PROBLEMS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract
Teaching and learning in schools are complicated processes that are influenced by many factors under which they occur. With changing educational trends the challenges continuously become harder and harder. Especially, in current situations, teachers learning autonomy becomes a new challenge for teachers. Students' motivation is influenced by external factors which are more interesting than learning in the classroom. This article explores the problems faced by teachers in conducting instructions in English lessons. The data were based on the report made by the teachers' profession program at Sanata Dharma University. 34 teachers participated in the presentation and reported their problems when they teach English in their classrooms. Three problems were reported as the major findings. They are students' motivation, teachers' difficulties in implementing innovative strategies, and students' difficulties in dealing with higher thinking skills. Other problems were identified by some teachers including students' interest in writing and reading. The problems become challenges for teachers to find some solutions to improve their English instruction in their classrooms.

Keywords: curriculum, innovation, motivation, technology

Introduction

Teachers face many classroom challenges in their daily professional activities. They should have the courage to respond to the difficulties in dealing with classroom situations. As an educator, a teacher needs to deal with counselling and helps the student to solve problems (Natriello, 1984). In addition, teachers need to have exceptional organizational skills. They should have the skills to communicate with adults and children. In addition, they should possess competence in teaching strategies. Other challenges include the adaptation of new educational policies and classroom arrangements for effective learning. They also have to deal with students with learning difficulties and students' misbehaviour. In addition, they also have to work hard to handle administrative work. Furthermore, teachers have to deal with communicating with parents for the best education for the children. Additional challenges include the demand to integrate technology in teaching and the requirement to accommodate higher thinking skills for their students.

In education, curriculum change is normal. The world is constantly changing and students need to be able to change with it. Modal & Das (2021) mention that

knowledge is always expanding and society is continuously developing at the same time with the advancement of science and technology. In other words, a delay in curriculum change can lead to students lacking the competencies needed for the future. With the new development of the world, students are required to be able to learn independently, deal with technology, and implement higher-order of thinking skills. Consequently, teachers should be prepared to adapt to the curriculum change to facilitate excellent student learning.

One of the big challenges in classroom teaching is students' engagement in learning. Dewey (1913) defines "engagement" as interest in doing something. In addition, Meece and Blumfield (1998) define it as effort in doing something. Meanwhile, Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) mention that "engagement" is related to motivation and Berliner (1990) concludes that "engagement" is related to time on task. In addition, Skinner and Belmont (1993) argue that when pupils are engaged, they will show continuous involvement physically and emotionally in learning activities. Engagement is more than involvement or participation. It requires students to make meaning of activities and feel happy in doing the activities (Quaye, 2009). Because engagement involves feelings it is often difficult to realize students' engagement in the classroom. Students are unmotivated in participating in learning, simply too willing to accept information as given, rather than be interested in thoughtful inquiry and active participation. After a long time of online learning in pandemic situations, students are familiar with learning in front of computers or cellphones with minimum forms of interaction. When they go back to school, their motivation decreases. Students become afraid to speak and communicate with other students. They become more withdrawn and not responding to questions during classroom discussions. Consequently, teachers must use all efforts to motivate students to participate in learning in the classroom. Teachers should implement teaching strategies which are engaging and interesting for students.

Teachers are also challenged by the demand to accomplish a high stake of learning outcome expectations. The teaching objective should include the application of higher-order thinking skills. Brookhart (2010) argues that higher-order thinking skills constitute analysis, evaluation, and creation which are parts of cognitive processes. These refer to the three upper levels of Bloom's taxonomies. Students apply higher order of thinking skills when they process information actively by paying attention to pertinent new information. Then, learners mix the new information with previous information that they already had. The students are expected to think critically by applying reflective evaluation and creating a critical idea. Or, students are expected to be able to carry out problem solutions by solving problems creatively and effectively. Furthermore, students are also expected to use technology in learning. Technology integration in the 21st century has moved through innovations and transformed the world that has changed the way people think, work and live (Grabe, 2007). Therefore, schools which are supposed to prepare students to live in "a knowledge society" need to integrate technology into their teaching and learning process (Ghavifekr, Afshari & Amla Salleh, 2012). In conclusion, teaching and learning in the classroom becomes more complicated and challenging for teachers.

