A Critical Review on Post-Method Era in English Language Teaching for Indonesian Context

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Abstrak

Kurikulum dan metodologi pembelajaran merupakan konsep inti dalam sistem pembelajaran. Para ahli sepakat bahwa kurikulum merupakan elemen yang lebih luas daripada metodologi pembelajaran. Namun, keduanya saling berkaitan. Sebenarnya, ada beragam metodologi dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris tetapi sekarang ini merupakan *post- method era* dimana tidak ada metodologi yang spesifik yang diklaim sebagai metodologi yang terbaik untuk diimplementasikan. Dalam konteks pembelajaran di Indonesia, kurikulum didesain secara umum oleh pemerintah. Faktanya, faktor yang mempengaruhi pembelajaran yang sangat beragam memerlukan metodologi yang beragam pula untuk diterapkan di dalam kelas. Hal tersebut menunjukkan pentingnya pemerintah memberikan perhatian pada konsep *post-method era* sehingga desain pembelajaran yang dikembangkan oleh pemerintah dapat lebih fleksibel untuk digunakan dalam konteks yang beragam di Indonesia. Sejalan dengan paparan tersebut, guru sebagai pengembang kurikulum, pelaksana kurikulum, fasilitator dalam pembelajaran, serta peneliti kurikulum, sebaiknya memahami *post-method era* dalam konteks pendidikan di Indonesia sehingga mereka dapat mengembangkan dan menerapkan kurikulum, memfasilitasi pembelajaran, melakukan penelitian yang sesuai dengan konteks pendidikan di Indonesia untuk meningkatkan mutu pembelajaran. Oleh karena itu, artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplor beberapa isu terkait topik utama yang didiskusikan dalam artikel ini yang meliputi kurikulum, metodologi, hubungan antara kurikulum dan metodologi, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, *post-method era*, serta *post-method era* dalam konteks Indonesia.

Kata kunci: *post-method era*, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, konteks Indonesia

A. Introduction

In this era, there are various issues on English language teaching, especially related to the instructional methodology implemented by the teachers in the

classrooms. In relation to the various factors affecting the instructional process, such as the learner‘s factors, teacher‘s factors, and materials, the appropriate instructional methodology is highly needed. On the other hand, post-method era becomes the new trend in English language teaching, especially for English as a second language and English as a foreign language. Indonesia, which implements English as a foreign language, should develop the appropriate formula for teaching English as a foreign language. Thus, this article tries to give a critical review on post-method era in English language teaching for Indonesian context to give a critical information, especially for the government and the teacher, as the basis to develop the formula.

B. Curriculum

The term of curriculum has various definitions. A number of definitions of curriculum have been proposed by different experts. In Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, curriculum is defined as syllabus. It is a description of the contents of a course of instruction and the order in which they are to be taught. In contrast with, Rodgers in Richard (2001) said that syllabus prescribes the content to be covered by a given course and the form is only a small part of the total school program. However, curriculum is a far broader concept. Curriculum is all those activities in which children engage under the atmosphere of the school. This includes not only what students learn, but how they learn it, how teachers help them learn, what supporting materials are used, what kind of style and method of assessment are conducted, and what kind of facilities are needed.

In conjunction with Rodgers‘ argument, Richard in Richard and Rodgers (2001) defines the term curriculum as a very broad field of inquiry that deals with what happens in schools and other educational institution, the planning of instruction, and the study of how curriculum plans are implemented. Then, Smith and Lovat (2003) explain that curriculum is more than a set of definitions. It can be conceived as decision- making action that integrates both intention and the manner in which the intention become operationalized into classroom reality.

Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that every expert has her or his own definition of curriculum. However, most of them agree that curriculum is something wider‘ than a syllabus. Moreover, in English curriculum, there are two approaches. They are systematic and systemic or system approach. The systematic approach consists of thinking, planning and doing. It is to solve English complex problem since English education consists of a lot of interacting components. Then, in systemic approach, it consists of goal, process and content. Goal is the mainly important component. Then, process is to achieve the goal. People must do something and in order to do it, they need resources or content. All of the approach involves the whole concept of curriculum.

C. Methodology

Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics defines methodology (in language teaching) as the study of the practices and procedures used in teaching, and the principles and beliefs that underlie them. It includes:

1. study of the nature of language skills (e.g. reading, writing, speaking, listening) and procedures for teaching them,
2. study of the preparation of lesson plan‘s materials, textbooks for teaching language skills,
3. the evaluation and comparison of language teaching method (e.g. the audio-lingual method)

Then, Anthony in Richard and Rodgers (2001) defines methodology in three hierarchical elements, namely a*pproach*, *method* and *technique*. An *approach* is set assumptions dealing with the nature of language, learning, and teaching. *Method* is defined as an overall plan for systematic language, learning and teaching. Meanwhile *techniques* are specific classroom activities consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well. Then, For Richard and Rodgers (2001), method is an umbrella term to capture redefined approaches, design, and procedures.

