



English teachers' perceptions on English curriculums: A study of English curriculums applied at junior high schools in Indonesia and Malaysia

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to investigate English teachers' perceptions toward the curriculum applied at their schools. A total number of 10 English teachers participated in this study, in which 5 teachers teach at State Junior High School 12, Tangerang Selatan, Indonesia and the other 5 are teachers of SMK Mutiara Rini, Johor Bahru, Malaysia. This is a qualitative research which used questionnaire of curriculum analysis as the instrument to collect the data. There are 15 items stated in the questionnaire, rated from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". The responses of the respondents are analyzed descriptively and presented in the form of percentages. The findings show that most of English teachers in Indonesia found that the curriculum applies student-centered strategy. They also assured with English curriculum used and found this curriculum is appropriate to be applied as teaching guide. Besides, these teachers chose to further improve their teaching according to the curriculum of English. While most of teachers in Malaysia found that the curriculum covers their perception and needs. They also found that the approaches stated in the curriculum are applicable to be implemented.

Keywords: English curriculum, English curriculum in Indonesia, English curriculum in Malaysia, English teachers' perceptions

Introduction

Language has a central role in the development of intellectual, social, and emotional to support learners to be successful in studying all fields of subjects. Language also has an important role for human life. People express their ideas and desires through language. It is used as a medium to interact with one another to fulfill their daily needs. Language learning is expected to help students know themselves, their culture, and the culture of others. One of important languages should be learnt is English. As an international language, English is used as a bridge of communication among countries. English unites people worldwide for many purposes. All countries in the world have set this language as one of compulsory subjects studied at school including Indonesia. Nowadays, learning English is a vital demand that will help the students achieve their full potential in later life.

English functions in three types, i.e. as a mother tongue (L1), as a second language (L2) and foreign language (FL). Based on its function, English both as a second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) is taught in school based on the curriculum. The curriculum determines the design of the syllabus and teaching methods. Curriculum has been widely accepted as a key factor which influences the rate and success of second/foreign language.

There are many factors influence students' success in learning English and one of them is curriculum. As Mitchell (2015:9) claimed: "A learning process on an otherwise successful teaching materials for the instructional goals achieved based on curriculum. A curriculum should be designed based on form and chart provisions for the processes of teaching and learning. Students' experiences are shaped by the way of choosing the design of curriculum. In other words, its design

provides varied qualities and powers of experience and knowledge.

Based on the writers' experiences when observing SMK Mutiara Rini, Johor Bahru, Malaysia, at level 1 (the same level as first grade of Junior High School in Indonesia), it was found that the process of teaching and learning in this country is slightly different compared to that in Indonesia. English is taught as a second language in Malaysia. That is why the students become familiar with English. It was very easy to use English when interacting with them. English language teaching was understood by the students quickly.

While based on the writers' observation in Indonesia classrooms, English was considered difficult by the students. Not all students understand while interacting in English. The teachers sometimes found difficult teaching English to students. The curriculum in Indonesia only describes basic development of learning programs that correspond to this subject. English in Indonesia is focused more on individuals and theories. The content of the curriculum is not as detailed as the one belongs to Malaysia. Curriculum applied in Malaysia outlines three main sections, i.e. the learning outcomes to be achieved by learners, the language content to be incorporated into the lessons, and educational which emphasizes to be woven into materials and activities. The teaching there is focused more on pair-works and practice.

Literature Review

The changing of curriculum should be accompanied by educational goals that vary for these changes. There is a specific purpose to be achieved through the development of curriculum. In Indonesia, the development of the curriculum happened in several stages, i.e. Curriculum 1947 (Leer Plan),

Curriculum 1952 (Lesson Plans Unraveled), Curriculum 1964 (*Renthajana Pendidikan/Education Plan*), Curriculum 1968, Curriculum 1975, Curriculum 1984, Curriculum 1994, Curriculum 2004 (Competency-based Curriculum), Curriculum 2006 (Unit Level Curriculum), Curriculum 2013.

