TEACHERS' STRATEGY IN IMPLEMENTING ENGLISH CURRICULUM IN A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: This study is a part of a bigger study investigating teachers' personal theories (beliefs) regarding English teaching and learning. Involving forty-two English teachers of fifteen Junior High Schools in the city of Sukabumi, West Java, this cross-sectional survey study used data gained from an open-ended questionnaire. From the total of 3696 raw data items, the data sets were then analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Relevant findings regarding the implementation of the curriculum in the daily process of English teaching and learning show that there are gaps between the mandated curriculum as stipulated by the government and the implemented curriculum at the classroom level. This departure from the mandated curriculum, in turn, diverts the course of curriculum implementation and leads to a level of accomplishment of the main goals of the English teaching and learning which is different from what is stated in the mandated curriculum.

Keywords: English, teaching, learning, mandated curriculum, and implemented curriculum.

Abstrak: Kajian ini adalah bagian dari kajian yang lebih besar yang meneliti teori-teori (kepercayaan) pribadi guru sehubungan dengan pengajaran dan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Dengan melibatkan empat puluh dua guru bahasa Inggris dari lima belas Sekolah Menengah Pertama di kota Sukabumi, Jawa Barat, kajian "survey penampang silang" ini memanfaatkan data yang diperoleh dari angket terbuka-tertutup. Dari total 3696 data mentah, satuan data kemudian dianalisis secara kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Temuan-temuan yang relevan berkenaan dengan penerapan kurikulum dalam proses sehari-hari pengajaran dan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris menunjukkan adanya ketimpangan antara kurikulum yang diberikan seperti yang ditetapkan oleh pemerintah dan kurikulum yang diterapkan di tingkat keas. Ketidaksesuaian ini menyimpangkan arah penerapan kurikulum dan membawa pada tingkat pencapaian tujuan-tujuan utama pengajaran dan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris yang berbeda dari yang dinyatakan dalam kurikulum yang diamanatkan.

Kata kunci: Bahasa Inggris, pengajaran, pembelajaran, kurikulum yang diamanatkan, dan kurikulum yang diterapkan.

Many scholars who have conducted intensive and extensive studies on teachers and their conceptions and teaching activities, such as Anderson and Reynolds (1995), Ballone and Czerniak (2001), Fang (1996), Murphy (1999), and Pajares (1992), put forward that teachers' conception about the nature of teaching and learning (e.g. their conceptions about the subject matter that they taught, how students learn, how to facilitate students' learning, as well as how they conceptualize their work) guides and determines their pedagogical decisions and practices as well as their development throughout their professional lives. More specifically, according to Yero (2002), individual teachers—through their conscious or unconscious participation (or lack thereof)—have the power to make or break reform efforts. They shape the curriculum according to their own beliefs, teach their

own personal values through the implicit curriculum, and operate their classrooms in accordance with their own particular definitions of teaching and learning.

As a matter of fact, curriculum as mandated by Ministry of National Education sets parameters that should confine teachers' instructional decision-making at the school level. However, as the implementers of the curriculum who translate it into practice, teachers are often confronted with many contextual problems that, in effect, "force" them to make decisions, which are not fully consistent with the aspiration of the mandated curriculum. These contextual forces include the lack of teaching and learning sources, parental demand (that their children should pass the English subject with good scores), test systems, etc. This kind of condition, in turn, drives the teachers to create and internalize their own maps that serve as the bases for making decisions and, in practice, becomes the teachers' implemented curriculum. Consequently, there are gaps between the curriculum mandated by the government and the curriculum that is implemented by the teachers in their daily teaching and learning process. This practice can lead to different levels of completion in attaining the main goals of the English teaching and learning as stated in the mandated curriculum.

Ideally, an education system should form a coherent whole from the upstream (at the central level) to downstream (at the school level). In practice, however, the system manifests differently in different places. Take this as an example: All teachers who participated in the study (100%) considered students' good scores as the major parameter used to justify the success of their teaching. This led the teachers—consciously or subconsciously—to teach English to the test. In this case, test has been one of influential aspects of teaching context (Borg and Burns, 2006) that has shaped teachers' beliefs about

themselves, about others, and the worlds around them (Murphy, 1999), and also has influenced almost every decision that they make (Chiang, 2003; Richards and Lockhart, 1995). Test, that is to say, drives instruction.

With high spirit of services, teachers have made a great deal of attempts to assist their students in learning English, although the decisions are contentious. The data in this study revealed that although basically the teachers believe that all the skills are important and should be taught in an integrated way in every session (as stated in the mandated curriculum), the content of the test which has been found to be disproportional in terms of number of questions addressing each of macro linguistic skills and language elements influence the teachers to deliberately take reductionistic views on the teaching of English, including reduction of macro linguistic skills, reduction of language elements, reduction of teaching activities, and reduction of English test.

