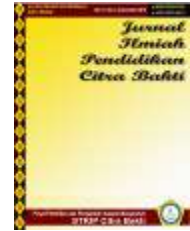




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A LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

Dinar Martia Azizah

English Language Education, Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa

¹⁾dinar.azizah@ustjogja.ac.id

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Abstract

As an international language, English has a strong influence on the policy making in many countries. The policy of including English teaching in elementary education level is implemented differently. Thus, the aims of this literature review are to describe the implementation of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) policy and its challenges. The data gathered are in the form of words, phrases, and sentences taken from books, websites, and supporting journals. The results show that the policy of including English teaching in elementary education level is implemented differently in various countries, in terms of central government's role in implementing TEYL and human resource or English teachers' aspect. The constraints of implementing TEYL policy are decentralization of policies, the lack of needs analysis, incompetent teachers, inaccurate learning models, non-uniformity of implementation, gap in access to learning, lack of preparation, and limited funds. The results raise a question of whether the policy can be implemented while those who will implement them are not involved. The implication of the data is the policies should be formulated based on an analysis of society's real needs to consider the impact on the students and the educational institutions, including the elementary schools. Therefore, the future research, it is important to develop the TEYL policy recommendation that is formulated based on a real needs analysis. The recommendation can go along with the national education goals and people's need for English mastery.

Keywords: TEYL, language policy implementation, early English education, education policy, multilingualism

*Corresponding author: Dinar Martia Azizah (dinar.azizah@ustjogja.ac.id)

Abstrak. Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa internasional memiliki pengaruh yang kuat terhadap pembuatan kebijakan di banyak negara. Kebijakan memasukkan pengajaran bahasa Inggris pada jenjang pendidikan dasar diimplementasikan secara beragam. Oleh karena itu, tujuan dari kajian pustaka ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan implementasi kebijakan Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) dan kendala-kendalanya. Data yang digali berupa kata, frasa, dan kalimat yang diambil dari buku, situs web, dan jurnal pendukung. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa kebijakan untuk memasukkan pengajaran bahasa Inggris di jenjang pendidikan dasar diterapkan secara berbeda di berbagai negara, baik dari segi peran pemerintah pusat dalam mengimplementasikan TEYL maupun dari segi sumber daya manusia atau guru bahasa Inggris. Kendala-kendala implementasi kebijakan TEYL adalah desentralisasi kebijakan, kurangnya analisis kebutuhan, guru yang tidak kompeten, model pembelajaran yang tidak akurat, ketidakseragaman implementasi, kesenjangan akses pembelajaran, kurangnya persiapan, dan keterbatasan dana. Hasil tersebut menimbulkan pertanyaan apakah kebijakan tersebut dapat dilaksanakan sementara mereka yang akan melaksanakannya tidak dilibatkan. Implikasi dari data tersebut adalah bahwa kebijakan harus dirumuskan berdasarkan analisis kebutuhan riil masyarakat dengan mempertimbangkan dampaknya terhadap siswa dan lembaga pendidikan, termasuk sekolah dasar. Oleh karena itu, pada penelitian selanjutnya, penting untuk mengembangkan rekomendasi kebijakan TEYL yang dirumuskan berdasarkan analisis kebutuhan nyata. Rekomendasi tersebut dapat sejalan dengan tujuan pendidikan nasional dan kebutuhan masyarakat akan penguasaan bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: TEYL, implementasi kebijakan bahasa, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris untuk usia dini, kebijakan pendidikan, multilingualisme

Introduction

Even though currently England does not own as much power as it did before, the English language can still maintain its position as an international language. Moreover, in the era of globalization, where various international-scale conferences get organized more often, the role of the English language is essential in bridging differences among languages used in those forums (Nunan, 2003). As expressed by Graddol (2008), the fact that English is chosen as the international language also has pushed the government to formulate a policy in which the language is taught early on, aiming at preparing prospective workers with better English mastery.