In the education in Indonesia nowadays, several schools still apply Curriculum 2006, known as the education unit level (KTSP), while several others use Curriculum 2013. KTSP was firstly halted in the early 2006. The review of this curriculum on content and target is not much different compared to Curriculum 2004. The most notable difference was that the teachers are given more freedom to adjust the syllabus in accordance with the learning environment, conditions of both students and the schools. However, basic framework (KD), competency standard (SKL) and basic competencies (SKKD) were designed by national education department)

Baswir, et.al (2003:108) ^[1] defined education as proposed by M.J. Langeveld (1999) ^[3] as a human effort to guide adult human immature to maturity. This notion implies that education is an activity to guide learners to become mature and have self-reliance. Education equips the learners to walk the life in the future. It cannot be separated from human perspective and humanity. In Indonesia, the importance of education is reflected in the Constitution of 1945 which stipulates that education is the right of every citizen.

Todaro & Smith (2003:28) ^[7] stated that education plays a key role in shaping human ability to absorb modern technology, and to develop the capacity to create growth and sustainable development. It can be used to reach a satisfying and rewarding life. Education will form a broader human capabilities that are at the core meaning of development of a nation.

According to Rahman & Ahmad (1995) ^[6], the national curriculum promotes unity through the use of a single medium of instruction (the national language) and the provision of the same core subjects for all students in all schools within the national education system. However, the cultural diversity of different ethnic groups in Malaysia is preserved through the existence of national type of schools which are allowed to use other major ethnic languages as the medium of instruction. The underlying theoretical principle of national curriculum formulation is that of general education, using an integrated approach in curriculum planning. The curriculum comprises content and skills, with the emphasizing on the development of basic skills, the acquisition of knowledge and thinking skills. Each subject must also incorporate moral values and attitudes and also the correct use of Malay and other languages, such as English, Chinese and Tamil. The integrated approach is the main focus in the design of Integrated Curriculum both for Primary and Secondary levels of education. The elements of knowledge, skills and values are incorporated to bring the integrated development of intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects of the individuals.

In the context of its education system, the curriculum in Malaysia aims to build human resources that are unparalleled in terms of academic. The curriculum emphasizes learning and skills development as the way to lead the community to be able to practice lifelong learning. The lessons offered in the

curriculum should maximize the potentiality of individuals in terms of intellectual, physical and spiritual. In Malaysia, the development of the curriculum happened in two stages, i.e. Curriculum KSSR (Low standard school curriculum) and Curriculum KBSM (Integrated secondary school curriculum). Low standard school curriculum (KSSR) was implemented for one year at all schools in 2011. The main focus of this curriculum was to allow students to achieve proficiency in three areas of principles; field of communications, humanities and natural surroundings as well as individual development. This curriculum was distributed to the two ratings, i.e. a single stage (one to three grades), for a period of three years and the beginning of phase two (four to six grades) for a period of three years ending in schools low ratings.

Curriculum KBSM was implemented gradually at schools from 2013. In terms of language learning, this curriculum focuses more on 4 major languages in Malaysia; Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil. The secondary education under this curriculum has the vision to develop the potential of individuals to become balanced and integrated. This integrity has the correlation and tight linkage between philosophy and education.

Methodology

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive research is a research that seeks to describe a phenomenon and events that occur in the present. In other words, the study takes issue or focus on actual problems during the research. According to Norman (2006:8) ^[5], “qualitative research aims to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the subject of the study such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, and others, holistically and by way of description in the form of words and language, by utilizing a variety of natural methods.

Main data of this study were the perceptions of English teachers towards English curriculums applied by their schools, i.e. KTSP (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan – Unit level curriculum*) used by State Junior High School 12 Tangerang Selatan, Indonesia and KBSM (*Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah -- Integrated curriculum*) applied by SMK Mutiara Rini, Johor Bahru, Malaysia. The instrument used to collect the data was a-Likert scale English curriculum analysis. The questionnaire comprises 15 statements asking the respondents’ perceptions related to curriculum used. The questionnaire was modified by the writers, thus, it was firstly validated by the lecturer expert in the curriculum before being distributed to the respondents. There were 10 respondents of this study. Those respondents consisted of 5 English teachers of each school mentioned above. The scales in the questionnaire are rated from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”.

