

# Removing English as Compulsory Subject from Primary Schools on the 2013 Curriculum Based on Teachers' Opinion

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**Abstract-** The Indonesian government has recently started implementing the 2013 Curriculum. There are some aspects are revised in that curriculum. One of them is removing English as compulsory subject in the primary School level. It has been a contradiction among many parties such as teachers, parents' group and education observers. Therefore this paper tries to present Teachers' Opinion about—removing English as compulsory subject in the primary school level. The population in this research is all teachers that were taught by the researcher during PLPG (Training for Certified Teachers) on August 2014 at rayon LPTK university of Jambi. The data were collected through questionnaire. Random cluster sampling was used here. From the data analysis, it can be concluded that majority of teachers who become samples do not agree if the English subject is removed from elementary school level.

**Index Terms-** English subject, Primary school, 2013 curriculum

## I. INTRODUCTION

Pros and cons of implementing the 2013 curriculum is still happening today in the community, particularly the academic community. What I mean by the academic community here is teachers from the basic level up to the upper secondary level. Complaints that I heard when interacting with them is "oh no, new curriculum again. Whereas most of us are still confused about the previous curriculum

Such comments are given by the majority of teachers that I asked. But what can be said, the government has its own thoughts in making changes to the curriculum in Indonesia. Decision has been made. Like it or not, "actors" in the field must accept and apply it. Although it will have to spend so much money to disseminate and apply it in schools. It seems this is not an obstacle for the government. As stated by Gumilar (2013) "The Indonesian government had allocated US\$ 257 million to plan and implement the new curriculum, half of which will go towards the printing of new textbooks"

Socialization of the curriculum is still quite intensively conducted from the central to the stricken areas. Even, this 2013 curriculum becomes as one of the teaching materials in PLPG (Professional Teacher training education). Teachers who will get a certificate as a professional educator

must take this training. And in this training, they are introduced to the 2013 curriculum.

There are many changes in the curriculum 2013. One of them is removing English as intra curricular subject in elementary School. English cannot be learnt as curricular subject as in the previous curriculum. In the 2013 curriculum, English for elementary is only included as an extra-curricular subjects. This means they cannot learn English as in the previous curriculum anymore.

Many people regretted the decision, but not a few people support it. Based on the condition in the field as I stated above, I am motivated to have a research entitled Teachers' Opinion about Removing English As Compulsory Subject In The Primary School Level

The research question is: "How is teachers' opinion about Removing English as Compulsory Subject in the Primary School Level?"

The purpose of his research is to find out. teachers' Opinion about Removing English as Compulsory Subject in the Primary School Level

The significances of this research are:

1. For the government: It is as an input in making future policy
2. For the teacher: it can be a medium to express their ideas.
3. For researchers: It gives new knowledge and experience about what are being studied.

## II. RELATED LITERATURE

In this part, I will try to review the literatures related to this paper. The first is about the concept of learning English as foreign language for children and the second is about Curriculum

### Learning English as foreign language for the children

#### Advantages of Learning English as foreign language for the children

Brilliant Publication (2014) stated 10 reasons for teaching foreign languages in primary school. They are :

1. Learning a new language is fun
2. It's best to start early
3. Develops self confidence
4. Enriches and enhances children's mental development.

5. Improves children understanding of English
6. Encourage positive attitudes to foreign languages
7. Broaden children's horizons
8. The ideal place to start
9. Help children in later careers
10. It's great when you go holiday

Among ten reasons above, I will explain some. The first is no 2, It's best early to start. Brilliant Publication (2014) explains that Primary pupils are very receptive to learning a new language. They are willing and able to mimic pronunciation without the inhibitions and self-consciousness of older students. The second is no 4 that is Enriches and enhances children's mental development. Brilliant Publication (2014) mentioned International studies have shown repeatedly that foreign language learning increases critical thinking skills, creativity, and flexibility of mind in young children. Pupils who learn a foreign language do better on both verbal and math tests than those that don't. Learning a foreign language actually increases the density of 'grey matter' in the brain and the number of synapses, that interconnect parts of the brain.

Then, Sukarno (2008) said that the teaching and learning of English in elementary school provides the students' English language competencies in the golden age –the age that children can learn anything easily. The two of those competencies are called linguistic competence and linguistic performance.

Furthermore Wang Qiang (2002) in his paper entitled Primary School English Teaching in China – New Developments, mentioned the main aims of primary English:

- to develop pupils' interests, self-confidence and positive attitude towards learning English;
- to cultivate the pupils' language sense and enable good pronunciation and intonation;
- to develop the pupils' preliminary ability to use English in daily exchanges and lay a good basis for further study.

It is still from Qiang (2002), he said that since the start of the new millennium, the Chinese government has become increasingly concerned with the upgrading the level of English of all Chinese citizens. It was decided in early 2001 that English would be offered at primary level from September of that year.