Language policy in education is explained by Spolsky (2004) as the decision to study a language which is not used for communication in the daily life, including the decision to choose a foreign language to be taught at schools. In relation with the practice of language use at schools, Spolsky (2017) gave an example of public schools' tendency to choose to use the national language as the medium of instruction according to government's instruction, although currently there is a trend to teach English at the elementary schools because this is considered as the foreign language most widely used in the world.

Language policy at schools which involves choosing a language of instruction and other languages to be put in the curriculum has become an important study in the language policy. Spolsky (2007) added that in language planning or management in education, there are more parties involved, such as the central government, the regional government, the headmasters,

committee teachers, parents, and the society. Other than that, the private sector, religious groups, the newspapers, and other media also influence the language policy at schools.

A research of language teaching policy is a challenging thing to do because the patterns of language change and modification in terms of local, national and international language status and distribution are difficult to predict (Graddol, 2006). Wright (2004) added that if language planners at the national level cannot predict, they can only respond to the phenomenon.

The policy of including English teaching in elementary education level is implemented differently in various countries (Butler, 2004). Language policy in Japan underlying the research of Turnbull (2004) is in line with the opinion of some experts. Bruthiaux (2002); Hu (2007) in Rich (2014) reveals that Teaching English for Young Learners (TEYL) can have a negative impact on the development of first language competencies and cultural identity. However, learning English means learning other cultural elements that are different from the original culture of the students.

On the other hand, students from all elementary schools in China have a reasonably positive view towards English learning. Students state that the mastery of English is needed as a requirement for graduation and getting a good quality school, communicating with foreign tourists, and travelling to other countries. Students also explain that their parents have high expectations that their children can master English (Qi, 2016). This fact is inline by the opinion of Mattheou (1997) who claimed that many parents asked the school to conduct English learning for their children. Ghatage, Inal, Kapur and Lee (2000) also explain that parents perceive mastery of English as an opportunity for a better life and may increase the social status.

The previous studies only highlight cultural tensions and expectations of students and parents. Thus, it is not easy to find researchers who have investigated the inconsistencies between the TEYL policy and the implementation. Thus, the aims of this literature review are to describe the implementation of TEYL policy and its challenges. The results are expected to be used as study materials for the formulation of education policies, including curriculum and teaching materials development needed for English teaching application in elementary schools.

Method

This research used a descriptive qualitative method so the gathered data is in the form of words, pictures, and not numbers (Moleong, 2005). The researcher used some journals related to the implementation of language policy on TEYL in various countries as the source of data. Data in this research are in the form of words, phrases, and sentences. The obtained

data is then analyzed by employing an interactive analysis model which consists of data condensation, data presentation and data conclusion/verification (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014).

This study analyze journal articles published between 2001 and 2020. The articles were selected based on their relevance to the implementation of TEYL policy and its challenges. Databases such as ERIC, Scopus, and Google Scholar were used to identify and retrieve relevant studies.

Result and Discussion

Result

The policy of including English teaching in elementary education level is implemented differently in various countries. First, Butler's research (2004) showed the differences in elementary school English teaching policies between Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. Compared with the other two countries, Korea started the earliest in teaching English, that is, since 1997, and it was comprehensively implemented. In Taiwan, English was taught since 1998 in certain regions, and was comprehensively taught in 2001. In Japan, the government gave freedom to schools to teach English since 2002.

Korean central government's role in implementing English teaching for elementary school students is quite dominant. The government prepared a detailed curriculum using single textbook reference uniformly used in all of the schools. In Taiwan, the government also formulates the curriculum, although not as detailed, and the implementation can be adjusted according to each school's condition. The government provided several books and gave freedom to each of the schools to use them. Unlike Korea and Taiwan which place English as a subject in schools, Japanese government gave freedom for schools to formulate the curriculum and textbooks to be used. In terms of human resource or English teachers' aspect, there are differences between the three countries. In Korea, English teaching was handled by class teachers who received a 120-hour official on the job training from the government. In Taiwan and Japan, English teaching was not always handled by class teachers, but by those who had received training from the government or those from private institutions. However, Japan hired more native speakers of English as teachers than Korea and Taiwan.