Based on the above explanation, methodology might be said with all things about methods. It is a system and the method is the plan. All expert agree that methodology is somewhat an abstract thing and it consists some elements beyond of its.

D. Inter-relation between Curriculum and Methodology

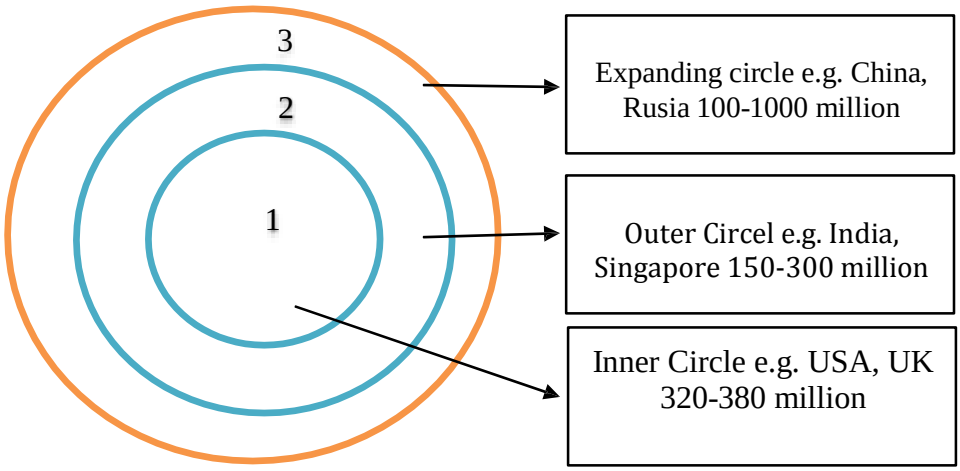
The curriculum provides the system or framework, but learning ultimately depends on the interaction between the teacher and the learners in the classroom, and on the teaching approaches, activities, materials and procedures employed by the teacher. The main point to be made in the context of an integrated approach to curriculum development is that teacher training and development is a necessary and ongoing process, involving the exploration of a range of materials, method and approaches to learner training and evaluation. Teachers must be reflective, analytic and creative, open to new methods and ideas; the aim of teacher training courses must be to develop teachers who are researchers, not just technicians and delivers of the syllabus. In other words, teaching methodology can reflect goals, and teachers' experience in turn contributes to the process of curriculum renewal. (Finney in Richard and Renandya, 2002)

In conjunction with the explanation, the curriculum and methodology have been important at any particular point in time and the approaches to teaching that are followed in different parts of the world reflect contextual such as current understanding of the nature of second language learning, educational trends and practices in different parts of the world, and the priorities the profession accord to specific issues and practices. The field of Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language has developed into a dynamic worldwide community of language through addressing the key issues that shape. Learning curriculum and methodology will allow us to see relevant problems more holistically: conceptually, design-wise, and operationally, so that, the problem selection, deficience and growth, and its solution become more valid, focused, and productive.

E. English Instruction

1. Circular Taxonomy

Kachru's widely accepted conceptualization of the geographic and historical spread of English as three circles is helpful. In the most frequently cited version of the model (Kachru in Harmer, 2007)



In the model, the inner circle refers to the –traditional bases of English: the UK, USA, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The outer (or extended) circle refers to the earlier spread of English in non-native settings, where the language has become a part of the country's important institutions, and it plays an important _second language' role in a multilingual setting: it includes Indonesia's neighbors Singapore and Malaysia, India, and over fifty other territories. The expanding or extending circle refers to nations which recognize the importance of English as an international language, but which were not colonized by the countries of the inner circle, and which have not given English any special official status. In these countries, English is taught as a foreign language. Indonesia belongs to this group, which also includes China, Japan, Greece and Poland.

2. English Instruction

The final goal of the learning of English is that the students can use the language in real communication. It means that the students are taught English in order that they are able to speak English. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) state that the culmination of language learning, however, is not simply in the mastery of the forms of the language, but the mastery of the forms in order to accomplish the communicative function. So, whether or not, developing students‘ language fluency should be more emphasized. Some national surveys show that there have been changes in the perception of students, teachers, and parents concerning the role and objectives of the English instruction in secondary schools. The English instruction should not be targeted only at the acquisition of reading skill, but must also be aimed at the development of the speaking skill.

According to Corder (1973), most people start learning language when they are still at school, before they have any clear idea of what their future careers will be, and consequently, what specific uses they will have for their language.

