

Reflecting Students' Parents Expectations into Primary English Teaching Curriculum and Instruction

Refleksi Harapan Orangtua Murid terhadap Kurikulum dan Instruksi Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris Tingkat Dasar

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Abstract

Pengembangan kurikulum membutuhkan analisis situasional guna memperhitungkan faktor-faktor eksternal yang dapat menentukan dalam pengembangan, evaluasi dan penerapan kurikulum tersebut. Salah satu faktor eksternal yang penting dalam pengembangan kurikulum adalah faktor orangtua siswa yang merupakan bagian dari faktor sosial pengembangan kurikulum. Penelitian ini dimaksudkan untuk mengetahui harapan-harapan orang tua dari siswa-siswi yang belajar pada tingkat dasar (SD) guna pengembangan dan pengaplikasian kurikulum bahasa Inggris pada tingkat tersebut. Penelitian ini dilakukan pada dua lembaga kursus penyelenggara pendidikan bahasa Inggris pra-sekolah di Bandar Lampung. Data dalam penelitian ini diperoleh melalui interview dan kuesioner dengan melibatkan 23 orangtua siswa sebagai responden. Hasil penelitian ini mengindikasikan bahwa orangtua merupakan faktor yang mampu memberi kontribusi penting bagi pengembangan kurikulum tersebut. Responden memberikan sejumlah harapan-harapan yang perlu diakomodasi terkait muatan, pengaplikasian dan pengevaluasian hingga penerapan kurikulum bahasa Inggris pra sekolah.

Kata kunci: faktor orang tua, pengajaran bahasa Inggris tingkat dasar, pengembangan kurikulum

Introduction

Every country treats second or foreign language teaching in varied conditions. These conditions usually appear in the context of the role of the language in the society, the status in the curriculum, educational tradition and experience in language teaching, and expectations of the society for language teaching and learning. The aim of examining the impacts of social factors on language teaching is to determine

the impact of groups in the society on the program (Richards, 2001).

Some people believe that it is important to start the teaching since early age, while others think that it is not that important as the teaching will not take place well (Brewster, 1993). In Indonesian context the practice of English language teaching in primary school has been an issue within this decade. Some pros and contras

towards the need of English teaching in this level have been emerging and anticipated differently by the education world. Some agree that it is important then put the load into language teaching practices either in formal school or informal school.

As a matter of fact, the government of Indonesia has not yet determined English as the compulsory subject in elementary school, let alone in the preschool level. So far, the government just accommodates the raising issue by complementing the English teaching in elementary school, particularly started at the fourth grade of elementary school. The subject is considered optional – not a compulsory subject. The decision to include English into a school curriculum should be determined by the local education office by considering the need of education world in the respective area. Simply, English is included as local content in this level.

Despite the fact that English is just a local content and not a compulsory subject, some elementary schools in Indonesia include English into their subject load. Though it is still considered non compulsory subject, some school even provide the subject starting from the first grade. And another surprising fact is that English has been taught even in preschool level. This can be found in term of a loaded subject in kindergarten level, a language used into certain extent in the classroom interactions, or even in particular English courses or schools.

Implementing a subject into a curriculum requires many aspects to consider (Richard, 2001). Considering the fact that there is no official curriculum provided by the government concerning English as a subject in elementary and preschool programs, some schools seem to accommodate their own perspectives toward the importance of the subject, the content of the subject, and the way the classroom interactions carried out. Little have we learned that the curriculum of this level take societal factor, especially parent factor – into account in determining the syllabus. This study is carried out in order to learn about the parent factor which should be accommodated into the curriculum development and instruction.

Some previous research indicated that parent factor is crucial to curriculum development. It is believed that parents are one of the determining stakeholders in education (Beagley, 1996; Hammerschmidt, 1994). The parents' expectation should be taken into consideration since they are the factor that will receive the implication of the education process (Beckman, 2001). Gaining parents' expectation would help institution to cope with curriculum development and instruction (Hammerschmidt, 1994). In order to investigate the expectation of the students' parents, this study employs the following research questions (1) What are the parents' expectations towards the content of the EFL curriculum? (2) What input can be derived

from the parents to develop the curriculum and instruction?

Literature Review

Situation/External Analysis for Curriculum Development

A language curriculum is a function of the relationships that hold between subject-specific concerns and other broader factors embracing socio-political and philosophical matters, educational value systems, theory and practice in curriculum design, teacher experiential wisdom and learner motivation (Richards, 2001). Therefore it is very important to understand how all the factors interrelate to give shape to the planning and execution of the teaching learning process. In order to identify what these factors are and what their potential effects might be when planning a curriculum then an adequate situation analysis is necessary to do.

