

Responses towards Policy on TEYL in Elementary Schools:

A case study in Malang City

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Abstract—In Indonesian elementary schools, English subject has been transformed to be an extracurricular subject since the 2013 Curriculum was implemented in order to give more opportunities to our young learners to learn the local languages. In East Java, this is supported by the Governor Regulation Number 19 Year 2014 that the local content subject taught in Elementary and Secondary Schools is Javanese or Madurese language—in other words, English is no longer a local content subject in primary level like when the School-Based Curriculum (KTSP) was implemented. Thus, schools are actually given options to include or exclude it from the curriculum. This qualitative case study which was conducted in Malang, East Java, was aimed at investigating whether elementary schools in this municipality still had English subject in their curriculum as the regulation did not oblige to do so. The data gained from the questionnaires and interviews with Elementary School Principals revealed that English teaching was undertaken beyond the general policy. Almost all of the participating schools taught this subject to their students, even some still included it as a local content subject and a compulsory subject. Furthermore, the participating schools gave various answers about the grade level from which English subject was given. Although higher number of schools informed that they started teaching English since Grade 4, many others started the English lesson from the first grade. In conclusion, most of the schools still regard English as one of the important subjects that their students need to learn at school.

Keywords—*English for Young Learners; policy; responses*

I. INTRODUCTION

The immense impacts of globalization have undeniably reinforced the power of English language as a means of universal communication. This has encouraged Governments across the world, especially in the non-English-spoken countries to take serious concern on English teaching and learning at school. In Indonesian context, English lesson has been given to students from primary level as an elective subject to high school as a compulsory subject.

When tracing the policy of English education in Indonesia, it is the Minister of Education and Culture Decree number 060 / U / 1993 on Elementary Education Curriculum Decree which stated that English is a local content subject at the elementary

school and a compulsory subject at the secondary school [1]. After more than a decade, in 2006 when School-Based Curriculum (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan / KTSP*) was implemented, the Indonesian Government issued the Ministerial Regulations No 22, Year 2006 on Standards of Content for Elementary and Secondary School that has the same contents with the previous regulation about the status of English subject in primary and secondary school [2]. Alwasilah highlights that the guidelines of English teaching in elementary school provided by the Government were only for Grade 4, 5, and 6 [3]. When school decided to give the English subject to the lower grades—Grade 1, 2, and 3, the school had to provide the guidelines by themselves. In spite of this, many students, especially in big cities, had learned English at school from Grade 1.

In 2013, when the newly proposed curriculum was introduced, the status of English subject in elementary education was shifted from the local content to extracurricular subject. Although both statuses carry English as an elective subject where schools are given options to conduct or to exclude this subject in the curriculum, the status of being extracurricular subject has affected the implementation of English teaching, where the guidelines and supports are no longer provided by the Government. Alwasilah calls it as the bottom-up policy as it is the school that decides the policy in implementing the English teaching and learning activities [3]. This has led the various implementation of English teaching in terms of which books to use for teaching, which grades study English, and who teaches the subject as it is the school that [4].

To reinforce, the Regional Government issued the Governor Regulation, about the local content subject taught in the elementary and secondary school. In East Java, the Governor Regulation Number 19 Year 2014 states that Javanese and Madurese language are the local content taught at school [5]. In West Java, Sundanese language, Cirebon language, and Malayu Betawi language are taught as the local content subjects based on the Governor Regulation Number 69 Year 2013 [6]. The case is not too different in Bali where Balinese language, Balinese literature and writing are officially put in the school curriculum as the local content subjects according to the Governor Regulation Number 20 Year 2013

[7]. These provincial regulations are made on the basis of the Constitutions Chapter 42 Clause 1 Number 24 Year 2009 about Indonesian Flag, Language, State Symbol, and National Anthem in which Local Government should also participate in developing, nurturing, preserving local languages and literature as parts of Indonesian cultural wealth by including the local language in each region as the local content subject students learn at school.