In the following sections, this article will present and discuss some findings relative to how the teachers of English at junior high school level in a regency in West Java implement the English curriculum to meet the kinds of demands coming from their actual teaching and learning contexts.

METHOD
This study is a descriptive (non-experimental) research in nature. It attempts to find out certain variables that are not easily identified or too embedded in the phenomenon to be extracted for study. No manipulations or treatments of subjects were devised in this study—the variables were characterized as they were.

In this non-experimental study, a total population of fifteen Junior High Schools in a regency in West Java was involved as the participants in the study. This level of schooling was chosen because it is the first level of education where English has been

officially taught and, therefore, English teaching at this level can hold decisive impacts on students' further learning. In addition, logistically speaking, these schools were relatively easier to access because the researcher was one of the English teachers.

To ensure that the data reflect a full picture of the condition, the total number of schools—represented by forty-two teachers of English—was taken as participants of the study. These participating teachers were non-native teachers of English. The majority of these teachers were female (61.90%) and the rest of them were male (38.10%). Most of them hold an S1 (bachelor's degree) as their highest degree (90.48%), or had D1 (one-year university diploma) (2.38%) and D3 (three-year university diploma) (2.38%). They all majored in English Education. Meanwhile, the remaining two respondents hold an S1 degree from different specialty areas of educational background (4.76%): one majored in Mechanical Engineering and the other majored in Management. In addition, the majority of the teachers reported that they had never taken any additional English courses (83.33%), while the rest did (16.67%).

In order to collect, organize, and integrate the data, this study employed a cross sectional survey as its research design. This research design was employed because of the nature of the research questions as well as the scope of the study that involved a total number of populations of a relatively large geographic area (Merriam and Simpson, 1989; Merriam, 1991; Fowler, 1995; Scheureun, 2000; Trochim, 2001; McMillan and Schumacher, 2001; Walonick, 2004; Connor, 2006; Coe, 2006; etc.).

In order to collect the necessary data, the researcher administered a set of self-administered written questionnaire, which provides direct quotations, to the respondents. This instrument was chosen essentially for two reasons. One reason is that questionnaire is a very effective way to gain data from a big number of participants like in this study and, secondly, because it is less intrusive compared to any other data collection method (such as telephone or face-to-face surveys)—the participants were free to answer the questions on their own timetable.

The questionnaire utilized in this study comprises fifty-seven main questions. All of these questions were developed based on the research questions that had been composed based on theories (through careful writing, editing, reviewing, and rewriting). In order to probe detailed information, most of the questions were open-ended and few of them were closed ones. According to Fowler (1995), asking open-ended questions is among the best ways to increase response, especially to measure complex matter. Fowler (1995) further emphasized that although the measurement result may not be as easy to work with; participants like to answer some questions in their own words.

Furthermore, to ensure the validity of their responses, some questions were deliberately designed with a specific function to check the participants' consistency. Besides, given that this study applied no other data collecting procedures, some sub-questions investigating the "hows" and "whys" related to certain main questions were given in order to solicit more information and to verify their responses.

In order to establish the whole pictures of the findings, the data gained were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. More specifically, the data were analyzed through precisely nine careful steps. *First*, every respondent was assigned a number (as an identity). *Second*, the respondents' responses were typed under each question consistent with the identification number of the respondents— this resulted in 88 sets of data. This typing process was done to file the raw data, to make the data more user-friendly and to

make the analyses easier. Besides, this procedure made the verification of participants' consistency possible. It also made more straightforward the process of data analyses of every response and across responses of a question as well as across questions under the same issue and across issues. *Third*, each data set was read repeatedly to identify recurring topics. In this step, the recurring topics (the keywords stated on each response) were then highlighted using various kinds of symbol (e.g.●,*, ¤) and colorful highlighters. In some cases, especially in analyzing closed questions, the processes were easier because the questions had directly provided the themes (such as important/not that important/unimportant), in which the data could be put into nominal-level categories right after applying the themes into the responses. *Fourth*, the recurring topics coming from each data set were organized into themes relevant to items of the questions in the questionnaire.

