

*The Implementation of the 2013 Curriculum and the Issues of English Language
Teaching and Learning in Indonesia*

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0362

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2013

Official Conference Proceedings 2013

Abstract

The importance of English as world language and the education reform envisaged through several changes in national curriculum play an important role in the development of English language teaching in Indonesia. This paper highlights some constraint and resources related to the implementation of new curriculum 2013 in Indonesia especially in context of English language teaching and learning. Some common ELT problems in Indonesia such as students' lack of motivation, poor attitude toward language learning, big class size, unqualified teachers, cultural barriers for teachers to adopt new role of facilitator, and so forth are also discussed. However, the current policy of teachers' certification program, the integrative topics in some subjects in learning process as one of the main point in new curriculum 2013, and textbook provision as designed on the basis of new curriculum by the Ministry of Education and Culture have brought certain resources to the development of the quality in English language teaching in Indonesia. Some pedagogical concerns for the improvement of language teaching in Indonesia are also suggested.

Introduction

English was the first foreign language obliged to be taught at junior and senior high school as determined by central government policy since independency in 1945. It is prioritised over other foreign languages such as French, Arabic, Chinese and others (Dardjowidjojo (2000)). In 1967, the Ministry of Education reviewed that teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia was intended to equip students to read textbooks and references in English, to participate in classes and examinations that involved foreign lecturers and students, and to introduce Indonesian culture in International arenas. This general objective was represented in the high school English curriculum 1975, 1984, and 1994. The objective in the 1967 decree actually was to teaching English as to prepare students for the function at the tertiary level (Fuad Hassan in the Jakarta Post, 2001 as cited by Jazadi, 2008). In other words, English teaching and learning in Indonesia was dedicated to academic purposes.

English teaching in Indonesia has been based on the curriculum designed by the central government throughout provision of curriculum policies. Indonesian curricula have changed for several times during the past fifty years as responding to worldwide ELT methodologies; (a) 1945's grammar translation-based curriculum, (b) 1958's audiolingual based-curriculum, (c) 1975's revised audio lingual-based curriculum, (d) 1984's structure-based communicative curriculum, (e) 1994's meaning-based communicative curriculum, (f) 2004's competency-based curriculum. English language teaching in 1945 during the colonial era followed the grammar-translation method as it is suitable for large classes, cheap and only required grammatical mastery of the language. From the early 1950s, Indonesian government through the US Ford Foundation grant started to introduce audio-lingual approach which was later led to audio lingual based curriculum. In this case, some characteristics could be identified such as that the language laboratory was the main support, audio-lingual textbooks were developed. Yet, as the large classes remained the main issues, many teachers still employed grammar translation method.

In 1975s, the revised curriculum was still oriented to the audio-lingual approach but with more systematic teaching guidelines that covered all curriculum components such as teaching objectives, materials, approaches and evaluation (Tjokrosujoso &

Fachrurazy, 1997). In this context, it is the first time when Indonesia incorporated top-down and objectives-driven curriculum design approach especially in English language curriculum. Yet, this structure-based audio lingual curriculum did not still contribute to the achievement of learning objectives of English learning. The failure of this approach was mainly caused by the fact that some requirement of audiolingual implementation were not fulfilled such as the absence of native speakers as models, the absence of language laboratory, the existence of big classes and so forth (Wiramaya, 1991). The impact of dissatisfaction with this audio lingual curriculum had created the presence of the 1984 communicative approach curriculum encouraging the mastery of english communication both receptive and productive skills.

