

# Communicative strategies or fossilised forms: evaluating English in language-in-education policy

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## ABSTRACT

*It is widely known the focus of learning of English in Indonesia has always been centred on to how to gain the native speakers' proficiency and learners' successfulness in learning English is measured by how their speech production match those of the native speakers'. As international communication is no longer about the native speakers' competence but the learners' ability in switching and adjusting their Englishes to different speakers for different purposes, this may now be problematic and irrelevant. Using document analysis method, this paper examines the focus of teaching English in Indonesia during the past and recent curriculums. The finding shows that the curriculums focus on the fossilised forms rather than the communicative strategies and that they are not relevant to evaluate the international intelligibility as contrasted with their emphasis on gaining global participation. The paper therefore suggests the improvement in the curriculum and proposes to incorporate the communicative strategies in the evaluation.*

**Keywords:** *EFL, Communicative strategies, fossilized forms, Curriculum*

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## Introduction

During the past 7 decades after the independence, Indonesia has experienced if not less than 10 times changes in its education curriculums. They are the 1947s, 1952s, 1964s, 1968s, 1975s, 1984s, 1994s, 2004s, 2006's and 2013's. Within these curriculums, English has been always one of the main lessons taught at school. In fact, Indonesia has long known the importance of English and its use in global community. When traced back, all the curriculums implemented had at least once mentioned that the communicative competence is their goal in teaching English and that communicative approach is one the methods used in teaching (Lie, 2007; Panjaitan, 2010). However, the implementations were most of time do not conform to what is written in the curriculum (Lie, 2007).

In the process, each of the curriculum is called as the completion of the previous curriculum, but the biggest turn of the curriculum was started by 2004. This was initiated when the government made a reformation in the governmental system into a decentralised one in which local government were given more power to regulate based on the local needs. This somehow affects the education system in one way or another until the government also issued an Act in which the education system was no longer centralist but

decentralist (Act Number 25 Year 2000). The act is supposedly to give more access to teachers to develop and modify the material by adding or combine the local wisdom. The teachers are also allowed to design their assessment because they are believed to know best about their students' progress.

The product of the education system change was the implementation of the 2004 curriculum. Known as 'Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi' (KBK) or 'Competency Based Curriculum', it was the first curriculum to base on the Contextual and Learning approach. KBK was the pioneer of the curriculum design which considered the need of incorporating the local culture and make a move into facing the globalisation. In two years of implementation, the curriculum was re-designed if not replaced by the 2006 curriculum known as 'Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan' (KTSP) or 'School Based Curriculum' which gave more freedom to teachers in designing their material. KTSP, as contrasted to KBK emphasised more into introducing the students' culture and identities as opposed to others. Like KBK, KTSP also aimed for the students' who are competent to participate in the global community. The recent curriculum is known as the 2013 curriculum or K-13. It is seemingly like the final product which sees beyond the cognitive side emphasised by the other two previous curriculums but the

combination among the skills, knowledge and attitude.

What is interesting to highlight in the curriculum changes is that there is an increasing awareness in the different use of English by each curriculum. Regardless the political issue behind the curriculum changes, the government arguably watch over the latest trend in the latest use of English in the international community. Giving a glance to the curriculums, the focus in teaching English experience has shifted from merely teaching grammar to achieving the creativity in a context-based communication.

In fact, the world nowadays has started to recognise the use of the Lingua Franca English (LFE). LFE recognise the various cultures and various accent in its use. People who do not share the same first languages and use English to communicate may not necessarily need to conform to the native speakers' cultures (Jenkins, 2016). What they need to understand is the context of what they are talking about and what is the purpose of the communication they do and whether they are able to shuttle their Englishes according to whom they are talking to (Canagarajah, 2012). The emergence of LFE increases the awareness that the strategies in negotiation, meaning making, sensitivity, and adaptivity toward the multilinguals 'cultures make a proficiency (Canagarajah 2007) and not the cultures, accent and grammar of the native speaker.

Therefore, considering the shift in the use of English in the global community and the changes in Indonesian curriculums, this paper aims to see what the focus of speaking assessment in the Indonesian's curriculum after the reformation is. The paper wants to see whether intelligibility is assessed through the speaking task. If it is, the assessment should not necessarily focus on the native speakers' accuracy and fluency. The assessment should be more cultural aware and should be more flexible toward the speech production of the students in specific context. Further this paper aims to provide humble suggestions of what could be added in the element of the evaluation to better evaluate the global use of English.