Afterwards, in the *fifth* step, the recurring themes were rearranged into categories (per data set), for example: language aspects, language skills, etc. In the *sixth* step, the categories were copied into a separate list of items complimented with number of respondents. This procedure made possible the calculation of each category into percentages. *Seventh*, the data sets, which have been converted into categories and percentages, were organized based on corresponding research questions. Because all research questions required information from many different items of questions, references were made to "maps of questions" already prepared beforehand. In this way, all related information items could be put together. From this grouping, formulation of finding for each research question became possible. *Eight*, the (big number of) categories in each group of data set were reformulated into fewer bigger categories—there are four groups of data

sets, including data sets about teachers' beliefs about English, about learning English, teaching English, and about the teachers' job. Finally, in the *ninth* step, a statement of generalization based on the final categories organized under each research question was formulated.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Curriculum has long been considered as the most important guidelines and component of teaching and learning processes needed by teachers to achieve the purposes of their teaching activities. Related to this, the result of data analyses revealed that the teachers believed that *curriculum* and lesson plans were the most important guidelines that they mainly consulted in determining their daily teaching and learning activities—including in deciding on the exercises and evaluation that they usually administer, as shown in the Table 1.

Furhermore, the majority of the teachers agreed that curriculum was the reference they primarily consulted to do the following things: to choose the topic(s) they regularly presented in their daily English teaching activities (92.86%), to develop their lesson plans (88.10%), and to choose quality teaching sources (namely, English textbooks and students' worksheets) both for the teachers and students (80.95%). In other words, it can be inferred that the teachers found themselves comfortable when they did English teaching based on curriculum—consulting curriculum is considered the best way for the purposes of their teaching activities.

However, although the teachers believed that curriculum was the major teaching guideline, in general, most of the teachers reported that facilitating their students to learn the materials stated in the curriculum was difficult because the materials to cover and the number of students to teach in every classroom were too many, whereas the allocated time and supporting materials and learning facilities were limited (85.71%). For example, in the context of 2004 curriculum, some teachers found the curriculum unrealistic in terms of both contents and expectations.

Table 1.The most important teaching guidelines

Daily teaching and learning Guidelines	Number of occurrences	Percentages
Curriculum and lesson plans	36/36	85.71%
The order of activities available in the student workbooks (LKS)	30	71.43%
The order of activities available in the textbook	27	64.29%
Guidance from the MGMP	19	45.24%
The agreement with the students	15	35.71%

As a matter of fact, when the teachers were asked about things that they do not understand about 2004 curriculum, most of them commented on its impracticality (54.76%). They agreed that this curriculum was difficult and had no relevance to classroom conditions in their context whose students were too many. They said that the curriculum set too high standards of goals of learning—the goals were unrealistic. Furthermore, the curriculum made them uncertain about the implementation of text-based teaching and learning, and the intended evaluation system. In the teachers' understanding, actually the curriculum put teaching and learning writing as the primary goal. In addition, the curriculum was impractical because, while the teaching and learning process is supposed to be based on kinds of text types, certain text types are indeed quite difficult to locate.

Meanwhile, other teachers reported that the curriculum was difficult in terms of technical complexities (45.24%). These teachers said that they were confused about how to apply the newest genre-based teaching and learning cycles that consist of four levels, namely building knowledge of field (BKOF), modeling of text (MOT), joint construction of text (JCOT), and independent construction of text (ICOT). They wondered about what kind of method was best suited with these cycles because the curriculum brings into play certain learning approach(namely communication-based approach, literacy-based approach and genre-based approach).

Table 2. Responses about 2004 Curriculum

Thing(s) I understand from the curriculum	Percentages
The 2004 Curriculum emphasizes the mastery of standard competency of English in order to produce students who are communicatively competent both in spoken and written mode	33.34%
The 2004 Curriculum emphasizes the teaching and learning process based on text types/genre, in which its focus is more on writing skill	26.19%
The 2004 Curriculum requires the students to be active learners	26.19%
The cycles of teaching and learning process cover the BKOF, MOT, JCOT, and ICOT	2.38%
Non-response	11.90%

- The 1994 Curriculum is more comprehensible and applicable than the 2004 curriculum (7.14%).
   - The materials to be taught (2.38%).
   - The process of making the teaching aids (2.38%).	

Total	100%

Therefore, it can be said that while, indeed, teachers found difficulties in implementing 2004 curriculum, it is clear that these difficulties stem primarily from the nature of the curriculum which is impractical. Additionally, another contributing factor of the difficulties is lack of socialization. As a matter of fact, in response to question about the thing(s) that they understand from the curriculum, the teachers gave quite various responses (as shown in Table 2).