The current emphases on policy about the local content subject in Indonesian schooling have thus raised the inquisitiveness about how elementary schools react to the regulation and implement the English education that was a local content subject before. Do the schools still teach this subject to the students? This current case study is aimed at investigating the schools' responses towards the policy about Teaching English for Young Learners.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Design of the Research

A qualitative case study method was implemented in this present study to investigate elementary schools' responses towards the policy related to English teaching in elementary education [8,9]. The study took place for about six month from May 2018 to September 2018 for data collection process.

B. Setting of the Research

This present study was conducted in Malang City, East Java, Indonesia. Administratively, this city is segmented in five sub-districts—Blimbing, Klojen, Lowokwaru, Sukun and Kedung Kandang, where 274 elementary schools under the supervision of Regional Office of Education of Malang City were located. To answer the research question in this study, all of the schools were involved in the study.

C. Instruments of the Research

A set of questionnaire was constructed to gather the data of how many schools conduct English education and other related information. It was adapted from Mardiani [10] and Bailey [11] and containing three themes: 1) school's data; 2) principal's data; and 3) schools' English language curriculum. To gain further information related to the participants' answers in the questionnaire, brief interviews were also undertaken.

D. Participants of the Research

School Principals were chosen as the participants of the research as they were the vital stakeholders in making decisions in the institutions that they were leading. Furthermore, it was considered that the data obtained from the principals' answers were very representatives to capture how English education was implemented in Malang City.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This investigation scrutinized the implementation of English teaching in elementary schools in Malang City. Through paper-based questionnaires and interviews, data

involving two main themes were obtained. Hence, the themes emerged are included in Table 1 as follows.

TABLE I. THEMES OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

No	Themes
1	The school's English language curriculum The status of English subject Curriculum implemented Grades who learn English
2	Background and rationale of giving English subject

Before the themes above were comprehensively explored, the research began by finding out how many schools conducted English teaching as the information became the vital data to go further with the questions related to the themes above.

The paper-based questionnaire were distributed in two ways. First, the researcher came to the schools one by one to meet the principals and the second, the papers were distributed to the principals when they gathered for regular meeting. This was done with the help of the coordinator of elementary school principals. Although 274 schools were targeted to fill out the questionnaires, only 184 schools returned the paper. From this number, it was revealed that 168 schools (61.31%) admitted that they conducted English teaching, while 16 others (5.84%) informed that they did not give English subject to their students. Unfortunately, 90 schools (32.85%) did not returned the paper. The number of schools that affirmed to conduct English education as written above indicate that there can be no doubt that elementary schools in Malang still consider English subject as an important one to learn at school. Although it has been put as a minor subject in which schools do not have to teach it, the respondents' answers show that most of the elementary schools in Malang teach English subject. Insignificant number of schools was found not to teach English and this then led to further investigation.

The next stage of the research was to focus on the group of schools that conduct English teaching and learning. Concerning the status of English subject in elementary school level, it has been obvious that it bases its position according to the three regulations in the following: 1) the Regulation of Minister of Education and Culture Number 21 Year 2016 on Standards of Contents for Elementary and Secondary School; 2) the Regulation of Governor of East Java on the Local Content Subject for Elementary and Secondary School in East Java Number 19 Year 2014; and 3) the Regulation of Minister of Education and Culture Number 62 Year 2014 on Extracurricular Activities for Elementary and Secondary School. The contents of these three regulations can be employed to encapsulate the status of English subject taught in the elementary school. As the local contents are now being emphasized on the local language and the compulsory extracurricular is also visibly accentuated on scouts, the position of English subject is thus as the elective extracurricular subject. The two conditions framed by Alwasilah [3] and Hawanti [12] are assumed to be the bases that the schools use to conduct English subject. The two points are: 1) the demands from the society around the schools, and 2)

the schools' readiness in terms of the teachers, the learning resources, and the curriculum.