This paper is an attempt to explore the challenges of teachers to carry out their professional activities in the classroom. The research question is "What problems do teachers face in carrying out their teaching and learning process in English

classrooms?" The purpose of this paper is to analyze problems that teachers have in carrying out the instructional process in the classroom. The analysis of problems of teachers in their English classroom relates to curriculum and curriculum changes, students' motivation, implementation of a higher order of thinking skills into teaching and other aspects which are related to English subject.

The curriculum is one important component of education that teachers should translate into classroom teaching and learning. Schools use the curriculum to control the process of teaching and learning with the students. The curriculum consists of students' experiences through lessons, interaction with learning materials and teachers, playing fields, and workshops. Curriculum determines the purposes of teaching, the learning subject, the teaching materials, the process of obtaining knowledge, and the interrelation among parts of it (Kliebard, 1977). Furthermore, the teacher becomes the most significant person in the process of curriculum implementation. In this context, teachers are the people who plan the lesson, implement, and evaluate the teaching-learning process. Shen, Poppink, Cui, and Fan (2007) argue that in the development of lesson plans, teachers should consider the teaching materials and how they are presented in textbooks or students' worksheets to gain the learning objectives. Therefore, teachers design the lesson plan including the objective, learning materials, teaching methods, and learning assessment. Wong and Wong (2009) in Cicek and Tok (2014, p. 11) mention that an effective teacher has to have a positive expectation for students' success, knows how to design lesson plans, and becomes a good classroom manager during a learning activity. Therefore, to support better learning teachers should design classroom instruction well because they are the most competent in the practice of teaching and they are responsible for communicating the content of the curriculum in the classroom.

The development of science and technology results in the spread of knowledge. In consequence, the spread of knowledge changes society. The change in society creates many changes for the better life of the people. Therefore, the curriculum should also change continuously to keep up with the change in society. An important feature of the curriculum is that it is subject to change. Mondal and Das (2021) mention that curriculum revision and change constitute the process of making the curriculum distinct from the old one so that it has a new vision or orientation. The curriculum change eventually gives impacts the learning process for teachers and their schools. That is why teachers are the people who have to be ready for the curriculum change. Teachers must have a good understanding of the curriculum change. Teachers need to have a clear interpretation of the new curriculum so that they can implement the new curriculum into practice effectively (Mondal & Das, 2021). Teachers must negotiate and adapt to changes in the curriculum, to implement the teaching strategies based on the new curriculum.

The curriculum change becomes a challenge for teachers to adjust their teaching strategies with the new curriculum. Modification may be carried out to change the proportion of lessons or learning materials or the time allotment to accomplish the work for the pupils. In the movement to a competence-based curriculum, teachers have to move from content-based teaching to competence. The rote memorization of factual knowledge has been identified as the focus of content-based teaching and learning relies on upon. On the other hand, competence-based teaching and learning rely on understanding the concepts, skills and competencies

(Postner, 1995). The change to a competency-based curriculum requires teachers to change their teaching, learning and assessment approaches. For some teachers, this can become a challenge to move from behavioristic teaching to constructive one, from teacher-centred learning to student-centred learning, and from receptive learning to more discovery activities. Teachers who are familiar with the conventional learning model in which teachers become the information center have to change the teaching models so that students are accustomed to looking for information in the learning process.

A further challenge to the teacher in the teaching and learning process deals with the engagement of the students. Student engagement reflects the real condition of the learning process which may imply significant learning results. Students who are engaged in learning show positive motivation on carrying out learning tasks. Their behavior and feeling are in harmony with the learning objectives. Furthermore, teachers have comfortable effort when teaching students with high engagement. Skinner and Belmont (1993) mention that children who are engaged show sustained behavioral involvement in learning activities accompanied by a positive emotional tone. Engagement in classroom activities indicates students' motivation in participating in learning activities. Behavioral, emotional, and cognitive elements are involved when students are willing to participate actively in the activities in language learning classes.

