

Policy and Implementation of English Learning for Elementary Schools in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

English is crucial for success in the globalized world because it is a powerful language: both for transmitting information and as a tool of innovation. Furthermore, this condition has implications for English's standing as a foreign language in Indonesia. People have an increased interest in learning English, and there is an overall sense of public awareness of the role of English in the global context. The Indonesian government has acknowledged and responded to this problem, so in 1993 the government permitted schools to teach English as a local content subject at the elementary school level through a Decree issued by the Minister of Education. It is an excellent way to help students study English in their youth, hoping that learning at a younger age is better. While government policy and the English curriculum have shifted, elementary school teaching has grown, and these changes have been reflected in how the subjects are presented.

Keywords: *Policy, Implementation, English Learning, Elementary Schools*

1. INTRODUCTION

English has become an essential communication medium globally because of its international language and technology [1], [2]. With the increasingly globalized world and increasingly past technological advances, it is undeniable that mastery of the English language is one of the keys to getting better job opportunities or success. As part of the world community, Indonesia is aware of mastering the English language [3]. Therefore the teaching of English has long been applied in the world of Indonesian education.

English has long been an inseparable part of the education system in Indonesia, which was initially only given to higher education levels [4]–[6]. However, over time the need and popularity of the English language increased, which resulted in the curriculum for teaching English changing. To improve students' ability and mastery of English, the government finally began introducing English lessons at a lower level of education, namely at the basic education level [2], [7]–[9].

English as a foreign language in Indonesia has become a concern, especially in primary education, since the early 90s based on the importance of learning English as early as possible to compete in an increasingly modern and globalized world. This awareness finally made the government issue a policy through the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 0487/1992, Chapter VIII

[10], which states that Elementary schools can add subjects to their curriculum [11]–[13]. This policy ultimately underlies the inclusion of English subjects as part of local content in elementary schools.

It makes the popularity of English as a part of subjects in elementary schools overgrowing, elementary schools are competing to apply English in the classroom so that as a foreign language in Indonesia, English has experienced significant development. Even kindergarten schools have begun to introduce English [7], [14], [15]. English is a promotion for schools and pride for parents. Schools that teach English are considered more prestigious than schools that do not include English in their subjects [16]. Not surprisingly, in the early 2000s, parents tended to prefer sending their children to schools that offered English as part of the local content subject [17].

The position of Local Content as part of the subjects taught in elementary schools is a manifestation of the locally applicable section, which is intended to equip students with the skills deemed necessary by the region so that the provision of Local Content is adjusted to the surrounding circumstances and needs [8], [9], [15], [18]–[20]. In general, Local Content subjects are filled with regional languages. However, along with public awareness of the importance of English, many elementary schools have finally added English as Local Content. With the Local Content program, it is hoped that elementary school graduate students who do not

continue school have more skills in foreign languages that can be used to earn a living [21].

Moreover, Its' practice the addition of Local Content English can be given in elementary schools as long as the school considers the addition of Local Content to be relevant and under the surrounding conditions and the school can provide the necessary facilities related to learning materials and teachers to support learning English at the school [14], [22]. Article 14 of Government Regulation Number 28/1990 (paragraph 3) explicitly states that primary education can describe and or add study materials from subjects adapted to local needs. These regulations are the basis for the implementation of Local Content English in elementary schools.

In subsequent developments, Local Content English for elementary schools is increasingly recognized in the 2006 Education Unit Level Curriculum. Based on the Minister of National Education Regulation Number 22 of 2006 concerning Content Standards and the Minister of National Education Regulation Number 23 of 2006 concerning Graduate Competency Standards, English is local content (Depdiknas, 2006; Indonesia, 2009; Pemerintah RI, 2005). Compulsory for all elementary school students from grade I to grade VI, the allocation of learning time provided is 2x35 minutes of study hours per week [15], [20], [21], [25]. With the KTSP, almost all elementary schools in Indonesia include English as Local Content even though at first English was only taught in grades IV-VI, to be taught in all classes starting from grade I.

A drastic change to the Local Content position of English in elementary schools occurred in 2012 when the government planned to replace the KTSP with the 2013 curriculum. The 2013 curriculum prioritizes an equal and learner-centred education model to be more involved in the learning process [14], [20], [26], [27]. This curriculum prioritizes the right to freedom of learning while still upholding religious values, culture and national diversity.

With the plan to implement the 2013 curriculum, many experts argue that primary education should focus more on developing children's character through religious and cultural values that have become the norm in Indonesia [13], [20], [28]–[30]. This view then changed the structure of primary education where before children should be emphasized more on teaching about the religious values and culture of the State before they were exposed to foreign cultures (English). In addition, many also think that learning a foreign language will allow the loss of their language (Indonesian). Therefore, it is recommended that English should not be part of teaching in elementary schools.

Not long after that, in mid-2013, the government began to introduce the 2013 curriculum by appointing 2,598 model schools for elementary school levels throughout Indonesia [16], [30]–[34]. Unprepared curriculum changes enough and suddenly caused many problems in the field. The readiness of human resources and supporting facilities lacking is a complicated

problem at the beginning of its implementation. Many schools are not ready to change the structure of their curriculum and learning.