In Indonesian context, English is taught as the integrated four skills. Students learn speaking, listening, reading and writing. The aim of learning is always to enable the learners to do something which they could not do at the beginning of learning-process. It means that there must be positive changes in the learner‘s ability. It is from being unable to do something to be able to do something. This involves any of kind ability, any physical ability, as well as any less directly to be observable ability to understand some scientific theory.

F. Post Method Era

The English language teaching is now in the Post Method Era in which previous attention to a variety of methods (Audiolingualism, Total Physical Response, Silent Way, Natural Approach, etc) has given way to a more generic approach to English Language Teaching methodology (Richard and Rodgers, 2001). Furthermore, Richard in Richard and Renandya (2002) argues that in contrast with the Method Era which was a primary concern of the language teaching profession to find more effective

methods of language teaching and had most focused on study of particular methods, in the Post Method Era, the discussion on language teaching is not focusing on methodology anymore but concerning about principle.

The 20th century has witnessed the rise and fall of a variety of language teaching methods and approaches. The reason why this era comes into the post method era is that in the past people tried to find the best method to teach English like the old method Grammar Translation Method or Direct Method was considered as the best method at that time but it is now irrelevant anymore. Then it is followed by the decline of Audiolingual Method in the late of 1940s that it emerges dehumanization. It focuses on people speaking automatically without thinking. In fact, people learn not like a machine. Next, others fade away soon after come into existence such as (Nunan in Richard and Renandya, 2002) termed the ―designer methods: Community Language, The Silent Way, Suggestopedia, TPR and others.

Here are some reasons why are methods no longer exist in the language teaching journey through time according to Brown in Richard and Renandya (2002):

1. Methods are prescriptive, assuming too much about a context before the context has even been identified. They are overgeneralized in their potential application to practical situations.
2. Generally, methods are quite distinctive at the early, beginning stages of a language course and rather indistinguishable from each other at later stages. In the first few unique set of experiences in their small circles of translated language whispered in their ears. But within a matter of weeks, such as classroom can look like any other learner-centered curriculum.
3. It was once thought that methods could be empirically tested by scientific quantification to determine which one is ―best‖. Language pedagogy cannot ever be so clearly verified by empirical validation.
4. Recent work in the power and politics of English language teaching has demonstrated that methods become vehicle of ―linguistic imperialism‖ targeting the disempowered.

Nunan (1991) summed it up nicely. It has been realizes that there never was probably never will be a method for all, and the focus in recent years has been on the development of classroom tasks and activities which are consonant with what we know about second language acquisition, and which are also in keeping with the dynamics of the classroom itself.

G. Post-Method Era in Indonesian Context

Based on the circular taxonomy proposed by Kachru, Indonesia belongs to expanding circle country. English is taught as a Foreign Language in Indonesia. Then, based on the government‘s policy, in general, the objective of English teaching in Indonesian secondary schools is to equip the students with language skills that enable them to:

1. Read textbooks and reference materials in English, which constitute 90% of all available reference materials.
2. Understand lectures given by foreign lecturers as part of the affiliation programs with universities abroad or to communicate with individuals and students from overseas.
3. Take notes of lectures given by foreign lecturers, and to introduce the culture of Indonesia to international communities.
4. Communicate orally with foreign lecturers, individuals and students in oral examination and discussions

These objectives represent an order of priorities of the four macro language skills, with reading skills being on top, followed by listening, writing, and speaking. This priority order was maintained in the 1975 curriculum and the 1984 curriculum, except that the skills were no longer limited to academic purposes only. The 1975 curriculum, for example, described the function of English teaching in secondary schools as the facilitation of the development of advanced science, technology, culture, and arts, as well as to enhance international relationships (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1975a, 1975b). In addition, the number of vocabulary items that students

should master in order to develop these four language skills was specified: 1,500 words for the junior secondary school (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1975b, 1987) and 4,000 words for the senior secondary school (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1975a, 1986).

In the 1994 curriculum, a slight change occurred in the priority order of the writing and speaking skills. In earlier syllabi, writing was placed third, after reading and listening, and speaking was last. In the 1994 syllabus, the order was reversed, with speaking placed third and writing placed last. This change was intended to meet the needs of students and parents as expressed in some surveys. Moreover, the expected number of vocabulary items was substantially reduced to 1,000 words for junior secondary school and 2,500 words for science and social science streams at senior secondary school. A target of 3,000 words was set up for the students of senior secondary school majoring in the language stream. Grammar and other elements of language, such as pronunciation and spelling, were to be taught only to support the acquisition of the four language skills, not for mastery of the language elements (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993a, 1993b). The 1975 curriculum specified that English should be taught with the audio-lingual approach with an emphasis on the teaching of linguistic patterns through habit-formation drills. As such, the syllabus was created mainly on the basis of structure.