Second, Turnbull's research purpose (2004) was to determine the perceptions of 97 Japanese students regarding the impact of learning English, primarily related to the concept of national identity. The background of this study is the history showing that in the past, the Japanese people tend to have introvert characteristics and identify themselves as a homogeneous nation both regarding language and culture as an effort to maintain national identity. Japanese is highly respected and kept by Japanese people because it symbolizes its

identity. This concept forms a negative perception of English and western culture which is considered to be able to destroy their national identity. There is even a perception that if someone speaks English, that person is considered as not being a Japanese citizen.

Gradually, Japan began to open up to the global world. Nevertheless, the balance between mastering English and trying to maintain a national identity remains a significant concern. Learning English does not mean adopting Western culture, but instead uses it to promote Japanese culture to the world. This belief has an impact on the learning policy of English which aims to maintain Japanese nationalism.

In the aspect of the relationship between English and national identity, there is more than 80% of students consider that the language will not eliminate national identity. These students provide various reasons. There are not a few of the students think if learning a foreign language has nothing to do with growth or the ignorance towards national identity. They asserted that they did not want to be like westerners. Some students explained that for the learning English which is only given in a few hours is not able to dissolve the values and culture of Japan who have been internalized in themselves because they have been living and grown in Japan for a long time. Some students revealed that when they learn English, they became more aware of the essence of the Japanese language and its culture as their identity. It is seen in the increasing intercultural awareness because it opens opportunities for mutual understanding and tolerance for cultural differences in the world.

Third, Qi's research (2016) is conducted due to the existence of policies in China that have been implemented since 2003 and require the implementation of English language learning starting from grade 3 in the elementary school. The policy formulated that the duration of English language learning is shorter compared with Mathematics and Chinese subjects, that is written in the curriculum. According to Qi (2016), the minimum number of hours for learning English is considered to be inappropriate, considering that the massive impact of the English mastery for students. This occurrence encouraged him to see how the implementation of the policy, specifically related to the curriculum and students' perceptions of the learning process.

The results of the study indicate that the educational policy that obliges the English learning to be given to grade III is applied uniformly in all elementary schools. Not all of the schools implement policies that have been set by the government, there are even elementary schools that introduce English faster than normal regulation. The elementary school I and II teach English since grade I, the fact shows that elementary school III is the one that teaches English according to government policy. Students from all elementary schools even revealed that they had learned English since they were in kindergarten.

TEYL policies often cause a number of problems and are considered difficult to implement. The following are some of the obstacles often found in the efforts of the implementation of TEYL policies in several countries.

a. Decentralization of policies

In China, English language learning policy is made by the central government (Su, 2006). Teachers are not involved in the policy making. Teachers tend to only act as parties who must implement the policy (Li, 2010). This has caused inconsistencies between the objectives made the policy makers and the implementation by the implementers of the policy.

Lu (2003) in Hu (2007) also sees that the Chinese government does not much involve the stakeholders in the policy making. Hu (2007) adds that the education system in China is centralized. Consequently, it does not consider the impact on the students and the educational institutions, including the elementary schools. This raises a question of whether the policy can be implemented while those who will implement them are not involved.

The inconsistencies between the policy and the implementation have also occurred in South Korea. In the latest curriculum released in 2000, it is mentioned that one of the objectives of TEYL is to realize student-centered learning that is by encouraging teachers to use songs and games (Lee, 2009). In fact, even though the teachers realize that the government wants the application of songs and games, they do not understand the purpose using songs and games in learning (Butler, 2005). In fact, it should be well understood by the teachers because it can affect the quality of the teaching. This is confirmed by Waugh and Jolliffe (2013) stating that teachers' understanding influences the decisions taken and their methods in managing the learning activities.

b. The lack of needs analysis

A policy is made to solve the existing problems or to prevent issues that have the potential to become more serious. The conformity between the real problems with the policies can be pursued through a needs analysis. In conducting TEYL, a needs analysis can be carried out by looking at the need for the mastery of English among adults. Thus, it is necessary to formulate a TEYL curriculum that is suitable for future needs. However, sometimes this analysis is difficult to be carried out because the size of the population of a country is too large (Lambert, 2001).

c. Incompetent teachers

Yuan (2005) in Hu (2007) claims that the Chinese government policy which allows a non-English education graduate to teach TEYL is the reason why the expected results cannot be achieved. The government seems to assume that anyone can teach TEYL. A graduate of different study program who only has a little connection with English or someone who has taken an English course is considered capable of teaching TEYL. Yuan's opinion is supported

by Machida and Walsh (2015) stating that in Japan, teachers who teach in elementary schools are not prepared to teach English.