In addition to the readiness of schools to implement the new curriculum, there is another thing that is no less complicated, namely the elimination of the English language for elementary schools [7]–[9], [14], [15], [20], [21], [25]. In Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 67 of 2013 regarding elementary school curriculum pages 9 - 10, there is no mention of the existence of English subjects in elementary schools. Various questions arise regarding the implementation of English subjects in elementary schools, including local content (such as regional languages) or extracurricular activities. In addition, if the English language is abolished, what will happen to the fate of the English teachers in schools?

Based on the above problems, in 2014, the Ministry of Education revised the 2013 curriculum to improve the current curriculum, which is still applied to model schools. While schools that are not ready in structure and resources can apply KTSP as a teaching guide.

With this situation, schools that use KTSP still include English as Local Content, even for some schools that have implemented the 2013 curriculum, still include English as Local Content. Then what about the learning tools used? How is the application of Local Content English in the 2013 curriculum? With the background of these problems, this study aims to determine the implementation of English subjects in the 2013 curriculum.

2. METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. Qualitative research methodologies have the main objective of collecting descriptive etc. that describe the object of research in detail and depth to develop a concept or understanding of a phenomenon. It is done because it is realized that many things are impossible only through observation and measurements [35], [36].

The subjects of this study were English teachers and elementary school students in grades IV-VI who studied English by taking samples at the Jambi City State Elementary School. This research aims to implement the learning process of English subjects in the 2013 curriculum at the elementary school. The sample involved in this study was carried out purposively, namely English teachers and students at SDN Jambi.

The data collection of this research was carried out through the methods of observation, interviews and documentation. Data collection activities in the form of observations were carried out to observe how the implementation of English learning in Jambi City Elementary Schools. The activity used was the participant observation, where researchers directly observed the process of Teaching and Learning Activities of English subjects at the school. In addition to getting an initial description of KBM for English subjects, researchers also get data from learning tools

used by teachers as guidelines for implementing teaching and learning activities, including syllabus, lesson plans, package books, and worksheets used by both teachers and students.

Furthermore, the data used is to conduct interviews with teachers who teach English subjects. The researchers got further information about how the English subject teachers learn with various teaching methods and approaches from the interviews.

The following data collection is documentation, where the researcher documents the teaching tools of teachers and students in the form of syllabus, lesson plans, and various accompanying books used by teachers and students. The previously mentioned documents were then used as research material for analysis to determine the extent to which the implementation of English subjects in the 2013 Curriculum by the subject teachers in Jambi City Elementary Schools.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To find out how English subjects are implemented at Elementary Schools in Jambi, the following will describe the results of interviews and observations carried out in the stages of research conducted by researchers. Q = Researcher's Question, A = Teacher's Answer

Q: What curriculum is applied at the Jambi City Elementary School, ma'am?

A: We still use a mixture of KTSP and 2013 Curriculum for the curriculum we are implementing.

Q: For English subjects, which grades get English subjects at this school, ma'am?

A: At SDN Jambi City, English is given starting in grade IV to grade VI. One hour lesson per week. 35 minutes.

The interview results show that the curriculum used for the school is following the demands of the curriculum imposed by the government for the elementary curriculum. It is just that at SDN, Jambi City continues to carry out Local Content English learning starting from grade IV even though currently the government regulation does not explain in detail the status of English Subjects in the 2013 Curriculum in each school unit, especially at the elementary school level. More detailed information about this is obtained from the following interview results:

Q: "English subjects at this school are included in extracurricular or local content, ma'am?"

A: "For English, it is included in Local Content".

Responding to the status of English subjects at SDN Jambi City, and related to Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 67 of 2013 concerning the Basic Framework and Curriculum Structure of Elementary Schools/Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, we can get a clear conclusion that the position or status of English subjects in elementary schools has not been mentioned. As local or extracurricular content. Thus it can be concluded that the position of English subjects is left to

the conditions of each school. Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 67 of 2013 concerning The Basic Framework and Structure of the Elementary School/Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Curriculum states that the subjects in the 2013 Curriculum consist of group A and group B wherein the two groups, there are no subjects that are included in Local Content.

By not mentioning what subjects are included in Local Content, it can be described that each elementary school has the flexibility to determine which subjects can be included in the Local Content. Based on this, some elementary schools still include English as part of the Local Content, including the Jambi City Elementary School. Moreover, because schools have the authority to determine their teaching patterns, the following interview questions relate to the learning strategies used.

Q: "What kind of learning methods are implemented in this school, ma'am?"

A: "For those that are following K-13, we use a scientific approach, because students are expected to find out on their own, for example, we use...there is material about fruits. Children grouped into several groups in one class then have to look for themselves about the types of fruit through books, maybe through others, or ask friends, and it is more like cooperative learning.

Q: "What are the problems/obstacles in teaching English that you often encounter, ma'am?"