Dealing with this, the data revealed heterogeneous responses towards the position of English subject in the school curriculum. In the questionnaire, 2.8% of 168 schools that teach English subject ticked the 'Compulsory Subject' box, 8.8% included it as a local content subject, 5.5% answered 'Others', and the major responses (82.9%) were found to choose the 'Extracurricular Subject' option. From this data it can be assumed that most of the schools have understood and obeyed the rules that the central and local Government have regulated in terms of the implementation of English teaching in elementary school. Nevertheless, this does not avoid certain schools, although the percentages are not too significant, to choose the other categories—compulsory subject, local content subject, and others. This should come as no surprise as the execution of the bottom-up policy (Alwasilah, 2013) that is carried by each school and as the results of decentralized decision-making of education in the field of Teaching English for Young Learners [3,13,14]. Dealing with this, these group of schools have developed their own curriculum as the school's identity to be implemented along with the one from the Government by including English subject as one of the three status mentioned above.

Next, the exploration is directed to find out from which grade the schools actually started the English subject. In 2013, Alwasilah stated that most of the schools taught English to higher grade only (Grade 4 to 6). However, his previous survey in 2011 publicized that for 73.9% of the respondents, English in the Elementary school was a mandatory subject which was taught from Grade 1 to Grade 6 (92.0%) as being regulated by the Regional Office of Education [15]. This records seem to be linear with the findings discovered in this study. The figure below presents the data.

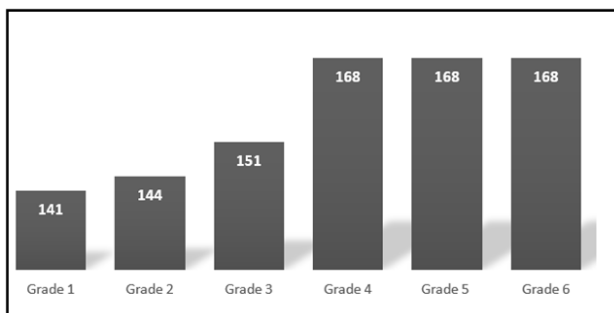


Fig. 1. Grades that study English subject at school.

From the figure 1, it can be concluded that currently, not only do schools teach English to the higher grades, but most of them also teach it to the lower graders. This indicates that there is a serious interest shown by most of the schools to start the English teaching earlier. From the data gained in this study, 141 (83.93%) out of 168 schools that conducted English teaching and learning activities gave the subject since the students sat at their first grade. The number then increased as some other schools were found to start the subject from Grade 2, 3 and so on. As written by Matsuda [16], this is not merely political or ideological when promoting English as an

international language. She reinforces that it is the English Language Teaching (ELT) Professionals who vitally take parts in taking up or rejecting English as an international language teaching. In Indonesian context, especially in Malang City as the site of this current research, this circumstance is seen more to be the decisions made by the stakeholders—school principals and parents, to make the initiatives of English teaching come to execution. This is positively equivalent with what was written by Supriyanti who sees the needs that our young learners should study English since primary level [17]. By referring to how other countries concern on providing English education to young learners, she points out that the Indonesian elementary school students deserve to be given opportunities to learn English as well like their fellows in other countries. Also, by giving English subject to its students, a school equips the students to be better graduates with knowledge and foreign language skills that surely benefit them for future challenges.

Further investigation was undertaken through interviews with randomly selected principals to know the reasons underlying the schools' decision in including and excluding English subject in the school program. Three reasons were found why some schools did not teach English. They are: 1) not a compulsory subject; 2) no English teacher; and 3) financial matter. These three reasons are seen to be as challenges rather than schools' rejection towards including English subject in the curriculum. These factors potentially emerged as the impacts of the policies related to the status of English as an extracurricular. With this status, it is not again the Government's responsibilities to provide the schools with the human resources and curriculum when schools decide to have English as a subject in their curriculum. For some schools, this can be burdening, especially in terms of financial matters as they have to arrange and afford all the supporting resources by themselves. On the other hands, conditions seem to be different with most of the participating schools which declared that they conduct English teaching. There are four basic reasons concluded from the data why the schools that involved public and private ones were persistent in teaching English for their students. They involve: 1) to introduce English as a foreign language; 2) to introduce English as a global tool of communication; 3) to equip students' with basic English for secondary education; and 4) to prepare students for Science and Math Olympiad that apply English as language of instruction.

