Willingness to Communicate in English, (4) Improvements in the English Week Program, and (5) The General Impression of the English Week Program.

(1) Students' Efforts to Use English outside the Classroom during English Week Program

This study discovered that students mostly used English during their casual conversations at school during the English week Program. Grade 1 to Grade 5 homeroom leaders admitted that their students kept communicating in English outside the classroom during the English week program. Grade 1 homeroom leader diligently implemented the reward system in her class; her students were fully aware of

the rewards, and they kept speaking in English to get the rewards. On the contrary, Grade 6 homeroom leader still noticed that some students needed to be reminded to speak English. The students communicated in English only when their teachers were around.

Interestingly, all of the English teachers admitted that most of their students communicated in English during the English week. However, Grade 1 English teacher acknowledged the fact that weak students, the ones who were not really good in English, preferred to speak Indonesian or Chinese. On the other hand, Grade 2, 4 and 6 English teachers realized that rewards played the most prominent role in fostering the habit of speaking English. However, Grade 2 English teacher pointed out that her students began to misuse this policy by speaking English only when she was nearby. Grade 4 English teacher realized that her students were struggling at first, but it turned to be fruitful in the second semester since most of her students kept speaking in English during the English week. Compared to all of the responses above, Grade 5 English teacher realized that students got used to speaking in English.

(2) Students' Efforts to Use English outside the English Week Program

All homeroom leaders, except Grade 6 homeroom leader, admitted that English was used more by the students. Similarly, all English teachers agreed that most of their students spoke English outside the English week.

(3) The Effect of English Week towards Students' Willingness to Communicate in English

Grade 1 to 4 homeroom leaders believed that English Week Program encouraged their students to communicate in English. The weak students put a lot of efforts in speaking English while the rest did not since they were accustomed to speaking English at home.

The English teachers had diverse opinions towards the effectiveness of the program. Grade 1 English teacher concerned about students' extrinsic motivation in speaking English. She hoped that students would gradually be intrinsically motivated to speak English. Grade 2 English teacher did not think the English Week program encouraged all of her students. Based on her daily observation, she noticed that only some students were motivated in speaking English and the rest were not. She realized that the weak students needed more encouragement to speak English. Grade 3 English teacher spotted her students' less efforts in communicating in English. She frequently figured out that students simply translated their ideas from Indonesian into English, often resulting strange phrases or sentences in English. Thus, she concluded that students did not focus on their accuracy in communicating in English.

Grade 4 English teacher described her students' efforts in communicating in English using code mixing. Grade 5 and 6 English teachers asserted that there were other factors beside the English Week program which made the students communicate in English. Grade 5 English teacher realized that her students felt comfortable in using English although they were quite interested to

compete in collecting the stickers. On the other hand, Grade 6 English teacher highly emphasized his encouragement to his students to keep speaking English. Nevertheless, he also noted that some students were still speaking in Indonesian.

(4) Improvements in the English Week Program

Grade 1 homeroom leader thought that it would be better to find other activities in the English week to encourage weak students to put their efforts in communicating in English, such as reading a story book and then asking the student to retell the story in front of the class. Grade 5 homeroom leader, having the same point of view as Grade 1 homeroom leader, thought that reading activities could be inserted during the English lesson to increase their students' reading skill.

Unlike Grade 1 and 5 homeroom leaders, Grade 2 homeroom leader suggested giving more attractive prizes so that students would be more motivated. On the other hand, Grade 3, 4 and 6 homeroom leaders emphasized the importance of teachers' monitoring the students' efforts.

The English teachers had various opinions to improve the English week program. Grade 1 English teacher suggested using better monitoring system, and using the time to announce the best English speakers.

Grade 3 English teacher opined that the English week regulations need to be firmly formulated. Besides, she also proposed that the monitoring system should be well-regulated.

(5) *The General Impression of the English Week Program*

Grade 1 to 4 homeroom leaders believed that this program was already good; nevertheless, there were some additional notes towards the implementation of this program. Grade 1 homeroom leader highlighted on the importance of teachers' encouragement to their students in speaking English.

Both grade 3 and 4 homeroom leaders admitted that this program indirectly urged the teachers, both English and non-English speakers, to put some efforts to speak English with their colleagues and students. However, grade 4 homeroom leader was concerned with the policy of giving stickers. She suggested that this policy be well-formulated so that there would not be any misuse of this policy.

Grade 5 and 6 homeroom leaders were not satisfied with this program. Grade 5 homeroom leader was concerned more with the classroom environment which could give a big influence towards the students' language use. She added that the more their environment forced them to speak English, the more it influenced the students' English use. On the other hand, Grade 6 homeroom leader believed that this program was successfully implemented in the lower levels, but she admitted it did not work well in the upper levels since the students did not get any stickers due to their lack of using English. She suggested these three points to be added in this program:

- a. Monitoring is the key to trigger them use English.
- b. Encouragement is more important than rewards.

- c. Teachers should make learning more enjoyable and more fun for the students.

Generally, all English teachers agreed that English Week was a good program which would be better with some improvements.

Grade 1 English teacher realized that role-modeling was important since children would copy and imitate what they saw. Besides, she saw the importance of working harder to monitor the students such as five minutes walking around to check the students' speaking English so that students would feel that they were always monitored.

Grade 2 English teacher suggested changing the rewards since they were not really attractive for upper levels.

Grade 3 English teacher uttered her satisfaction towards this program. She believed that this program brought excitement towards students.

Grade 4 English teacher realized there were some things needed to be improved and added in this program so that it would work better than before. Meanwhile, grade 5 and 6 English teacher noted some superiorities of this program.

Discussion

English Week can encourage students to use English outside the classroom, and at the same time can give them lots of opportunities to put into practice what they have learned. As a result, the students can learn from one another about the language outside the class through informal conversations. By regularly doing this, the students' English proficiency will be improving.

In the findings, it is true that some teachers asserted that their students did not use grammatically correct English in their informal communication, and they just used simple English neglecting the grammars. They were frequently found to speak English with countless grammatical mistakes. In language learning, making mistakes or errors is part of the learning process. Students, however, will learn from one another or from the feedback received when they interact with adults such as their seniors or their teachers; this process of receiving feedback will be part of the input to modify their English to be better, and produce better English as their output.

CONCLUSION

In general, the result of the data analysis shows that teachers, both homeroom leaders and English teachers, have positive responses towards the implementation of the English Week Program in XZ Primary School in the academic year of 2017/2018. The answer to the major question is elaborated as follows:

- a. This is a good program which helps students to be motivated in using English as their means of communication.
- b. This program indirectly urges the teachers, both English and non-English speakers, to put some efforts on speaking English with their colleagues and students.
- c. This program is conducted consistently and regularly, so it makes the students practice the language.
- d. The program in general is relevant and practical for the students.
- e. This program helps students to develop their fluency and confidence in using English in various forms of communication.

This study was conducted at the time when students no longer came to school and waited for the time to get their report card; as a result, the writer could not observe and interview the students. Thus, this study focused on only one single point of view, that is the teachers' point of view. This study would be better if students' perception towards the implementation of the English Week was also recorded.

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