

THE PRACTICE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Knowledge of English language becomes very important to develop oneself in global community since English is a common language used in global communication. Indonesia has experienced curriculum changes to meet the demands of global community, and industrial revolution. Hence, the result of ELT in Indonesia is not satisfying. The latest EPI data shows that Indonesia ranked 51st out of 88 countries in the world, and 13th out of 21 countries in Asia. With an average score of 51.58, Indonesia falls under the 'low proficiency category.' The condition worsens by teaching learning environment that is very different to a classroom context from a natural ESL language. Indonesian learners hardly use English in the real world even for simple purposes. The lack of English exposure in every day conversations and students' low motivation contribute to students' English proficiency achievement. Crowded class and improper teaching facilities creates more obstacles for teachers to achieve the goal. English language teaching in Indonesia faces continuous challenges. It is a teacher as the key factor to conduct successful ELT.

Keywords: *global community, English proficiency, English exposure*

The Industrial revolution will affect the English language teaching in Indonesia. It is without question that advancements in technology have played a vital role in the development of the language. It becomes a part of English language teaching and it is inseparable. There are many new apps on the market for four language skills such as iPads, tablets, and e-readers like the Kindle, a dictionary and a thesaurus, audiobooks, whatsapp, etc. Those tools help the learners to the exposure of

English language. In global communities where English is a common language of communication, knowledge of English language becomes very important to develop oneself in global community. The growth in the demand for English is closely related to one particularly important dimension of globalization. English provides a strong competitive edge in fields as diverse as diplomacy, commerce, media, academia, and IT (www.britishcouncil.org).

To answer the demand for English language in a global network, Indonesia has changed the curriculum for several times. In 2004 Indonesia implement Competence Based Curriculum, and in 2006, it was changed in to 2006 curriculum (KTSP) or School Based Curriculum, which is revised by 2013 curriculum. Consequently, some junior high school use double curricula, KTSP and 2013 curriculum and senior high schools mostly use 2103 curriculum up to now due to the announcement of Ministry of Education in 2015 that the 2013 curriculum should be re-evaluated

The fast changing curriculum within two years causes distress among English teachers in Indonesia. They must teach their students in the newest curriculum before they fully understand the previous curriculum. Curriculum changes is commonly needed to adjust the education goals with the present condition and situations in the globalization era where technological advancement is rapidly changed but it causes problems when the human resources

are not ready to implement the curriculum and the changes are unpredictable such as in Indonesia.

Hence, English has never been widely used and spoken in the Indonesian society. But in contrast, English is taught in Indonesian schools as a compulsory subject in grade 7 of secondary school to University levels and considered very important compared to other subjects in Indonesian education system. This is proven by the fact that English is tested the Indonesian national examination (Minister of National Education, 2007). This paper presents the discussion of English language teaching in Indonesia.

EnglishLanguage Teaching at Elementary Level

Since 2013 curriculum has been implemented in Indonesia, English language is no longer taught at Elementary school level. The policy has shocked the nation especially English practitioners. They have been questioning the reasons of the English removal, as it is clearly

contradictory with the demand of globalization.

English is not totally banned. Elementary students still have opportunity to learn English as they can learn the language as an extracurricular subject at school. The policy may work only in big cities such as Jakarta because English is ensured to be taught after school by Jakarta administration limited to 5th and 6th graders but English may consider unimportant for the student of Elementary school in suburb (<https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/12/12/jakarta-keep-english-schools.html>).

Pros and Cons among English practitioners have emerged about the removal of English at Elementary school level since the first time of the implementation. The majority of teachers admit that English should be taught from elementary school level (Arif, 2015). Teachers argue that students will be better prepared to embrace the globalization since English as the main language of cross-cultural communication enables students to engage with the

wider international community and as a result, communication barriers are broken. It is widely viewed that English will continue to significantly contribute to both personal and community growth across countries, and play a pivotal role politically, economically, socially, and scientifically in the future.

Many researches shows young children are natural language acquirers; they are self-motivated to pick up language without conscious learning. They have the ability to imitate pronunciation and work out the rules for themselves. According to Cameron (2001), very young learners are exposed to only spoken language for a few years, it is of great significance to handle it meticulously. Children are better able to focus their attention on relevant information therefore, they are able to get the gist and summarize it. In addition, children learn effectively through scaffolding with the help or guidance of an adult or more proficient peer (Bruner, 1983). Any

idea that learning to talk in English is difficult does not occur to them.

The removal of English language causes teachers in Elementary school graduated from English Education become a class teacher, and they study again majoring elementary teacher education or *Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar* (PGSD) in order to be eligible to take civil servant enrollment test (CPNS). By removing the English subject at Elementary level, Indonesia may move backward in terms of English proficiency in global community.

English Language Teaching at Secondary Level

English as the first foreign language is a compulsory subject at the secondary level in Indonesia instructed in 1989 law (Chapter IX, section 39, Verse 3). The goal of English language teaching at secondary level is enabling students to be proficient in English in response to the globalization (Rachmajanti: 2008). English proficiency is also beneficial for

helping students to study in higher education.

To meet the goal of ELT, the national curriculum has experienced ten times changes, 1945, 1952, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, and 2013. Just two years after the implementation of the 2004 curriculum, a new curriculum was created, the 2006 KTSP or School Based Curriculum. KTSP curriculum was also then revised known as the 2013 curriculum. The Ministry of Education in 2015 call for reevaluation of 2013 curriculum, consequently some schools are back to the KTSP curriculum and others are still using 2013 curriculum. KTSP should be developed by individual school in accordance with the local characteristics, and learners need based on standard competence and basic competence set by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Alwasilah, 2003) whereas 2013 curriculum adopts scientific approach and three kinds of assessments, skills, attitude, and behavior aspects.