From that statement, implicitly, it can be understood that one of advantages of learning English at Primary level is the students will be easy or ready to face new millennium with high competition around the world where English is as International language.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that there are so many advantages of Learning English as foreign language for the children.

### **Disadvantages of Learning English as foreign language for the children**

To make it balance, beside discussing the advantages, I also will discuss about Disadvantages of learning English as foreign language for the children by overviewing the experts' ideas.

According to Verial (n.d) Foreign language education puts a cognitive strain on a child, a strain that can bring benefits and

detriments. He mentioned that there are some disadvantages to children learning a foreign language. They are:

- **Language Setbacks:** Learning a new language puts extra cognitive strain on children
- **Cultural Discrepancies:** due to the intimate link between language and culture, your child will get a taste of a foreign culture. This can result in cultural confusion in some cases, especially when a child is of a multi-ethnic background.
- **Barriers to Mastery:** children who start learning a new language in later years will always have a "foreign" accent, which can cause misunderstandings and impede. future opportunities in using that language professionally.
- **The Bright Side:** the language learning delay that causes a child to be weaker in both his native and second language dissipates as she approaches her preteens.

When reading the article written by Vareal (n.d) entitled "disadvantages to children learning a foreign language", I found that in that article he also discusses about the advantages of children learning a foreign language. He combined between advantages and disadvantages. So, I think it is not relevant to his article title. For example: in the point "The Bright Side", at the end he wrote "In addition, learning a foreign language brings children more cognitive challenges that result in better skills. For example, the addition of a new grammar predisposes children to seeking out rules, making them stronger in logic and math. Additionally, the learned ability of switching from one language to another helps children build concentration skills." So, I think the statement is about the advantages of learning foreign language for children, not disadvantages as in the article title.

From all ideas about advantages and disadvantages of Learning English as foreign language for the children that have been discussed above, I conclude that there is no doubt that Learning English as foreign language for the children has more advantages than disadvantages.

### **Curriculum 2013**

The new curriculum will focus on character development for elementary school students, skill development for junior high school and knowledge building for senior high school (The Jakarta Post, 2012). Because my topic is focused on elementary curriculum, so for the next, I will just discuss about it.

Mulyasa (2013) wrote some changes in 2013 curriculum for elementary level that distinguish it from previous curriculum. They are:

1. **Thematic-integrative:** The learning teaching process will be done based on theme. It means some subjects are combined into one based on the theme.
2. **Eight subjects:** There are ten subjects in the previous curriculum, but in the 2013 curriculum, the ten subjects become eight subjects. Namely Religion, Math, Indonesian, , social, science, civics education, arts and skills (local content), and physical education (local content) .
3. **Boy scouts** as compulsory extra- curricular subject.

- 4. **The learning time will be longer.**
- 5. **English is only as extracurricular subject.**

Talking about English just as extracurricular Subject, or in other words, it is omitted from intra curricular subject, Deputy Education and Culture Minister, Musliar Kaslim (2012) in Koran Sindo (2012) said that the omission aimed to give ample time for students to master the Indonesian language first before diving into foreign languages.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The data were collected through questionnaire. The questioners consists of closed questioners. The population in this research is all teachers that were taught by the researcher during PLPG on August 2014 at rayon LPTK university of Jambi. There were three classes. 1 class consisted of all elementary teachers and two other classes consists of English teachers from Junior until senior high school teachers. They come from various districts such as, Kerinci, Sarolangun, Tanjung Jabung, etc. To focus the analysis of data, the researcher only took 2 classes. One class is from elementary teacher class that consists of 33 teachers and Another class is a class for English teacher at junior and senior high school that consists of 18 teachers. So, junior and senior English teacher were put in one class during the training (PLPG). The researcher used Random cluster sampling.

The questionnaires were distributed to teachers. For one class, the researcher allowed them to bring and answer the questionnaires at their room (they live in the hotel during that training/PLPG). And then, the next day, the questionnaires were collected. And for another class, the researcher asked them to answer in the class. It took about 15-20 minutes to answer the questionnaires. It was done based on consideration that if they did it in the class, the questionnaires could be answered directly and the reason "forget to answer or lose the questionnaire sheet" of course will not happen.

It's the foremost preliminary step for proceeding with any research work writing. While doing this go through a complete thought process of your Journal subject and research for it's viability by following means:

- 1) Read already published work in the same field.
- 2) Goggling on the topic of your research work.
- 3) Attend conferences, workshops and symposiums on the same fields or on related counterparts.
- 4) Understand the scientific terms and jargon related to your research work.