Situation analysis is a term that has gained greater credence in the field of curriculum in recent years. The underlying concept was outlined by Hilda Taba (1962) – as cited in Print (1988) – in what she described as diagnosis of needs. Situation analysis can be described as detailed examination of the context into which a curriculum is to be placed and the application of that analysis to the curriculum being developed (Print, 1988). Similarly Richards (2001) defines it as an analysis of factors in the context of planned or present curriculum project that is made in order to

assess their potential impact on the project. It is clear then that the need for conducting a situation analysis is a fundamental precept of effective curriculum development. In return, a situational analysis gives opportunity for curriculum developers to bring a reasoned rational approach to the development of a curriculum (Print, 1988).

Experts provided some important external factors which are necessarily included in situational analysis. Print (1988) classified the factors into two main categories: external and internal factors. The external factors cover some aspects such as cultural and social changes and expectations, educational system requirements and challenges, changing nature of content, teacher support systems, and resources. The internal factors include the pupil factor, teacher factor, school ethos, material resources, and perceived problems. Similarly, Richards (2001) described the factors which should be taken into consideration into teacher factors, project factors, institutional factors, learner factors, adoption factors, and societal factors.

In order to carry out the analysis, a curriculum evaluator can make use of some relevant sources and methods. Richards (2001) suggested that the analysis can be carry out through (a) consultation with representatives of as many relevant group as possible, such as parents, students, teachers, administrators, and government officials; (b) study and analysis of relevant documents, such as course appraisal

documents, government reports, ministry of education guidelines and policy papers, teaching materials, and curriculum documents; (c) observation of teachers and students in relevant learning settings; (d) surveys of opinions of relevant parties; and (e) review of available literature related to the issue. In addition, Print (1988) suggested that the analysis should be carry out through systematic studies and review involving relevant factors which are potential in providing the required information to analyze.

Parent Factor in Curriculum development

As an element of external factor in curriculum development, parent factor has been one of the major issues in research. The following are literature review as well as some results of research conducted related to this issue.

Dodge (2002) notes that involving family in planning for the children is a powerful way to convey that this is true partnership. There are some benefits that can be derived from this family involvement into curriculum and instructional development. These benefits can be very advantageous for the curriculum developer and the classroom teacher. The benefits among others enable them to: (i) Obtain a richer more accurate assessment of a child's development; (ii) Gain valuable insight about the children's culture, background interest, and temperament that will aid in

planning appropriate exercise; (iii) Share visions of a child's strength and weakness; (iv) Agree on what objectives and techniques/ strategies are important; (v) Share expectation about the child's growth and development; (vi) Encourage parents in their roles as their child as first and most important teacher; (vii) Make the children more likely to receive common messages both at school and at home; (viii) Create education as a team effort (Dodge, 2002)

Furthermore, Bredekamp (1997) mentions that developmentally appropriate practices can be derived from deep knowledge and the context within which they develop and learn. Reciprocal relationship between teachers and families require mutual respect, cooperation, shared responsibilities, and negotiation of conflict towards achievement of shared goals. To ensure more accurate and complete information, the program involves family in assessing and planning for the children education.

Hammerschmidt (1994) carried out a research on this issue. It is found that input from parents led to significant changes in the lessons and instructions. Similarly, Ekawati (2010) indicates that the parents' expectations in education will be beneficial input for curriculum development. Beckman (2001) also notes that parents should be involved as active participants in the educational planning for their children. He mentions that the parents' involvement

can support meaningful contributions to the education of its students.

Methodology

The research was designed in descriptive qualitative research for some considerations. First of all, this research has the characteristics of qualitative research as stated by Nunan (1992); Kvale (1996); Holliday (2005); Setiyadi (2006); Dornyei (2007); Frankel (2007); and Alwasilah (2009). As they mention that qualitative research is characterized by the nature of the data which may be originated from various source, among others are document and data processing which elaborate the findings into textual form. In addition, this research is also characterized by the nature of qualitative research which tries to describe social phenomena as they occur naturally. It is considered appropriate as the study dealt with analyzing and describing the data concerning with the perceptions of the students' parents factor evaluated.