Although the 1984 curriculum was proclaimed to be communicative, the reality was still form-focused as observed from the official textbooks released by the Department of Education in which language structure was the most dominant content in the textbook. In other words, linguistic competence was put into more priority than communicative competence (Nababan, 1983). According to Tjokrosujoso and Fachrurazy (1997) the 1984 curriculum was inconsistent since its main aim was reading comprehension, the program was structure-oriented, the teaching approach was intended to be communicative, and the evaluation was discrete and grammar-based. The unsuccessful 1984 curriculum had encouraged the Department of Education to change the curriculum. Through conducted survey for both students and teachers, they both perceived productive skills as more important and that communication-focused is more important than structure-focused approach. Thus, in 1994 the meaning-focused communicative curriculum had replaced the 1984 structure-focused communicative curriculum. The underpinning approach in the 1994 curriculum was meaningfulness approach or communicative approach which involves some features such as the development of the ability to communicate in the four skills, linguistic mastery as only part of communicative abilities, a range of syllabi used (functional, situational, skills-based, structural), and integrated and communicative assesment. Textbooks were produced accompanying this curriculum by which the content is theme-based and teaching approach is task-based (Jazadi, 2000). Yet, he further suggested that this 1994 curriculum met some issues; the priority of teaching was still on reading despite the four skills or productive skills, the national exam was still using

the same format as in the 1984 which tested reading comprehension and form-based multiple choice questions and did not test all aspects of communicative competence.

The 2004 competency-based curriculum was then published as a reflection toward perfection of previous curriculum. This curriculum contain more systematic competency to be achieved in any level of education in Indonesia. Communicative language teaching was the underlying approach in its implementation. Within this sense, the learning being more put on students or learner-centred learning become the trend of language teaching and learning. The national examination managed by central government started to incorporate listening, reading and grammar while speaking and writing score was taken from teacher's assessment at schools.

The condition of Indonesian government which issues the policy of decentralized system has made many educators and teachers urge for the role presence of local authority in designing curriculum. The 2006 KTSP curriculum was implemented as a response to many input toward curriculum correction. However, the 2006 curriculum had several problems; (a) too many subjects being learnt by students and many competences were overlapping each other ignoring the cognitive development of the students, (b) curriculum was not fully based on competency, (c) competency did not holistically reflect domain of knowledge, skills and affective behavior, (d) some competences were not accomodated such as character building, active learning methodology, (e) the equilibrium of developing soft skills and hard skills, (f) standard of learning process is still teacher-oriented, (g) standard of assessment and evaluation still neglects process and end product, and (h) KTSP was still open for multi interpretation by many educators and teachers in real practice (Diknas, 2012).

Responding to some above constraints, the Indonesian government has decided to rethink, reformulate, and redesign the curriculum into the 2013 curriculum. To this date, the government has succeeded in producing curriculum documents that served as frameworks and syllabuses in all subject from primary level to senior high level. After being launched for public review, this curriculum has been implemented in many schools in Indonesia. In context of ELT in the 2013 curriculum, the time allotted for English subject at schools is reduced. This surely brings about several consequences for language teaching and learning process in Indonesia.

The current resources and constraints of ELT in Indonesia

Some constraints and resources always appear behind the implementation of new curriculum. First, the government should train the teachers, especially in the form of in-service training or currently through PPG/education for teaching profession about the whole package of new curriculum and its contents and its effective implementation in real classroom. Second, the government should also issue policy to deal with large class size issues, for instance by providing more budgeting to build more classes. If not, large classes would be unresolved issue which affect class performance. Yet, it is also argued that creative and autonomous teacher could deal with large classes by using a numerous techniques in classroom (Jazadi, 2000). Third, students' empowerment should also be encouraged by teachers to know the essence of new curriculum. Bringing students into the right conception about the language being learnt is essential for achieving language learning target as students and teachers would have the same perception about their target of language teaching and learning.

In addition, the implementation of new curriculum which changes the teacher from being information center to be facilitator toward their learning should gear the concept of student-centered classroom. Learner-centeredness should be embraced since it could maximize the learner's focus on form and meaning and their achievement (Reilly, 2000). Teacher-centredness should be left behind since the teacher often dominates the class hours. In this sense, students are inclined to be passive listeners for teachers' explanation. The ability to manage class or classroom management ability is required in this case, so that the teachers can easily lead the class without any frustration to find their classrooms are noisy in some extent.