In fact, thorough analyses of the data gained in this study, it is found that the teachers conceptualized teaching and learning English as the teaching and learning of macro linguistic skills (85.71%). However, although they believed that all the skills should be taught in an integrated way in their daily teaching and learning process, further analyses revealed most of the teachers taught reading and speaking, together with

vocabulary and *grammar,* more often than the other macro skills and language elements (writing, listening, punctuation, intonation, etc.). The teachers considered these language skills and elements the most important to be learned by students, as these language skills and elements hold the highest proportion of a number of questions appearing in the national examination (UN). The students have to learn more of these because they must get good score to indicate the success of the teaching and learning process (see Table 3).

Furthermore, teachers' conception in believing reading, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar as the most important language skills and aspects in English is indeed reasonable. That is, these linguistic resources enable both teachers and students to achieve some real purposes in life both academically and socially.

Table 3. The most frequently taught language skill(s)

Language skills	Percentages
Reading	45.25%
Reading and speaking	11.90%
Reading, speaking, and writing	9.53%
Reading and writing	7.14%
Reading, listening, and speaking	2.38%
Reading, listening, and writing	2.38%
Reading and listening	2.38%
Speaking	11.90%
Writing	7.14%
Listening	0%
Total	100%

Academically, *reading* and *speaking* were important to be mastered by students because the students need to read many English texts and do many exercises that involve many reading and speaking tasks. Meanwhile, socially, these skills are necessary to widen up their knowledge and life perspective, support them to attain higher education, sustain their prestigious life style, enhance their social relationships with others, and get many other real life

purposes. In the same line, *vocabulary* and *grammar* as language aspects are important because these enable both teachers and students to express their ideas properly, use the right word with the right form, understand meaning in any kinds of text, explain the intended meaning on the right time and place, and (most of all) communicate appropriately with others. In fact, when the teachers were asked to choose the language aspect(s) they like

most to learn—covering vocabulary, intonation, pronunciation, grammar, and punctuation—most of them chose language aspects that would support their ability to speak (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and intonation). As can be inferred from the table below, none of the teachers straightforwardly chose punctuation as a supportive aspect of English communication (in written mode). Indeed, it can only be inferred from two teachers who reported liking to learn all the aspects (4.76%) (see Table 4).

Table 4.The most pleasurable language aspect(s) to learn

No.	Language aspects	Percentage
1.	Grammar	33.34%
2.	Pronunciation	23.82%
3.	Vocabulary	9.52%
4.	Vocabulary and Grammar	7.14%
5.	Vocabulary and Pronunciation	7.14%
6.	Grammar and Pronunciation	4.76%
7.	Grammar, Vocabulary, and Pronunciation	4.76%
8.	Pronunciation and Intonation	4.76%
9.	All language aspects	4.76%
	Total	100%

Consistently, data analyses on the teachers' current teaching activities revealed that only eight out of forty-two teachers considered punctuation as a supportive aspect of their students' communication ability (see Table 5).

Table 5.The most important and supportive language aspect of students' communication ability

Language aspects	The most important aspect to be learned by students		The most supportive language aspect of students' communication ability	
	Number of occurrences	Percentages	Number of occurrences	Percentages
Vocabulary	42	100%	36	85.71%
Pronunciation	41	97.62%	22	52.38%
Grammar	40	95.24%	19	45.24%
Intonation	38	90.48%	10	23.81%
Punctuation	36	85.71%	8	19.05%

Ideally, there are two forms of communication—oral and written communications. These forms of communication should be developed through English teaching by facilitating students' learning with all the language skills and aspects in an integrated way. However, further analyses of the data described above confirmed that teachers' conception about the importance of learning these language skills and aspects consistently translate themselves into instructional acts in the classroom (as reported in the questionnaire). That is, the teachers who believe in the importance of reading, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar, prioritize these skills and aspects in their teaching of English (see Table 6).

Table 6.The results of data analyses on English language skill(s)

Responses about …		Language Skills (in percentages)			
		Reading	Speaking	Writing	Listening
Current English Teaching activities	The most important skill(s) to be mastered by students	54.76%	52.38%	33.34%	33.34%
	The most commonly taught skill(s)	80.96%	35.72%	7.14%	0%
	The most rarely taught skill(s)	7.14%	2.38%	33.34%	57.14%

Additionally, as articulated earlier, this condition is also driven by by the reality that those skills and elements are included more often in the test in contrast with the other ones. Consequently, with the intention of assisting their students to get good score, the teachers used student worksheets as one of the most important teaching and learning sources as it contains lots of exercises that would train the students to answer questions correctly to get good scores. Results of data analyses indicated that the teachers believed that student worksheets (95.24%) facilitated their teaching and learning activities more than any other sources. As a matter of fact, these sources were the most frequently used as teaching sources in their daily teaching, as can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7. The usability of teaching sources in daily teaching