This research aimed to answer two research questions. The first question was: what is the focus of the speaking assessment in Indonesia's previous and current curriculums? The second was: How could the curriculum be made better to assess the students' speaking task? The assessment handbook documents generally explain about the types of the test administered to assess the speaking task and provide the rubrics. Therefore, to answer the first question, I treated the documents as participants by providing a set

of questions to be asked (O'Leary, 2014; Bowen, 2009). After that, I highlighted the answer within the document as the answer of the questions. Then I analysed the answers and generated explanation. To answer the second question, I presented suggestions based on the data found, what focus could be included in assessing the speaking task.

## **Method**

This study aimed to analyse the curriculums in the past few years to see whether they address the communicative strategies used by the students or they only focus on the fossilised forms produced. To find out the objectives of this study, document analysis was used as the method. Document analysis is "collection, review, interrogation, and analysis of various forms of text as a primary source of research data" (O'leary, 2014, p. 177). It was best employed because it is a process of "evaluating documents in such a way that empirical knowledge is produced and understanding is developed" (Bowen, 2009, p. 33). Besides, document review and analysis could provide the data that could indicate how far the curriculum had changed and developed thus necessary steps could be taken.

## **Participants**

In document analysis method, the documents were treated as the participants. This study set a number of questions to interview the documents and highlight the answers within the documents (O'Leary, 2014). There was a total of 9 documents collected from three consecutive curriculums from 2004 to 2015.

## **Procedure**

I started the research by formulating the research questions. I began collect the data by visiting the curriculum centre in the website of ministry of Education and download the basic standard competencies and basic competencies, syllabuses, and the assessment handbook for English in three consecutive curriculums; KBK, KTSP, and 2013 curriculum. I set questions and treated the documents as participants. I asked the questions to the data and analyse the answers. After that, I proposed the improvement that may be made in the curriculum.

## **Data Collection**

In the research, data can be taken either from documents or from people (Bardach, 2009). Documents are anything that can be read while people are any individual or group that can be consulted. The data used in this paper was the data document.

I collected the documents in the form of the syllabus forms, standard and basic competencies, core competencies, and the assessment guidelines from three consecutive years of curriculum changes in English language teaching. These documents were published by the Ministry of National Education and available for download at the archives in the website. The documents collected can be seen as follow:

1. The standard competences and basic competences handbook of KBK curriculum 2004.
2. The syllabus handbook for teacher of KBK 2004.
3. The assessment handbook for teaching English of KBK 2004.
4. The standard competences and basic competences handbook of KTSP curriculum 2006.
5. The syllabus handbook for teacher of KTSP 2006.
6. The assessment handbook for teaching English of KTSP 2006. This document is the form of handbook for teachers and is available to be downloaded online.
7. Core competencies and basic competencies handbook of curriculum 2013.
8. The syllabus handbook for teacher of curriculum 2013
9. The assessment handbook for teaching of curriculum 2013

**Findings and discussion**

After analysing the data documents through KBK, KTSP and K-13, the findings are summarised as follow:

Categories	KBK	KTSP	K-13
<b>Features</b>	Emphasise on the cognitive aspect Class based assessment in which teachers assess because they best know their students' progress. The teachers are able to develop the syllabus which conforms to the local needs.	Emphasise on the cognitive aspect Class based assessment in which teachers assess because they best know their students' progress. The teachers are able to develop the syllabus which conforms to the local needs.	The balance between soft-skill and hard-skill Activity base teaching Thematic integration between all lessons which contribute to the formation of attitude, skill, and knowledge.
<b>Purpose in speaking</b>	Students master the <b>language structures</b> like spelling, vocabulary, and grammar needed for them to understand the language learning. Expressing various (interpersonal, ideational, and textual) in various interactional and monologue in various text genres.	Students develop their <b>communicative competence</b> to informational literacy level Students have <b>increased awareness</b> of the importance of English to add their	<b>Applying</b> the text and language structure to commence the social function from asking for attention, checking understanding, appreciating the good work and asking and expressing opinions and responding according to the <b>context</b> .
<b>Focus in speaking assessment</b>	Communicative competence which consist of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Linguistic competence (grammar, vocabulary, and spelling) Strategic competence (communicative strategies, right term, paraphrasing, body language) Sociocultural competence (Pragmatic use of who and where)	Textual competence: produce oral information in 4 integrated skills Ability to create short functional monologue and essay Supporting competence: linguistic competence (grammar), sociocultural competence (using expressions and accepted speech act in communication, sociocultural competence	Centred in a daily life-based problem. The use of own words in explaining and responding based on the given context. Appreciating the students' creativity, enhancing their self-concept growth, enhancing the ability to self-reflect and helping the students to formulate their own goal.