The fact that the central government through Ministry of Education and Culture provide English textbooks both for teachers (teacher's book) and students (student's book) to use at schools is to some extent good idea. Teachers do not need to spend much of time selecting, adopting or even adapting english materials for students at class. Yet, the uniformity of the materials somehow ignore the local content where the learning occurs and where the students feel engaged with the materials as it is part of their life experience. Although this issue can be oriented with the response that the content of the textbook represent the national content which everybody can understand rather than local content representing certain local socio-culture in certain

region or province. School books should be culturally sensitive and students's varied sociocultural background will affect students' learning. Yet, the textbooks being promised are still not published for schools, so that textbook evaluation is still unable to do. In line with the idea of learner-centredness, the textbook should activate students' learning, the textbook should be communicative competence supports containing real world themes leaving more proportion on form-focused activities, and it should finally lead the students to be autonomous learners.

Regarding the potential of bringing students in autonomous learning and independency, from sociocultural perspective Dardjowidjojo (2001) argues that Indonesian students are not ready to be independent due to the strong influence of Javanese paternalistic values in their daily lives and in the government system captured from the observation of government bureaucrats. The 'obidience' culture embedded in Javanese society also supports Darjowidjojo's argument. Responding this claim, Lewis (1996) reported that the generalization that Indonesian students were 'authority-oriented' was unwarranted. Of 320 Indonesian students at higher education, it is revealed that they preferred a variety of learning models that accompanied the full complement of learning style orientation. I argue that Indonesian learners nowadays have potential to be independent and autonomous in their learning as long as the teachers could build their learning awareness about learning targets.

Although the curriculum plays important role in maintaining standards in ELT and the upcoming new 2013 curriculum is designed to improve the quality and standar of ELT in Indonesia, most of the major problems are still existing. Both Dardjowidjojo (2000) and Nur (2004) agree on five common problems such as big class sizes, teachers with low level of English proficiency, the low salary of government English teachers which encourage or even force many to moonlight, the lack of sufficient preparation to teach the new curriculum and the culture barriers for teachers to leave the role of master and to accept or to adopt the new role of facilitator. They also claims that the large class sizes and unqualified English teachers are two obvious factors that contribute to the ongoing problems in ELT in Indonesia. Musthafa (2001) also lists other reasons for the problems such as limited time allocated for teaching English; lack opportunity to actually practice speaking English in the classroom due to focus on grammar and syntax and the use of L1/ mother tongue; less authentic materials and lack opportunity to socialize English outside the classroom. According

to Yuwono (2005), ELT in Indonesia seems to be always problematic before and after decentralization era. She also suggests that the continually-revised curriculum does not seem to consider factors such as suitable qualifications for teachers and numbers of students nor does it provide strategies and alternatives.

In addition, Dardjowidjojo (2000) assumes that the number of hours a student spends in secondary school and the optional hours in elementary school should at least have resulted in a high ability in English by the time she/ he graduate from senior high school. The outcome, however, is far from the expectation. It seems that a high school graduate is unable to communicate intelligibly in English. The number of hours of learning English at class in the new 2013 curriculum are less than that of previous curriculum. This bring a big challenge for both teacher and students to work harder in achieving the learning goal in a limited time. In addition, schools should also be aware of this condition in which opportunities for additional English learning and exposure could be one effort to improve students learning mastery of English. Nevertheless, Dardjowidjojo (1996, cited in Kam, 2004) claims that the lack of students motivation, poor attitude of students in learning English and shortage of teachers with adequate English language competence are the contributors of the low ability in English.

Conclusion

The implementation of 2013 curriculum seems to be promising if Indonesian government put maximum efforts through policy and budgeting to really resolve many constraint in Indonesian ELT practices. Some common ELT problems in Indonesia such as students' lack of motivation, poor attitude toward language learning, big class size, unqualified teachers, cultural barriers for teachers to adopt new role of facilitator, and so forth are also discussed. However, the current policy of teachers' certification program, the integrative topics in some subjects in learning process as one of the main point in new curriculum 2013, and textbook provision as designed on the basis of new curriculum by the Ministry of Education and Culture have brought certain resources to the development of the quality in English language teaching in Indonesia.

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