Students' motivation plays an important role so that the teaching and learning can be successful and students' engagement in class activities reflects students' motivation. Students who are motivated will participate positively in the activities in the classroom. Fadillah (2013) mentions that the students' motivation may lead to cognitive engagement as a result of learning behavior. Furthermore, motivation in participating in classroom activities is related to the success of past learning. Chuter (1919) argues that students are more likely to encourage themselves to work more seriously on a new task when they feel the success and satisfaction of doing similar things in the past. English is considered a difficult subject for students and students have to struggle for the best performance in every class session. Students often fail to perform well in classroom activities. This creates challenges for teachers to inspire students to participate in classroom activities. Moreover, teachers are also expected to teach the student in using higher order of thinking skills. Teaching higher-order of thinking skills is more important than lower-order of thinking skills. However, it is much more difficult to teach higher-order of thinking skills than lower-order skills.

Higher-order of thinking skills is a complex process which requires students to use critical thinking and problem-solving. Brookhart (2010) argues that higher-order thinking skills require students to use analysis, evaluation, and creation. This refers to the top three cognitive processes in Bloom's taxonomy. Students use higher-order thinking skills to actively process information. They need to create a web of information in related units and then develop new information from previous information that has already been acknowledged. Moreover, higher-order of thinking skills requires students to use their critical thinking. According to Murawski (2014) critical means the students need to evaluate thoughts and ideas. They need to make judgments consciously and creatively refine the ideas when needed. Students are not familiar with this kind of act. Willingham (2007) posits that effective thinkers are not always the result of students' active school attendance

and even academic achievement. Higher order of thinking skills requires practice to be successful in all situations. Moreover, critical thinking needs to be introduced in variations of settings. This way enables students to learn how to bear similar skills in various situations. Teaching higher-order thinking skills creates difficulties for teachers to implement in the classroom.

Until today, teaching higher-order thinking skills is still a challenge for teachers. Wright (2002) identifies some issues related to the difficulties for teachers to teach critical thinking in the classroom. First, teachers are not well-informed about the meaning of critical thinking. The meaning of critical thinking is often inspired by the literature on education that is not deeply understood (Wright, 2002). Teachers often difficult to differentiate between higher-order thinking, problem-solving, problem-based instruction, decision-making, inquiry learning, reflective thinking and so on. Second, most teachers do not have the background knowledge necessary for appropriately conceptualizing critical thinking. Therefore, teachers need further training or professional development to help them be skilful in implementing classroom teaching. Third, large class sizes and lack of preparation time mitigate the teaching of critical thinking. Teachers are overwhelmed by everything they are expected to achieve. They have to make the Powerpoint presentation, student worksheets, and assessment materials. In addition, this will become more complicated when the class size is large. Aoumeur (2017) mentions that large class size creates problems for teachers. Teachers in large classes lack opportunities to get to know students. Moreover, large classes may reduce students' motivation to be actively involved in classroom activities. Consequently, large class sizes may reduce the quality of interaction in the classroom and decrease the opportunities to engage in cognitive skills and it may increase behavioral problems. In conclusion, teaching higher-order of thinking skills is still a problem for teachers.

Methods

This simple study is a descriptive research exploring the problems and difficulties of English teachers in teaching in the classroom. Observation sheets were used to record the problems that the teachers have. The participants were English teachers who teach in Junior high schools and senior high schools. They participated in Teacher Profession Program at Sanata Dharma University. They reported the exploration of problems that they have in their English classroom instruction. In addition, they reported their exploration of problems in the form of classroom presentations.

The purpose of using observation sheets is to draw real descriptions of the respondents. This was used to derive patterns, characteristics, and actions of the respondents to understand the experience, attitude, or opinion about the phenomenon from a respondent (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The observation consisted of 10 closed items and 5 open items.

1. Motivation of the students
2. Teachers' use of teaching strategies
3. The teaching of higher-order of thinking skills
4. Integration of technology
5. Literacy learning
6. Problems in teaching reading
7. Problems in teaching speaking

8. Problems in teaching writing
9. Problems in grammar
10. Problems in vocabulary

The open items were used to record any problems that were reported by the teachers.

The data analysis was focused on objective data collection, which primarily consists of numbers and values. Results of the quantitative observation are obtained from statistical and numerical analysis methods. The items of the observation were analyzed using the percentage that the teachers had reported. From this analysis, the researcher can find the general impression of problems that the teachers had found during their English lessons.