The findings above are positively reinforced by what was postulated by Supriyanti that each of the school was reasonably competitive to produce decent outputs [17]. The first and the second points are obvious that as the tool of widespread communication, English has been the first foreign language that is taught in Indonesian schools until today. Our Government actually have taken serious attention by allowing the teaching of this language as an elective subject in elementary education and as a compulsory subject in secondary levels. Regarding the third and the fourth point, the findings obtained in this present research perceptibly show that the participating schools were intentionally aware of the vital need to prepare their leavers to be ready for receiving English subject in the secondary education by including English in the

curriculum. Furthermore, as competitions, like Science and Math Olympiads, presently use English as the medium of instruction, schools initiatively keep English in their curriculum so that the students' English skills can be developed.

Overall, how schools responded towards the policy on Teaching English for Young Learners that was found in this study is seen to go beyond the general policy. However, this is not considered negative as the background underlying are very reasonable and acceptable. In a similar vein, without having intention to deny what have been ruled by the central and regional government, these findings signposted the positive movement from the stakeholders, particularly the school principals as the decision makers in their schools. The mindfulness of the importance of teaching English language to their students have encouraged the schools to still keep English in their curriculum although facing so many challenges.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This present study has concerned itself with an investigation on the implementation of Teaching English for Young Learners (TEYL) policy in Malang City, East Java, Indonesia. As the changes occurred, the English language teaching in elementary education has been shifted to be the supplementary subject in which school may or may not conduct. From the regulations it is known that the changes are aimed at equipping the young learners with local language and wisdoms before learning the foreign language. Through the regulations, the Local and Regional Government are encouraged to develop, nurture, and preserve the local languages and literature as parts of Indonesian cultural wealth by positioning the local language(s) in each province to be the compulsory local content subject.

Dealing with this reconstruction, a study was conducted to find out how elementary schools responded towards it as the impacts of the current regulation implementation. Through paper-based questionnaires that were answered by principals of elementary schools in Malang City, the findings revealed that more than half out of the total number of elementary schools in Malang City admitted that they had English subject. The justifications for keeping the subject in the school curriculum involved four main reasons involving the schools' awareness of the importance of introducing the English language as a foreign language used in the global communication, the schools' efforts to prepare the students for their secondary education and to equip them with Basic English for joining Science and Math Olympiad. On the other hand, insignificant number of schools was found to have no English subject in their school program after the 2013 Curriculum was issued. These schools did not seem to intentionally exclude the subject. Why they decided not to conduct the English teaching were due to the factors that English was no longer a local content subject so that curriculum and financial supports were no longer provided by the Government. This seems to be burdening for some schools.

Thus, it can be concluded that although there were quite many schools that did not return the questionnaire, the facts that most of the schools still regard English as one of the important subjects that their students need to learn at school are

obvious. The case that there are schools that do not have English subject in their curriculum is seen to be an operation that they carry out based on the need criteria that are not always the same as how other schools do. Hence, it was found that almost all of the schools that conducted English teaching tended to reform the status of English subject as an extracurricular. Only a few that still included it as a local content subject or even a compulsory one. Various answers were also found about the guidelines that the schools used for conducting English subjects. As it is noticeable that the central and local Government do not provide the curriculum, some principles informed that the syllabus implemented in the previous curriculum—School-Based Curriculum/KTSP, was still used. Some others were known to develop their own curriculum for the English subject besides adopting and adapting the Cambridge Curriculum. Hence, in terms of which grades that study English, it was found that almost all of the schools currently started to teach the English subject since the first grade. When referring to the current regulations, certainly, the data gained from the field concerning the implementation of English education in the elementary schools in Malang City indicated that some schools as the education units have implemented the current regulations beyond the normative shifts. Despite the approaches seem to contradict the rules employed, this can be seen as the schools' positive responses towards both the regulations and the society's demands.

Finally, it is absolute that further research needs to be undertaken in order to have comprehensive data about how English education is conducted. The English teachers' profile, the resources used in the English class, and the frequency of English learning arranged by each school are among the variables that are worth to investigate to find out the effectiveness of the English education implemented so far.

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