No.	Categories	The most frequently used teaching sources	
		Number of occurrence	Percentages
1.	Students Worksheets	40	95.24%
2.	Lesson Plans	38	90.47%
3.	English Textbook	36	85.71%
4.	Additional Teaching Media (Cards, pictures, charts, cassettes, Cds, etc.)	35	83.33%
5.	Authentic Material	34	80.95%
6.	Curriculum	33	78.57%
7.	Syllabus	29	69.05%

Although on one hand, it was quite surprising, further analyses found that the teachers were very practical in their daily teaching by choosing student worksheets as the primary source in guiding their teaching. That is, the worksheets are to some extent easier and more practical to use than other teaching sources, and cheaper than English textbooks—there are seventeen teachers out of forty-two, who reported that many of their students could not afford to buy the book(s) to support their learning (40.48%).

Moreover, similar with English textbooks, most of student worksheets are developed by expert teachers based on the mandated curriculum. The worksheets contain various materials, activities, exercises, and (most of all) review tests that are ready for use—these components are the most important things the teachers considered before teaching (97.62%).

Furthermore, it is also interesting to note that the worksheets provided for teachers are complemented with answer keys. Consequently, the worksheets made it easier for the teachers to help their students to cope with any kind of exercises, especially the ones that are commonly given in final test. Exercises done by students make it easier for teachers to

evaluate their teaching and give score to their students' learning.

Additionally, it is also interesting to know that in general the teachers taught English through product-focused approaches, as opposed to process-oriented pedagogy that is propagated in the mandated curriculum, because they use students' scores as the only parameter to measure the achievement of their teaching activities. In general, this product-oriented teaching is reflected in the teachers' teaching activities (as stated in the questionnaire). During the English teaching, most of the teachers taught all the skills at the level of language usage (expressions/forms) rather than language use (meaning).

More specifically, during the pre-teaching activity, the majority of the teachers usually started the lesson by giving sets of questions, telling stories, showing pictures, giving games related to topics under discussion, doing the brainstorming related to the topic, relating the topic to their students' daily life, and or relating the previous lesson to the new one (97.62%).

Meanwhile, during the whilst-teaching activities, some specific techniques were chosen based on the skills to teach. More specifically, in teaching reading, for example, most of the teachers usually required the students to read the available text, discussed the text with the students (translated some words stated in the text in order to help them to comprehend the text and able to answer the questions), and subsequently answered the questions that follows. In teaching speaking, the teachers usually provided as many question-and-answer sessions as possible, required the students to perform dialog and ddo the role-playing activities based on the available texts in front of the classroom, and asked the students to make a short dialogue themselves based on the topic given afterward.

Furthermore, in teaching writing, the majority of the teachers applied an almost the same teaching pattern, ranging from rewriting words up to rewriting the available text(s). During their teaching writing, they usually directed their students to develop certain words into sentences based on the examples given (sometimes they provided the students with certain topics in the form of pictures, themes, or vocabularies). Afterward, they instructed their students to develop the sentences into a paragraph, and then into a larger text. Moreover, in teaching listening, the teachers usually required the students to listen to the text read aloud by the teachers (and or listening to the tape) and subsequently did the exercises given.

Meanwhile, to conclude the lessons, the majority of the teachers usually reinforced their students' understanding of the material being discussed by way of giving reflections or conclusions about what they had learned, or by administering various kinds of exercises, quizzes (question and answer games), evaluation (both spoken and written), and or giving some homework. Generally, they would end their teaching activities after the students did the exercises given, without many further meaningful communication activities that would require their students to use the information at the discourse level. Even though some teachers gave relatively more room for their students' creativity in expressing their ideas (in speaking and writing) by providing the students with certain topics in the form of pictures, themes or vocabularies for them to develop, students' creativity was still limited. In fact, the topics were still determined by teachers alone and, in reality, they required their students to stick to examples they provided.

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, it is safe to say that teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning—which is reductionistic in nature—result from inconsistencies found in the

mandated curriculum. That is, on the one hand, the English curriculum seems to champion the integrated nature of communicative language teaching, which requires that all linguistic skills be taught in an integrated way and proportionally. On the other hand, the English test in the national examination only emphasizes reading while the other macro skills are neglected almost altogether. More specifically, there is no question assessing listening skills, writing is assessed through questions related to structure, and speaking is not assessed at discourse level. This condition encouraged the teachers to prioritize some skills and neglect the others. If we want the English teachers to adopt more holistic and coherent conceptions of the English teaching and learning as reflected in the mandated curriculum, the test format and coverage should be revisited and reconstructed to better reflect those conceptions.

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