Furthermore, this research is also characterized as a case study. This is considering the fact that the research was carried out in a limited or small scale and not to be generalized (Alwasilah, 2009; Frankel (2007); Setiyadi, 2006; Merriam (1988) cited in Nunan, 1992; Patton, 1987; and Creswell, 1994). In this study, the research only dealt with analyzing particular document from a limited number of tertiary students within the setting. Then the results are not to be generalized as general conditions in Indonesia. The second feature

that constitutes this study as a case study is that the study is to examine a case mainly to provide insight into an issue (Dornyei, 2007). In this case the study focused on examining the relevant perceptions of the participants related to the aims of the research. The other characteristic is that this study used text analysis which is another method of qualitative study Yin (1998) cited in Creswell, 1994; Setiyadi, 2006; Nunan, 1992; and Patton, 1987).

The study took place in two English learning centers in Bandar Lampung. The participants were the parents of the students of the children class programs. There were 23 parents of the students took part as the participants who were involved voluntarily in this research. The choice of the venue of the participant was determined considering the accessibility of the researcher to carry out the research. Alwasilah (2009) mentioned that convenience factor should be taken into consideration to support the researcher to carry out the research.

The parents of the students were chosen as the participants of this research considering that they represented the relevant element of society related to education of early age. This indicated by their concern of sending their children to English learning center which of course requires them to spend certain amount of money. The participants consisted of parents with varied professional backgrounds; this is considered important as they might come up with their experience and perspective

from their own respective view point of employment and thus gave rise to better validity of the data.

The participants were recruited through random sampling technique. In particular, the samples of the participants were taken by considering their typical conditions needed for the research; this type is identified as typical random sampling (Dornyei, 2007; Patton, 1987; Frankel, 2007). The participants then were recruited by asking them voluntarily to be involved the research. This was considering the possible constraints concerning with their availability of time to cooperate. So, after listing the possible participants to work with, the researcher contacted the potential participants until the number needed for this research fulfilled. Moreover, voluntary-based participation is expected to have more motivated participants to cooperate in carrying out this research in a natural sense which in turn will affect the reliability of the findings.

The study collected data through questionnaires and interviews. The data gained from this study were analyzed at the end of the research. The data were categorized, analyzed and interpreted to answer the research questions.

The research made use of questionnaires in order to verify the data gained through interviews. As an alternative data collecting technique (Dornyei, 2007; Patton, 1987; Nunan, 1992) questionnaire is defined as “any written

documents that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting among existing answers” (Brown, 2001 as cited in Dornyei, 2007). The questionnaires applied in this research were of factual questions type which is used to find out certain facts about the respondents perceptions (Dornyei, 2007).

The questionnaires were arranged form of combination form questionnaire (closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires). These types of questions were employed to gain the needed information in attempt to answer the research questions of this research. The data collection was carried out simultaneously. In this case the questionnaires were distributed first and then followed by conducting interviews. Through this way, hopefully, the interviews which were intended to provide the major data source would not be affected by any condition resulted from answering the questionnaires.

The results of the interviews and the questionnaires were analyzed to answer the research questions. The data were coded in order to categorize the pattern of the perceptions documented. These categories were interpreted to formulate certain pattern of findings related to the aims of the research in accordance with existing theories related to the research. Data analysis was carried out at the end of the

research, which was after all the data collection processes completed.

Since the data of this study are derived from different sources, then a data source triangulation will be carried out in order to find out more comprehensive ideas to formulate as the answers for the research questions (Creswell, 1994; Patton, 1987; Setiyadi, 2006) this method was applied in order to enable the researcher to have various data of different aspects interconnected (Holliday, 2005; Alwasilah, 2009). It is also useful “in order to reduce the inherent weaknesses of individual methods by offsetting them by the strength of another, thereby maximizing the validity of the research” (Dornyei, 2007). In this stage, the data from both sources will be compared and contrasted to enhance the validity of the findings. Frankel (2007) also mentioned that “It improves the quality of the data that collected and the accuracy of the researcher’s interpretation”.

Finding and Discussion

The data show that most parents agreed that the preschooler should be exposed to English learning program. One of the reasons they mentioned related to their decision of sending their children to the learning center is that they believed that learning English in early ages would result

in better achievement. They also argued that one of the causes of their weaknesses of English mastery dues to the lack of exposure in early age. However, they mostly revealed that it is no need to state it as a compulsory subject, especially considering the load of other subjects at school.

The majority of the respondents mentioned that the focus of the teaching learning program in pre school level should be more on vocabulary enrichment. They expect that this vocabulary enrichment will help the students in learning English in the next stage. They seemed to worry if the focus is broadened – such as to writing exposure – the students will easily get bored in learning English.

Classroom interactions should be managed in such fun and entertaining circumstances. Mostly, the respondents noted that teachers should be able to create entertaining learning process. This is also indicated through their opinions that additional skills required for pre school teachers is that they should possess the talent of an entertainer. Some of the parents also suggested that the children should be fun exposed much into reading activities. The major issues generated from the data collection can be described in general in Table 1.