A: "I do not think there is a severe problem. At least the children are still shy when asked to speak or appear in English. However, it is also perhaps children's different interests in English. Some are seriously interested, and some are less motivated. At least, you can work around this by interspersing learning while playing, so they do not get bored and enjoy learning English.

Q: "Then what about the children's English skills, ma'am?"

A: "Yes, mix it up, Ms There are those who have good abilities and are quick to catch lessons. Some are lacking. However, the average is the same. The problem with the children's pronunciation is that they are still lacking, and maybe they are still embarrassed to speak in English."

From the interview points above, it can be seen that the English teaching and learning process in schools does not experience significant obstacles in practice. Furthermore, the teacher applies the latest learning method, namely the 2013 curriculum, in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The most common problem teachers face in teaching English is that children are still shy or lack the confidence to speak English and the problem of low motivation to learn English for some students, which was then circumvented by the teacher with learning that included games in it [2], [7]–[9].

Furthermore, regarding the technical implementation of the curriculum in schools, the researchers tried to ask

the teachers about the lesson plans and the implementation of Local Content English in schools. The following is an excerpt from an interview with a teacher regarding the technical implementation of learning.

Q: "Regarding the curriculum that is implemented regarding Local Content in English, ma'am, how does the school overcome it and at the same time practice its implementation at SDN Jambi City?"

A: "Yes, because of your situation, we are still using the lesson plans according to the KTSP, but for the learning process in class, we adjust it as much as possible to the latest applicable curriculum. Because frankly, we are not able to fully implement the 2013 curriculum. There is still a lot to prepare."

Q: "What obstacles do you face in applying Local Content English at school today?"

G: "Actually, it is more about supporting material. Ms This means that by removing English from the 2013 curriculum, teaching manuals and student practice books are very rare.

Even if there is, the quality is not good. So as teachers we find it a bit difficult to find manuals and suitable English teaching methods for children. From the interview excerpt above, it can be described that the position of English for the latest curriculum has received less attention from the government.

The abolition of Local Content English subjects resulted in good quality teacher manuals and student exercise books. It is, of course ironic, that in an advanced era and English has become an inseparable part of modern society, today's world of Indonesian education does not seem to pay much attention to English language education at the primary level [14], [15].

Furthermore, to find out the opinions and expectations of students about learning English in the classroom, the following is a snippet of the results of the researcher's interviews with several samples of Jambi City Elementary School students.

Q: "Do you enjoy studying English at school?"

S1: "happy."

S2: "Happy".

S3: "normal."

Q: "Why do you like learning English? / why do you not like learning English?"

S1: "because it is fun to know a new language."

S2: "because I have always liked English."

S3: "I do not like it because it is hard to speak in English."

From the interview sample above, it can be said that most of the children like to learn English in class. However, some students are not interested in learning English, and that is because they have difficulty pronouncing English words. The problem is arguably reasonable, considering that English has a much different type of pronunciation from Indonesian [9], [12], [16], [20], [30].

The results of the following interview were about the children's opinion about the pattern of learning English, like what they wanted.

Q: "What kind of English do you like to learn? Is it inside or outside the classroom?"

S1: "outside class. So that we can play while learning."

S2: "outside class. Because I am tired of studying in a class all the time."

From the sample above, it can be seen that children prefer to study outside the classroom because learning outside the classroom will create a new atmosphere of learning activities. Children also expect a fun learning method where they can learn while playing. It is following the objectives of the 2013 curriculum, which prioritizes learning in a fun way and learning from the surrounding environment [14], [20], [37], [38]. With a new atmosphere, namely learning outside the classroom, children will be happier to be more enthusiastic about learning.

From the results of interviews with previous teachers and students, it can be said that English for this basic level is essential. Some schools still include English as local content even though it is not written in the 2013 curriculum. It is based on the teacher/school awareness of the importance of English in today's modern era. From the student's point of view, students generally feel happy to learn English, so it is not appropriate if schools at the elementary level eliminate English subjects.

4. CONCLUSION

English as a foreign language in Indonesia needs to be mastered, especially for primary and secondary education students. The abolition of English lessons at the basic education level is not appropriate because mastering the English language is crucial to compete with the world community in an increasingly globalized world. Therefore, learning English as early as possible is essential to equip elementary level students to have a primary English language to study at a higher level of education.

Based on observations in the field, there are still many things that need improvement in developing the 2013 curriculum, especially regarding eliminating English subjects as local content. This deletion resulted in the unclear position of the English language for the elementary level so that there were differences in the content of lessons between one school and another. The problem arising from this elimination is the loss of support for good learning facilities for good subjects.

The teacher does not have a good quality manual, resulting in students lacking good lesson input. The development of the 2013 curriculum that pays attention to the conditions of students and teachers and is by the needs of today's progress is significant so that the educational curriculum becomes genuinely effective and has a positive impact, especially for students and a better world of education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Researchers would like to thank the Ministry of Research and Technology / National Research and Innovation Agency, Indonesia. This research can not be possibly completed without any research funding assistance through a doctoral dissertation research program.

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