Findings and Discussion

The objective of the study is to explore troubles that the teachers have when they implement the teaching and learning process in the classroom. After the data collection and analysis, it was found that the majority of teachers have problems in three aspects, namely students' motivation, the use of teaching strategies, and the implementation of a higher order of thinking skills in the classroom. Some teachers reported problems with technology integration and literacy teaching. Some others reported problems related to teaching English language skills. From the data that was collected the findings can be elaborated as follows

The motivation of the students

Students' motivation becomes a problem for teachers. Some of them reported that students feel that English is a difficult subject so they are afraid of making mistakes. Some other teachers reported that students feel that they don't use the language in everyday life. The result of the observation can be seen in the following charts.
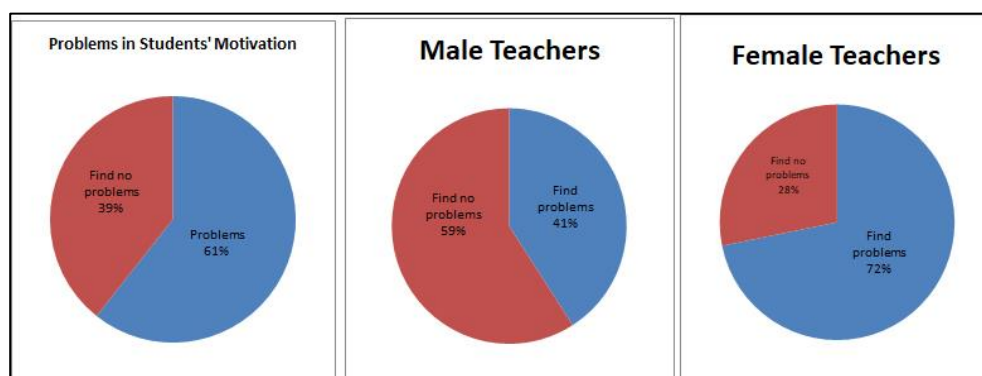

Figure 1. Problems in students' motivation

From the chart, there are 61% of the teachers find problems with students' motivation. There is a different portion between male and female teachers. There are 41% of male teachers find problems with students' motivation and 59% of others do not find problems. Meanwhile, 72% of female teachers had problems with students' motivation and 28% of them had no problems with students' motivation.

Teachers' use of teaching strategies

Teachers' use of teaching strategies refers to the difficulties of teachers to implement effective teaching strategies. Some teachers reported that they have difficulties finding good strategies for teaching English in their classrooms.
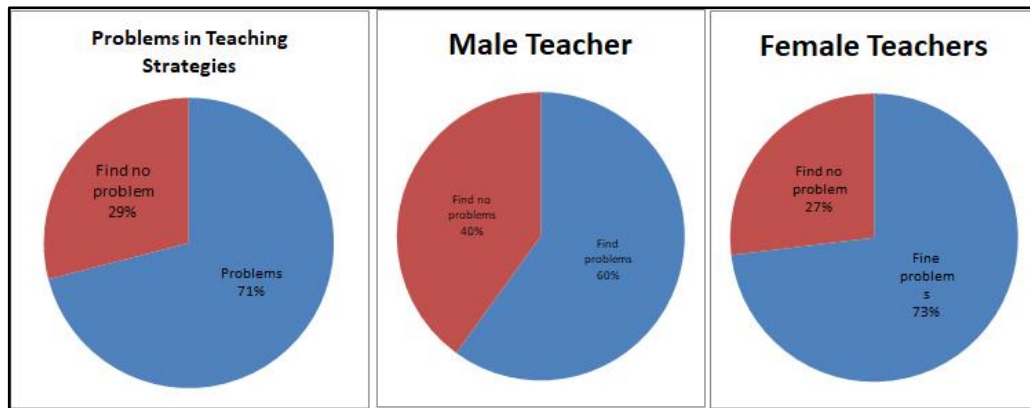

Figure 2. Problems in teaching strategies

The chart indicates that there are 71% of teachers had a problem with implementing effective teaching strategies and 29% of teachers did not find problems with the implementation of teaching strategies. Male teachers who had problems with the implementation of teaching strategies constitute 60 per cent and 40% of them did not find problems in selecting teaching strategies. In addition, female teachers who had problems with teaching strategies comprise 73% and those who did not have problems with teaching strategies constitute 27%.