Table 1. Parents' perceptions towards the issue

No	Issue Identified	Major Perceptions	N=23	%
1.	The need of preschool English program	Needed as optional/local load subject	19	82,6
2.	Content focus of the program	Vocabulary mastery	17	73,9
3.	Classroom instructions types	Fun	21	91,3
4.	Study load per meeting	30-40 minutes	13	56,5
5.	Intensity per week	2-3 meetings/week	18	78,3
6.	Explicit curriculum of the school	Required in written	17	73,9
7.	Socializing the curriculum	Must	22	95,6
8.	Moral content focus	Discipline and value knowledge	16	69,6
9.	Culture value load	Local and related foreign introductions	13	56,5
10.	Integration with elementary school curriculum	Must	14	60,8
11.	Teacher Background			
	- Non/Native	Non native	3	13,0
	- Level of education	S1 degree on English teaching	18	7,3
12.	Additional competence of the teachers	IT	14	60,8
13.	Problems emerge related to the lessons	Minor vocabulary matter	6	26,0
14.	Other expectations noted	Continuous learning program	11	47,8

Related to study load, the respondents agree that ideally the students are exposed to the lesson as many as twice or three times a week. They also suggested that each meeting of the lesson is given within 60 to 80 minutes – that is 30-40 minutes of each lesson hour only. Most of them are aware of the children's condition which are easily get bored when exposed to the lesson longer than those proposed time.

The curriculum should be explicitly and clearly provided by the institution. They also expect that they are well informed about the curriculum plan and instructions. This indicates that actually they are aware of the need of establishing cooperation with the school. Even though mostly they do not

really apt to the content of the English language teaching, but they believe that they deserve the cooperation.

The parents paid attention to moral content implied in the curriculum. They expect that the students can also learn good value through interesting English learning programs. Such values as discipline, tolerance, and eagerness to learn are among others the most preferred moral content to teach. In addition, they also showed their worry about the culture value hidden in the imported text books. Most of them are aware of having local English books with local wisdoms instead of imported books which may expose the children to western cultures – such as through the pictures, the

stories, etc. Nevertheless, they realize that it is necessary to introduce the children to such kind of international culture.

The respondents urge that even though English is no need to be a compulsory subject given in this level in Pre School, they still expect that whatever planned in the stage should be integrated to those in the following level – elementary school learning program. Related to this case, they believe that the government actually should take part in determining main content of the education programs, so that either formal or non formal institution will have similar guidelines in providing the content of the lessons.

The respondents believe that for the English teaching program in early age in Indonesian setting is not necessarily done by native speaker English teacher. When confirmed about the need of modeling for good pronunciations, they argued that it could be manipulate through the use of multimedia teaching aids. Such pronunciations model recorded can be an effective way out to provide the need of teaching good pronunciation for the children. They think that Indonesian teachers are adequate to handle this need.

Still related to the need of good English teachers, of the 23 parents, 16 of them expect that especially for young learners, the teachers are not only required to master certain level of relevant education background, but also possess natural talent of handling children – something to do with

nurturing young learners. The latter, they added, could be abridged by providing certain course designed especially for teachers for young learners. In additions, they argued that the teachers should hold certain degree of English teaching – expectedly undergraduate degree (S1) – to ascertain the linguistic mastery.

Besides, the respondents expected that the teachers are technology savvy. There are 21 respondents conveyed that interestingly effective and efficient English teaching learning are very closely related to the use of relevant technology. That is why the parents mentioned that mastering information technology – accessing internet, using multimedia teaching aids, etc – is crucial for the learning programs.

When asked about the problem they face related to the English learning program of their children, the respondents conveyed that they do not really face trouble on it. Few revealed that sometimes they have to deal with questions relate to vocabulary of the lessons, but that does not seem to give them big matter.

Another matter that the respondents expect much is the well planned continuous English learning program. Some of the respondents mentioned that they have experienced that they could not find good program to accommodate the need. They are afraid that if the English learning program not well planned, then the accommodated learning experiences might be less valuable for their children.

Conclusion

To conclude, we can infer that parents are effectively relevant factors to contribute to education curriculum. The parents are not only simply the target market of the service but they are the determining factor in having quality classroom instructions. Accommodating their expectations might be very beneficial

in order to develop and maintain effective language teaching curriculum. This research is a simple planned one covering simple issue related to this field. It is of course valuable to have more thorough research with more complex scope of study to have further and deeper understanding on this issue.

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