The data were analyzed descriptively and presented in the form of percentages. Each response from each teacher was firstly categorized based on each scale.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the analysis of teachers’ perceptions toward the curriculum applied at their schools, the following graphic present both data from teachers’ feedback of the two schools:

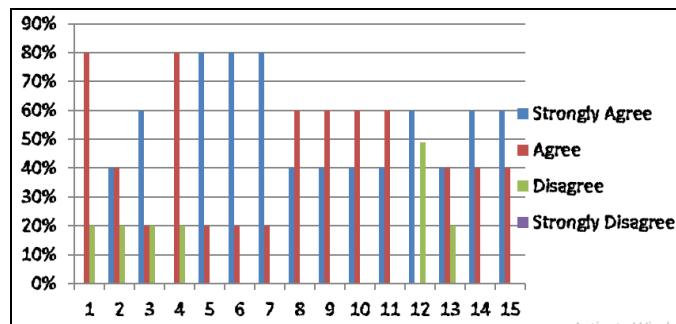


Fig 1: SMPN 12 English teachers' responses on English curriculum questionnaire

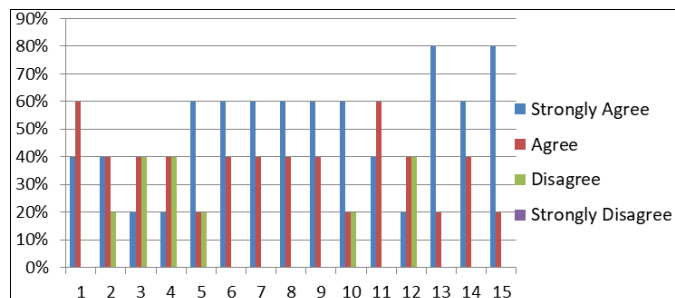


Fig 2: SMK Mutiara Rini English teachers' responses on English curriculum questionnaire

Based on the results presented on the graphics above, it can be seen that 80% English teachers in Indonesia strongly agreed with the statement number 5: "I think students' individual differences are considered in English curriculum". It shows that most of English teachers in Indonesia apply students-centered classrooms as it is required by the curriculum. There were 80% of the teachers strongly agreed with the statement number 6: "I think English curriculum tends to be implemented". It can be seen that English teachers chose to further improve their teaching according to the curriculum of English, because, the curriculum in Indonesia already to be implemented to teaching. A total number of 80% of English teachers in Indonesia strongly agreed with the statement number 7: "I find proper English curriculum appropriate". This implies that teachers of English in Indonesia were already assured with the English curriculum and they found it appropriate to be applied as their teaching guidance. While for English teachers in Malaysia, it can be interpreted that most of them (80%) strongly agreed with the statement number 13: "I think English curriculum reflect teachers' perception and needs". This result showed that those teachers were supported by the curriculum which covered their perception and needs. Total number of 80% of the English teachers strongly agreed with the statement number 15: "I find approaches (multiple intelligence theory, problem-based learning, etc.) in English curriculum applicable". This reflected how English teachers found approaches stated in their curriculum were applicable to be implemented. Based on those findings, it can be seen that English teachers of Indonesian school and English teachers of Malaysia school had different perceptions toward the curriculum applied at their education system. Their preferences fell into different items. However, overall, most of them gave positive perceptions toward their curriculums.

Conclusions

Language learning is expected to help students know themselves, their culture, and the culture of others. One of important languages should be learnt is English. As an international language, English is used as a bridge of communication among countries. There are many factors influence students' success in learning English and one of them is curriculum.

The changing of curriculum should be accompanied by educational goals that vary for these changes. There is a specific purpose to be achieved through the development of curriculum. In Indonesia, the development of the curriculum happened in several stages, i.e. Curriculum 1947 (Leer Plan), Curriculum 1952 (Lesson Plans Unraveled), Curriculum 1964 (*Renthajana Pendidikan*/Education Plan), Curriculum 1968, Curriculum 1975, Curriculum 1984, Curriculum 1994, Curriculum 2004 (Competency-based Curriculum), Curriculum 2006 (Unit Level Curriculum), Curriculum 2013. In the context of its education system, the curriculum in Malaysia aims to build human resources that are unparalleled in terms of academic. The curriculum emphasizes learning and skills development as the way to lead the community to be able to practice lifelong learning. The lessons offered in the curriculum should maximize the potentiality of individuals in terms of intellectual, physical and spiritual. In Malaysia, the development of the curriculum happened in two stages, i.e. Curriculum KSSR (Low standard school curriculum) and Curriculum KBSM (Integrated secondary school curriculum). As the main data of this study, the analysis of English teachers' perceptions toward English curriculum applied by their schools, showed different perceptions given by English teachers of Indonesian school and English teachers of Malaysia school. Their preferences fell into different items. However, overall, most of them gave positive perceptions toward their curriculums.

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