The teaching of higher-order of thinking skills

Some teachers have problems with teaching higher-order thinking skills. They found difficulties in encouraging students to use critical thinking skills in their classroom.
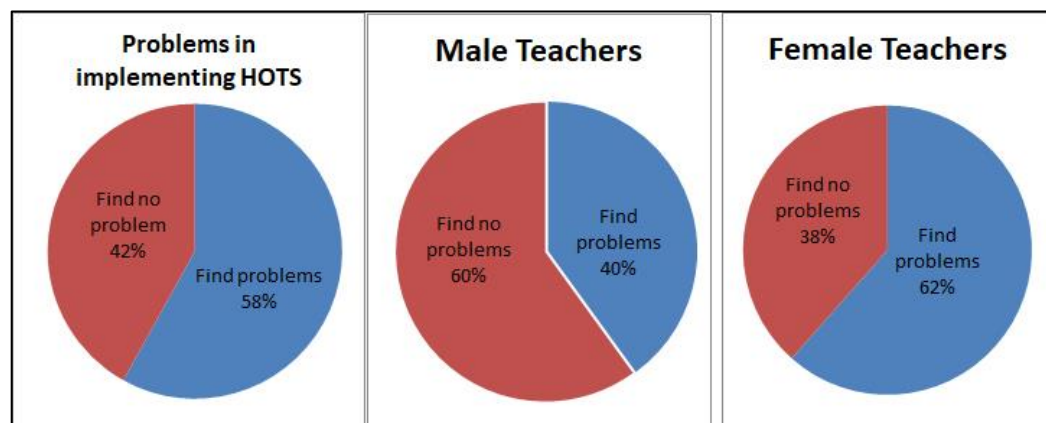

Figure 3. Problems in implementing HOTS

The chart shows the respondents' report on the implementation of a higher order of thinking skills in their classroom. 58% of teachers had problems in the

implementation of HOTS, while 42% of them did not have problems in this matter. Male teachers who had problems with the implementation of higher-order of thinking skills in the classroom comprise 40% and those who did not have problems with it comprise 60%. Furthermore, more than half (62%) of female teachers had problems with teaching higher-order of thinking skills, and 35% of teachers did not find problems in implementing higher-order of thinking skills in their classroom.

Integration of technology

Integrating technology into the English classroom was also one that was identified in this research. However, the pattern of data indicates a slight difference with the data on students' motivation, teaching strategies, and higher-order of thinking skills. The data indicate that only a few teachers have problems with the integration of technology.
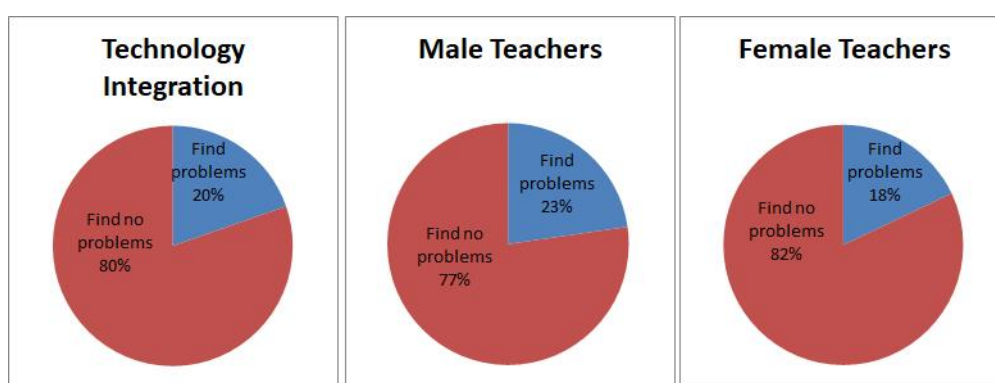

Figure 4. Problem with technology integration

The chart shows that the majority of teachers have no problems with the integration of technology in their English classrooms. It is only 20% of teachers had problems with the integration of technology and 80% of them did not. Male and female teachers indicate a similar pattern in which the bigger proportions of teachers did not have problems with technology integration. Females and males who had no problems with technology integration comprise a larger proportion of the total male and females (77 and 82 percent, respectively), while male and female teachers who had problems constitute 23% and 18%.