	Textual competence (part of speech, organising ideas, flexibility in communication)	(coping with the problem and to keep the communication going).	
<b>Types of instrument</b>	Open essay, Role-play, Vocabulary practice, Grammar use	Group performance, Role-play, Open essay, Story telling	Group performance, Role-play
<b>Rubrics</b>	Pronunciation, Intonation, Fluency, Accuracy	Pronunciation, Intonation, Fluency, Accuracy	Pronunciation, Intonation, Fluency, Accuracy

The background of the curriculum changes is all triggered by the global change and the need of equipping the national curriculum. In KBK, the initiative is however started, that is to prioritise the production of the competence and adaptable human capital. In KTSP, the initiative is expanding in which global change is still the focus, but the students are now put in the centre. The curriculums although slightly different in their background each year completing each other, there is a room for concern. Both of the curriculums somehow put too much emphasis on the cognitive aspects. Meanwhile in the 2013 curriculum, there is an integration between the soft skills and hard skills. Analysing the curriculums, it is found that there is an ambition for competition in global community which notably causes problem during the implementation of the curriculum. The curriculum set a much higher expectation to achieve without looking into the condition of the people. Its ambition to be able to stand along with other countries, leading to missing the vastness of the of Indonesians' geography, social, economy and cultural backgrounds. A simple example may be seen on how students from Aceh may have different resources to students in Jakarta. Yet, it is true that the three curriculums give authority for the teacher to formulate their own lesson plans based on the standard and basic competencies given by the government. However, it is arguable that this policy is merely on the surface. Lie (2007) highlights that students who live in a big city may have the access to have holiday to English speaking countries, while those in a more remote area may not even have the textbook to study. One size fit all is absolutely not the answer for Indonesian curriculum.

KBK and KTSP have been designed as the answer to the change from being a 'centralist' curriculum into a 'decentralist' curriculum. They propose the freedom for teacher to design their lesson plans according to the local wisdom and cultures, as well as designing the class-based assessment for teachers to measure their students' achievement. However, this only what is written on the paper. The painful fact is that the administration of the national examination has proven that both the curriculums have not truly lived the

term of being 'decentralist' curriculum. The administration national examination has pushed the schools to their edge. Many students failed during this exam. It takes around almost a decade for Indonesia to realise how national examination does not reflect the decentralist education before finally taking it off only as a national mapping. KBK and KTSP however, through national examination focus on the grammar and text structure more than speaking ability.

Looking into the purpose in speaking, it can be seen that each curriculum moves into a more intelligible type of communication implicitly. In KBK, it is obvious that the students are expected to have the native speakers' proficiency. In KTSP, the purpose shifts slightly into communicative competence and increased awareness. Although no further explanation given regarding to what is the communicative competence here refers to, it informs that the curriculum has been opened to the agreement of achieving the goal of the communication. Furthermore, KTSP explicitly includes the need of the increased awareness of the students' cultures and other cultures. This shows that KTSP has recognised that there is the possibility of speaking your cultures through the language use. It somehow echoes the use of English as a Lingua Franca, in which you speak your identity through language use (Jenkins, 2016). Meanwhile 2013 curriculum has gone further than the two previous curriculums. The 2013 curriculum talks about how the speech functions is used according to the context. Going way further, this echoes the concept of 'shuttling between communities' proposed by Canagarajah (2012).

The focus in speaking between the three curriculum grows in a bigger extend. KBK focuses on some competences namely speech act competence which consist of reading, listening, speaking and writing skills; linguistic competence which consists of the grammar, structure, vocabulary, accent and spelling; sociocultural competence which consists of the choice of formal and informal expressions, who and where the communication takes place and why the communication takes place; strategic competence which consists of the use of paraphrase and body language

for communication effectiveness and; textual competence which consists of the use of the text organisation, the use of expression in the conversation-opening and ending the conversation as well as shifting the topic. In KTSP, however the linguistic, sociocultural, and strategic competences are put as the supporting competences. Meanwhile the textual competence which is defined as the ability to produce oral and written language skills in informational level is put as the main focus. This somehow shifts the focus from just teaching grammar, although grammar is embedded within the text. The students are expected to be able create the functional essay. Regardless how ambitious this may seem because of the above-mentioned different backgrounds throughout Indonesia., the striking difference is that grammar is not highlighted as the main focus. In K-13, the curriculum, the focus has shifted from just grammar and the native speakers' cultures into a more localised use of English. The students' creativity and various answers are taken into account. Students are expected to answer the questions using their own words and respond to the open questions designed by the teacher according to the context given. This of course is in line with the principle of EFL. The students are no longer directed to achieve the culture of the native speakers' but the communicative goal (Kirkpatrick, 2010). In fact, if this what happens, the communicative competence should be what is needed to teach at the class.