Structural items were presented according to the degree of complexity and frequency of use (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1975a, 1975b). The teaching approach was changed when the use of the communicative approach was introduced in the 1984 curriculum. However, not enough information of the teaching procedures was available to the teachers, with the result that the approach was misinterpreted and implemented incorrectly. One serious misinterpretation was that the communicative approach meant a focus on the acquisition of oral communicative competence. However, many classroom teachers still emphasize the teaching of English structure.

Two factors may be responsible for this: the final national examination, which still gave greater emphasis on grammar mastery, and the syllabus. The syllabus was designed in such a way so that each instructional unit consisted of seven components: structure, reading, vocabulary, speaking, writing, pronunciation, and spelling. The fact that the structural component was placed at the beginning of each unit led to the impression that structure was still the emphasis of English teaching. To resolve the problems, the curriculum was again revised 1994, and this version is still in use. In the revised curriculum, the teaching approach is called the meaningfulness approach *(pendekatan kebermaknaan)*, but this is nothing more than the communicative approach redefined to suit the situations of English Language Teaching in Indonesia. The syllabus design adopts a variable focus model (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993a, 1993b) in which structure, notions, functions, and situations are the guiding principles of organization. At the junior secondary level, the linguistic forms are the organizing principle; notions and language functions are presented to provide contexts of use of the presented structural items.

At the senior secondary school level, the notions and language functions gain greater emphasis and the linguistic forms are gradually deemphasized. Another significant feature of the new syllabus is the integration of language components and language skills. Unlike the 1984 syllabus, in which language skills and language components structure, vocabulary, and spelling were taught separately, the 1994 syllabus integrates them in the form of themes. Thus, themes are the central components that tie language components and language skills together. In addition, the syllabus also contains recommended topics derived from the listed themes, functional skills to be developed, examples of communicative expressions, and lists of vocabulary items to be taught.

The teachers are then free to design their own instructional materials for classroom teaching. After being used for a few years, the curriculum was found to have three major weaknesses: some communicative expressions were not in line with the theme, several functional skills overlapped, and a number of the stated teaching

objectives were vague. In response, a slight revision of the syllabus was carried out in 2000 (Ministry of National Education, 2000). Despite the high expectations placed on the English curriculum, the time allocated for teaching English is minimal. In junior secondary school, it is taught in four sessions of 45 minutes long per week for the three class levels (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993a). In senior secondary school, it is also taught in four sessions of 45 minutes per week for the first and second year students. For the third year students, it is taught in five sessions a week for the students of science and social science streams and 11 sessions a week for the students of the language stream. Each session lasts 45 minutes (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993b). As a result, some students receive little exposure to English communicative situation.

Then, curriculum 2006 advocates a teaching approach called the text- based approach. It requires teachers to choose and to use genre based texts, personal text, interpersonal text, and short functional text which contain of the real life situation. It takes semantics knowledge as primary and attempts to answer the questions –what do users of the language need to express? This implies a belief in language as a system but a system of meanings rather than forms. It assumes that learning a language consists of learning how to mean. Such an approach would seek correlation between form and function but would define the link as being between the forms of language available to the user and the meaning he wishes to express.

In the recent curriculum named curriculum 2013, we still use text-based model as our instructional model. The learning process is carried out to help students to understand and produce various kinds of texts. What is meant by text here is any kind of communication forms which is meaningful or has meaning. The ability to understand any kinds of text tend to be better because it is a receptive skill or passive ability, while the ability to produce texts is more difficult to obtain because it is the productive one. Text – based language learning is based on the theory of communicative competence by Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrel (1995) which is in accordance with theory that language is communication , not only a set of rules consisting of actional competence

(including listening, speaking, reading and writing), discourse competence, linguistic competence, sociocultural competence and strategic competence. All those competences are merged into a discourse competence which is aimed at understanding and producing a text.

It‘s ok for the government to decide the goal of the instruction. However, since there are so many elements embedded in the instruction and every school has its own characteristics, the instructional design proposed by the government should be more ‗environmental- friendly‘. In fact, Indonesia is a wide country consisting of many islands with different cultures and so on. Economic, politic, culture and the other social factors also give contribution of the requirement of post-method concept in designing the instruction, beside the learners‘factors. That is why the government can decide ―the what‖, not ―the how‖ implemented in the instruction.

H. Conclusion

To sum up, notice that what is seen as good or bad instructional methodology is actually variations in the instructional system. This variation can be associated with the teacher‘s factors, the learner‘s factors, the materials, and so on. Seeing these phenomena, as a language teacher, curriculum developer, curriculum implementer, facilitator in the instructional process, as well as the curriculum researcher, we have to grow positive attitude, regarding variations in the instructional methodology as the nature of the instructional system.

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