Problems in English language teaching

Teachers also reported problems in English language teaching issues which include the teaching of reading, speaking, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. Meanwhile, no teacher reported problems with teaching listening.

Table 1. Problems related to English language teaching issues

EFL	Find problems	Find no problems
Reading	41%	59%
Speaking	23%	77%
Writing	15%	85%
Grammar	10%	90%
Vocabulary	11%	89%

The table shows that the biggest proportion of problems is in the teaching of reading. The data shows there are 41% of the total respondents reported that they have problems on teaching reading. Moreover, the smallest proportion is on the teaching of grammar which constitutes 10% of the total respondent from the observation. Briefly, teachers who had no problems with all issues of English teaching constitute bigger proportions than teachers who have problems. These include the teaching of reading, speaking, writing, grammar and vocabulary. Teaching listening is not reported by any of the respondents.

From the data that has been collected, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents had problems with students' motivation, teaching strategies, and higher order of thinking skills. Motivation is not only students' problems but it is also teachers' problems. When motivation is seen as a teacher problem, we can realize that there should be some teaching strategies that the teacher may apply to encourage students' motivation (Renandya, (2015). The implementation of effective strategies is a challenging matter for teachers. A teacher should select the teaching strategy that is most suited to the current level of knowledge of the students, the concept being studied, and the stage in the learning journey of the students. The challenge of teachers might be caused by many factors which relate to the classroom situation. Hallam and Ireson (1999) claim that teachers face various kinds of constraints including class size, classroom situation, school facilities, duration of the lesson, mixed ability etc. Teachers are expected to create learning situation which is more engaging to students. This can be done by creating interesting learning media, using strategies which encourage students to explore learning materials, and creating fun learning. In addition, teaching higher-order thinking skills is fundamental in this modern world. The students are expected to be able to use critical thinking skills in their academic activities in school. It is fundamental to admit that critical thinking is crucial for students (Murawski, 2014). Teaching higher-order of thinking skills coaches students the thinking skills. This needs to go beyond the basic memorization of factual information and numbers. Teachers need to do some inquiries that require students to perform creative engagement, use innovative responses, or carry out some critical evaluations, and then the students will engage in higher-order thinking.

Integrating technology in an English language classroom is a necessity for the current era. The students are expected to be able to face the industrial revolution 4.0. Grabe (2007) argues that integrating technology has moved through some innovations and changed societies that transform the way people think, work and live. However, teachers often find challenges to integrate ICT in the classroom. Ghavifekr & Rosdy (2015) in their research found that some teachers feel the demand and are motivated to use ICT in teaching. Meanwhile, the supports from the school leaders are still low and this can obstruct the effort and discourage teachers from using technology. This is consistent with the report of the respondents of this research. Some teachers reported that students are not allowed to bring cell phones into the classroom. Meanwhile, the teachers want to use some applications during the classroom teaching and learning process. Another issue was reported that the condition of projectors to show Powerpoint presentations is of a low standard. It can be the installation of the device or the model that is out of date. In conclusion,

the school management has a very important role to support teachers in integrating technology in the classroom.

Conclusion

Teachers always have many problems in their classroom teaching and they have to be prepared to overcome all these challenges professionally. Teachers' problems in instructional activities may have many different kinds. The present research identifies what problems English teachers encounter in their teaching and learning process in the classroom. The successful activities in the classroom are influenced by the learning motivation of the students. However, it is difficult to encourage students learning motivation. English is considered a difficult subject and students have already got the sigma so they are reluctant to do the activities in the classroom. Another challenge for teachers is related to implementing effective teaching strategies. Teachers have to handle classes consisting of 30 to 40 students. Teaching in a large class size requires teachers to incorporate a variety of teaching methods. This becomes complicated since all students demand high achievement. In addition, implementing higher-order of thinking skills in the classroom is a necessity in the current era in which teachers are expected to promote essential skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving. This is more difficult than teaching basic observation of facts and memorization. In conclusion, among the problems that the teachers have in their English lessons, comprehensive efforts and a positive attitude are needed so that the English teaching and learning process can be successful.

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