Yet many Junior high schools recently have implemented dual curricula in some regency, School Based Curriculum or *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP)*, and 2013 curriculum since 2006 curriculum implementation will be implemented until 2019/2020 although the new curriculum has been issued. Schools that have implemented the 2013 curriculum for less than three semesters revert to the 2006 Curriculum (KTSP) (see Mendikbud Nomor 160 Tahun 2014). Dual curricula are not efficient and confusing teachers preventing them to focus in English language teaching process because of the curriculum differences. The implication is students are not exposed to the learning process, as teachers are busy doing more complicated administrative matters. Some studies find many argue that dual curricula are contradictory fostering discrimination. Teachers need extra work to do in teaching English using KTSP and 2013 simultaneously. Different concepts of lesson plan emerge more problems in terms of

knowledge of curricula, teachers' readiness, and complicated administrations.

On the other hand, most of Senior high school recently applies single curriculum, 2013 curriculum. The challenges faced by schools in implementing 2013 curriculum are not similar to those who apply dual curricula. It is easier for teachers to focus on one curriculum only therefore; it can reduce the confusion especially in preparing lesson plan. The challenges in 2013 curriculum implementation depend on teachers' English proficiency, teachers' knowledge about the curriculum, and teachers' classroom management.

The 2013 curriculum has some strength and weaknesses. The 2013 curriculum issued to meet the needs of globalization. It designs to use the language in communication to bridge Indonesian learners in world community (Sarosa, 2014), by creating a natural language environment in ELT. Moreover, 2013 curriculum focuses on *knowledge*, *affective aspect*, and *character building* to answer socio-cultural

change changes of Indonesians. Indonesians belong to high-context culture, well known as courteous, polite, gentle, and caring for others, highly social, highly cooperative but recently the nation has shifted into a country with less social sensitivity and more selfishness (Muhamad and Saparahayuningsih, 2016). Teachers need to integrate moral and local values in teaching and learning process to make students build strong identity as Indonesians.

The 2013 curriculum has been criticized for number of reasons; first, reduction of teaching hours at senior high school that is contradictory with the goal of ELT that is achieving English language proficiency. Learning a language is a time consuming business therefore the reduction of teaching hours, makes students are less exposure to hearing English in the classroom, which is very crucial for them in learning English.

Second, 2013 curriculum applies scientific approach; observing, asking, collecting data, associating and communicating. Teachers find

difficulties to identify an Example of teaching English using a scientific approach since it is used for teaching math or science.

Third, teachers have fewer tasks in materials and curriculum development. (Putra, 2014). To create productive classroom environment, teachers need to develop materials based on the learners need to develop their skills. In the 21st century classroom, teachers are facilitators of student learning allowing a teacher to tailor make a course to fit specific student needs but in 2013 curriculum, teachers' role to develop materials is reduced. Patankar and Jadhav (2013), the teacher has crucial role as the mediator between students and the curriculum, and curriculum is an important factor in determining students' success in learning. The challenges become obvious; it is a teacher task to manage the classroom to achieve successful and meaningful learning.

English at Higher Education

Indonesia Government urges internationalization for universities

all over in Indonesia. It is necessary to enable students to see the world beyond their own background through comparative perspectives promoting them to learn new cross cultures.

The policy of internationalization forces higher education to send students whose English proficiency is good to create successful communication since English is a means of communication used mostly by people all over the world. Globally, the number of internationally mobile students is increasing rapidly, and Indonesian students make up about 1 percent of global internationally mobile students ([www. thejakartapost.com](http://www.thejakartapost.com)).

English language teaching in Indonesia higher education is improving the learners' reading skill to comprehend English scientific text for academic purposes in accordance with their field but In Indonesia, English is a foreign language therefore a formal instruction is needed in foreign language learning due to the lack of exposure in the environment of the learners. To

achieve the goal of ELT in higher education is difficult since the number of credits given is only 2 credits in a non-English Education program. Learners need more credits or hours to have good reading skill but in fact, the number of credits in universities in Indonesia is various depend on the internal policies of the university. Most of them apply 2 credits. Few amounts of the credits block the dream of internationalization achievement. The agenda of internationalization without being prepared to embrace its intellectual consequences, then they embark a doomed project. The latest EPI data show that Indonesia ranked 51st out of 88 countries in the world, and 13th out of 21 countries in Asia. With an average score of 51.58, (<https://www.ef.com/wwen/epi/regions/asia/indonesia/>) Indonesia falls under the 'low proficiency category.'

Becoming a part of global community Indonesia still suffers many problems. General problems faced in English language teaching as a foreign language is teaching

learning environment (school characteristics, local needs, cultural background) that is very different classroom context from a natural ESL language. Learners hardly use English in the real world even for simple purposes. The use of mother tongue in daily conversations and students' low motivation also contribute in students' English proficiency achievement. Government needs to conduct teacher training to improve teachers' competence. Crowded Class and improper teaching facilities creates more obstacles for teachers to attain English language teaching goal.

Conclusion

English language teaching in Indonesia is continuous challenge since Indonesia is a bit behind on the proficiency index. Yet the result of English teaching is not satisfying. However, teachers are the key factors to conduct successful ELT. Monitoring the class and adjusting lessons accordingly is an important tool for teachers even though pros and cons of 2013 curriculum are being underway. The next big thing

in the journey of digital transformation, 5G will have an enormous impact on humankind. Indonesia must be ready to the rapid changes of technological advancement and English is the language that supports internationalization and human resources to compete globally.

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