The government of South Korean also tends to see that teaching English is simple. They think that elementary school teachers are capable of teaching TEYL after 120-240 hour training. In reality, the results are not in line with the expectations because the training activities are only about theories. The teachers do not understand how to practice the theories in the real teaching and learning activities (Lee, 2010). Copland, Garton, and Burns (2013) add that teachers lack training in the methods of TEYL for rural or disadvantaged areas.

Nunan (2003) claims that the education for teacher candidates has not been sufficient to prepare them to become competent teachers. Teachers are considered to lack the ability to speak English to teach. This condition is exacerbated by the fact that the governments from a number of countries have not been able to provide teacher trainings to develop TEYL according to the students' needs (Nunan, 2003).

Inal (2009) in Copland, Garton, and Burns (2013) highlights another issue, namely the low technological mastery of teachers. In Turkey, even though technology is believed to support English learning, not all teachers can use it. A research conducted by Copland, Garton, and Burns (2013) shows that teachers in Columbia and Tanzania also have problems in accessing technology. In fact, the use of technology in learning is claimed by Gilzow (2002) as one of the success factors for TEYL.

Butler (2015) actually has a different opinion and tends to be neutral. He argues that the main problem is not about incompetent teachers in TEYL, but this is because there is no ideal standardization of TEYL teacher competencies. This has led to the assumption that TEYL can only be effective if it is implemented by teachers with the same skill as that of the native speakers. Lack of trust in the ability of local teachers in teaching TEYL can lead to pessimism and low confidence among teachers. The absence of standardization has possibly caused the elementary school teachers in East Asia assume that their abilities are still far below the standard of competent teachers to teach TEYL (Butler, 2004).

d. Inaccurate learning models

The government often determines a learning model that must be applied by teachers in the classroom through the curriculum. Liddicoat (2004) sees it as a form of government intervention by regulating what methods teachers should use without looking at the possibilities of unexpected problems during the learning processes which can be influenced by various complex factors. This has happened in South Korea where the elementary school English curriculum emphasizes the importance of developing communication skills to meet the demands of the globalization era, so that the government encourages the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in learning (Mitchell & Lee, 2003).

On the other hand, some other scholars' view that CLT has unique characteristics and is only suitable for certain conditions. Copland, Garton, and Burns (2013) think that CLT that was first developed in western countries was initially intended for adult students with complete learning facilities. Therefore, CLT is considered unsuitable if applied to teach children from EFL countries who tend to study in large classes with limited infrastructures and teachers who are less trained in the implementation of CLT. This opinion is confirmed the study carried out by (Nunan, 2003) which shows that English teachers in the Asia Pacific region have not been able to apply the CLT and Task-based Language Learning (TBLT) models due to lack of competence in developing the learning methods.

e. Non-uniformity of implementation

One of the causes of not achieving the expected results of a policy is its non-uniform implementation in various regions. In China, the time to begin TEYL is different across regions. Schools in the cities are required to run English learning 1 year earlier than those in the villages because it is assumed that schools in the cities already have more funding, facilities and infrastructures, and supports from various parties. This non-uniformity has disadvantaged English language learning in secondary education because students have diverse English skills (Hu, 2007).

Hu's opinion about the negative impact of the discontinuity of English learning materials in elementary and junior high schools is also explained by Cameron (2003). Cameron states that junior high school English teachers are faced with the reality that they have varying levels of comprehension and skills in English. In addition, it seems that junior high schools have a very different English curriculum from that of elementary schools. This is not an easy challenge for junior high school teachers (Cameron, 2003).