### IV. FINDINGS AND DISSCUSSION

**Table (1)** The result of Data Analysis for Questionnaires from Elementary School Teachers

No	Questionnaire	Percentage	
		Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
1.	In the globalization era, English is very important	100	0

2.	English has to be taught since elementary school	84	16
3.	in curriculum 2013, English is not as compulsory subject at elementary school anymore	64	34
4.	In curriculum 2013, English is only as extra-curricular subject at elementary school	64	34

**Table (2)** The result of Data Analysis for Questionnaires from Junior and Senior High School Teachers

No	Questionnaire	Percentage	
		Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
1.	In the globalization era, English is very important	100	0
2.	English has to be taught since elementary school	89	11
3.	in curriculum 2013, English is not as compulsory subject at elementary school anymore	39	61
4.	In curriculum 2013, English is only as extra-curricular subject at elementary school	39	61

From the two tables above, it can be seen that the percentage in answering each questionnaire between the first group (elementary school teacher) and the second class (Junior and Senior High School Teachers ) is difference except no1.

For the questionnaire no 1: **In the globalization era, English is very important.** All teachers from the two classes chose 'agree'. No one chose "disagree.

I assume it is influenced by their background knowledge about English. They got the ideas from many sources, such as television, product instruction when the bought it, or information from someone, electronic media, etc. that exposed about the importance of English nowadays. All ideas influenced the way of their thinking. That is why no one disagree when they were asked to give opinion about the statement "In the globalization era, English is very important." All of them agree with that statement.

For the questionnaire no 2: **English has to be taught since elementary school.** Majority of teachers from both classes

agree with that statement. Almost 90% of teachers agree with that statement.

For the questionnaire no 3: **in curriculum 2013, English is not as compulsory subject at elementary school anymore** and For the questionnaire no 4: **In curriculum 2013, English is only as extra-curricular subject at elementary school**

There is a contradictive option between class of elementary school teachers and junior, senior high school teachers dealing with questionnaire no 3 and 4. Most of elementary school teachers chose “Agree” for the Q no 3 and 4, where the percentage is 64 for “Agree” and 36 for “disagree”. On the contrary, Most junior, senior high school teachers chose “disagree”, where the percentage is 61 for “disagree” and 39 for “agree”.

I assume it happened because of different concept about Learning English for children, in this case, elementary school students that the teachers have. And the concept is built by some factors. One of them is background knowledge. The elementary teachers who are not from English background, who did not get specific theory about Language. It might be they never know or hear the advantages of learning foreign language based on the linguist or language researcher. Such as, there is the research result that stated the teaching and learning of English in elementary school provides the students’ English language competencies in the **golden age** –the age that children can learn anything easily (sukarno, 2008).

If the English subject is just put as extracurricular subject, and then the extra-curricular subject is not compulsory subject like boy scouts , I am sure not all students will get English and they will lose the golden age as I stated before.

Furthermore, If I relate to the theory and reality based on my experience when I was a child, let say elementary school.. unconsciously, I learnt more than one language after my mother tongue. My mother tongue is Kerinci language and my second languages are Indonesian and Minang language. I got Indonesian language at school because all of text books were written in Indonesian, and then the teacher also used Indonesian in teaching. Next I used to hear Minang language in the market because that language was commonly used as media of communication for trading. Although I learnt more than one language beside my mother tongue, it did not make me hard to master my mother tongue as my first language. Based on that condition, I can get conclusion that it does not matter if the children learn more than one language. Therefore the government’s reason of removing English as intra curricular subject from elementary school curriculum in order to give ample time for students to master the Indonesian language is not totally correct. Actually, They have had much time to learn Indonesian because most of text books are written in Indonesian and I am sure the teachers also use Indonesian in explaining the lesson.

Why in the English teachers part, most of them disagree if in curriculum 2013, English is not as compulsory subject at elementary school anymore. I think, once again, because they have linguistics background knowledge that they got from previous education, while the elementary teachers do not have.

**Table (3)** The result of Data Analysis for Questionnaires from Elementary, Junior and Senior High School Teachers

No	Questionnaire	Percentage	
		Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
1.	In the globalization era, English is very important	100	0
2.	English has to be taught since elementary school	86	14
3.	in curriculum 2013, English is not as compulsory subject at elementary school anymore	56	44
4.	In curriculum 2013, English is only as extra-curricular subject at elementary school	56	44

The table above displays percentage of “agree” and “disagree” chosen by all teachers, after being combined between English teachers’ and elementary teachers’ opinion.

Overall, from the table, there are no significant differences from the previous table.

The slight difference happens on questionnaire no 3 and 4, that is about 12 percent. This happens because the total number teachers from elementary level is bigger than senior-junior high school teachers. I am sure if the total number of teachers from senior-junior high school was bigger than teachers from elementary school, the percentage who chose disagree for questionnaire no 3 and 4 would be bigger.

## V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

From the data analysis, it can be concluded that majority of teachers who become sample in this research agree that English should be taught from elementary school. In other words they do not agree if the English is removed from elementary school level.

From finding and conclusion, It can be Suggested to the government as the policy maker to consider to the teachers’ voice before making a policy especially that policy dealing with the education because the teachers are also as one of important parties in education field.

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