There is no significant different the instruments used in delivering the speaking assessment. All the curriculums basically use role play and group performance in assessing the students in speaking. This suggests that, by this far role play is the best used instrument to measure whether or not the students succeed to achieve the goal of the assessment.

The rubrics, however indicate the contradiction. In KBK and KTSP somehow, it is accepted if what measured are in the rubrics are the pronunciation, intonation, fluency, and accuracy. This is because these two curriculums are yet focusing on the native speakers' proficiency. This in fact contradicts to the focus of the K-13 which promotes about the use of creativity and criticality in achieving the goal. There comes question to the focus which says 'Appreciating the students' creativity, enhancing their self-concept growth, enhancing the ability to self-reflect and helping the students to formulate their own goal'. How should this appreciation be addressed through the assessment and what could be made better in assessing the creativity and criticality made by students in their speaking are what need attention in our curriculum.

#### *What could be different*

In the analysis, the data has revealed each KBK, KTSP, and K-13, has transformed into meeting the global use of English. In fact, the K-13 has arrived to unlock the pedagogical approach which expose the students to the development of the awareness toward the fluidity, emergence and the self-regulation nature of English, readiness to the messy and unpredictable nature of the world English, and their ability to negotiate meaning and to shuttle between communities (Ishikawa, 2017).

This paper needs to highlight that its main purpose does not support the use of English in any way the students wants, but of how the less accuracy of the grammar, accent, and intonation can be accepted and let pass (House, 2003). This paper evaluates that the purpose and the focus in speaking assessment have been on track with the development of the unpredictable nature of the global englishes. This paper thus suggests of paying attention to give credit to the broken rules which are produced from the lack of knowledge but not from ignorance.

Aiming not to criticise the curriculum but to scaffold the speaking focus design and the assessment, this paper proposes some humble suggestion that may be considered when assessing the speaking task.

#### *Achieved goal*

As seen from the data, though the curriculum and the focus of the speaking are different, the rubrics remain the same. Since speaking is not tested in the national exam and government have not mentioned the specific focus of speaking but let the teachers decide on their own based needs, the teachers are instinctively directed into measuring the pronunciation, accent, accuracy, and the fluency. However, there is no certain agreement of whose pronunciation and accent are being assessed; the native's or the intelligibility among the users of English. therefore, this somehow fails to measure the curriculum's focus and purpose. In theory K-13 has proposed about the use of creativity, own words, and criticality to answer the questions based on the contexts and has asked the teachers create the open questions which probes various answers. In this light, a suitable instrument to measure the creativity is needed.

Having an increased awareness among the teachers and having the same perception about the importance of achieving the goal of the communication rather than the accent and the pronunciation may help define the assessment. After all, any purpose of the conversation is to deliver a message. If this message is successfully delivered, the goal of the communication is

achieved.

### *Use of the communicative strategies*

Further, K-13 as the current curriculum in fact proposes to see not only the product but also the process. K-13 also talks about the creativity and the criticality of the students. This represents the communicative strategies which are used by the students during the conversation. Observing whether the students achieve the goal of the communication, the process of how they negotiate during the conversation is also as important as the achieved goal.

Therefore, this paper suggests including the negotiation done by the students in the meaning making process as criteria to assess the students' creativity and criticality to keep the conversation going, by confirming, clarifying, repeating, spelling, paraphrasing or even by using their body language. By doing this, it is highly believed that the assessment will be able to measure the creativity and the criticality mentioned by K-13. Further, the students' confidence will be strengthened to communicate cross-culturally as they will not be intimidated by the one fossilised used of English but of how they reach the goal of their conversation.

### **Conclusion**

The paper has analysed the focus in the speaking among the three previous curriculum and found that each curriculum has moved into a more open-minded idea that the goal of learning English is no longer to achieve the native speakers' fluency and cultures. Although the teachers in the implementation mostly or part still stick into the one-true English, the curriculum itself has recognised the 'global English'. Therefore, this paper suggests some recommendations in the speaking assessment. The suggestions in one way or another can help redirect the teachers' focus when assessing the students' speech production in the conversation. Now English can be used

to speak for one's identities and cultures, thus creative assessment is needed to assess creative speech production. Thus, communicative strategies matter the most than the fossilised norms in speaking creativity and criticality.

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