The non-uniformity in policy implementation is also reflected in the application of content based learning. In China, English learning is not a compulsory subject in schools, but favorite schools decide to teach Mathematics and Science in English. This is also observed in several universities where teaching and learning activities are carried out in English (Nunan, 2003). This non-uniformity can lead to gaps in the quality of graduates

f. Gap in access to learning

The gap in access to English learning between students living in the cities and villages is one of the causes of failure of TEYL policies. Students living in the cities have the luxury to take English courses outside school hours. Since English learning in schools is considered not optimal, students who can speak English are those who are supported by their parents to take English courses (Nunan, 2003).

The gap between students living in the cities and those living in villages is wider because students in the villages cannot directly get the benefits of English learning for their life. Copland,

Garton, and Burns (2013) state that students living in the villages do not see the relevance of English language learning to their life because they rarely interact with native speakers of English.

g. Lack of preparation

Hu (2007) notes that failures in implementing TEYL policies in China can be attributable to the lack of preparation. This includes the lack of trainings for TEYL teachers to prepare competent teachers and the unavailability of teaching materials. Because of the lack of preparation, many see the policy unrealistic, difficult to implement, and problematic.

h. Limited funds

The aim of the new 2000 curriculum in South Korea is to realize more student-centered learning by encouraging teachers to use songs and games (Lee, 2009). On the other side, teachers complain about the limited funds to buy learning support facilities that can place students as the subject of learning (Li, 1998 in Copland, Garton, and Burns, 2013). Similarly, Gilzow (2002) states that the funds is one of the contributing factors for the success of TEYL implementation.

Discussion

Based on the findings above, language policy needs to be evaluated. Kaplan and Baldauf (2005) explained the framework to evaluate language policy in education. First, access policy that does not only show when students learn the language, but also the design description and the language development program owned by the school. Second, matters related with language teaching curriculum need to be formulated immediately. Third, methodology and material policy that relates with the selection of methodology to be used in language teaching and the materials taught to the students within the pre-determined time duration. Fourth, resource policy that determines the source and allocation of funding needed for a language program in education. Fifth, community policy that determines the parties involved in the decision making process to formulate language policy in education. Last, evaluation policy which deals with the suitability between learning evaluation and the prepared language teaching methods, materials, and objectives.

So far, Kaplan & Baldauf (1997) viewed that language policy is top down, therefore, it tends to be taken based on the policy makers' point of view and the authority they own. In other words, the policy doesn't reflect the language learners' or users' needs who should be deeper involved in the process of language planning in education. This is also lamented by Liddicoat & Baldauf (2008) who considered that the opinions of language users or policy executors are fundamental and should be integrated in the whole process of language planning.

Because language users' needs are not well accommodated in the policy formulated, Eggington claimed (2002), desired results are not achieved. Policy executors tend to feel reluctant to implement the policies formulated, and consider that the policies do not solve problems, they even worsen the problem. If this continues to go on, it could cause deviations in policy implementation. Consequently, the policy formulated by the government would differ from the implementation in the society (Schiffman, 1996).

Conclusion

The aims of this literature review are to describe the implementation of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) policy and its challenges. First, the policy of including English teaching in elementary education level is implemented differently in various countries, in terms of central government's role in implementing TEYL and human resource or English teachers' aspect. Second, the constraints of implementing TEYL policy are decentralization of policies, the lack of needs analysis, incompetent teachers, inaccurate learning models, non-uniformity of implementation, gap in access to learning, lack of preparation, and limited funds.

The policies have not been formulated based on an analysis of society's real needs. Consequently, it does not consider the impact on the students and the educational institutions, including the elementary schools. This raises a question of whether the policy can be implemented while those who will implement them are not involved. Therefore, it is important to develop language policies that are in line with realities and needs of society.

For the future research, it is important to perform believe of teachers and students on language policy implementation because according to some experts, opinions from policy executors need to be accommodated as inputs language policy formulation. It is important to develop the TEYL policy recommendation that is formulated based on a real needs analysis. The recommendation can go along with the national education goals and people's need for English mastery.

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