EFL Teachers' Interpretation of Curriculum: The Cases of an Elementary Schools

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Abstract

The teaching of English subject in elementary schools with the 2013 Curriculum is quite common. Many teachers have different perspectives on the curriculum whether it's the strategies or challenges in the implementation of the teaching process. This study goal is to view the perspective of English teacher interpretation of 2013 Curriculum. This research uses observation checklists and interviews. This study involves 3 English teachers that teach elementary school to be observed and interviewed. Researchers conducted an observation on one of the teachers while they teach and conducted interview face to face with the 3 teachers. The data that was gathered was then sorted out in the observation checklists and transcription. The results showed that teachers have various teaching methods that they use, such as implementing interactive lessons, engaging in group discussion, encouraging students in activity and collaboration, providing opportunities to students, and the use of technology. Meanwhile, challenges in teaching occur such as limitation of teaching resources, large class size, and time limitations. It could be concluded that while teachers implement teaching methods in 2013 Curriculum teaching, it could still raise some problems for them. The implication of this study is that teachers are supposed to adapt to the curriculum to provide a great learning environment.

Keywords: 2013 Curriculum, English Teacher Interpretation, Strategies, Challenges

I   INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is a central component of education that determines the topics, goals, and outcomes to be covered in a course. It is future-oriented in the sense that it aims to prepare independent and capable individuals who can thrive in both the present and future worlds (Wang et al., 2022). As stated by Philippou and Priestley, (2019), curriculum being at the heart of educational practice means focusing on curriculum practices, not just students or teachers, as they shape human experience. Curriculum is a crucial part in improving students, notably in elementary school. The school curriculum assists students in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and morals needed to participate in community life at the local, national, and global levels (Lestari, 2022; Anugrahana, 2019). In other words, curriculum is an essential aspect of education that builds student to be a better person.

Currently, most school in Indonesia adapted the Independent Curriculum as the new standard of learning curriculum. Independent Curriculum was first introduced in 2022/2023 academic year. The concept of independent learning in elementary schools aligns with the philosophy of progressivism, which aims for progressive, innovative, flexible, open, rational, and scientific education (Yunaini et al., 2022). Implementation of the independent learning curriculum in elementary schools improves the quality of Indonesian education and prepares graduates to excel and compete globally (Lubis & Priyadi, 2022). In conclusion, The Independent Curriculum is somewhat promising and effective for the future generations.

The researchers conducted the research in one of the private elementary schools in Batam. The school currently implements 2013 Curriculum. Curriculum in Indonesia changes in time. Interactive 2013 Curriculum -based products are valid and feasible for elementary school students, supporting thematic learning in primary schools (Mukmin & Primasatya, 2020). The curriculum is in line with the teaching material that elementary teachers give to their students. An analysis on the usage of teaching materials as the basic of development and improvement of that teaching materials is pivotal to make it in line with education development (Hidayah & Marmoah, 2020). The 2013 curriculum more emphasizes on character personal education especially at the elementary level as the foundation for the next level (Arvianti & Wahyuni, 2020). Nonetheless, 2013 Curriculum is somewhat still looked upon in elementary learning by teachers.

While 2013 Curriculum has its advantages, a couple of problems emerge from the curriculum. Some elementary students are having a hard time absorbing teaching material from the teachers. Not only the students are facing problems, but teachers also face quite a similar problem. The obstacles faced are that the teacher has difficulty determining learning media, applying project-based learning methods, lack of infrastructure, and learning assessment difficulties (Warman et al., 2021). Teaching materials

needed in the learning process are sometimes difficult to find (Hidayah & Marmoah, 2020). The problems may occur in every elementary school, but some vary.

Some studies conducted on 2013 Curriculum have shown that most of school in Indonesia across all grades that implemented the curriculum faces different kinds of problems. The 2013 Curriculum has been implemented in SMAN 1 South Solok, but X grade students face obstacles in learning mathematics due to the lack of resources and time (Novita & Afriansyah, 2019). Implementation 2013 Curriculum in elementary schools still faced significant problems were based on the focus group discussion results with elementary school teachers in the Kuningan area of West Java, it was known that teachers still had difficulty implementing thematic-integrative with connecting the material with other material (Oktaviani & Wulandari, 2019). Another case study can be found by Jatmika et al. (2020). They found that some vocational high schools in Surakarta lack many aspects regarding 2013 Curriculum. Similar case studies can be found by (Rohmatulloh et al., 2019). They stated that the 2013 Curriculum in one of primary school in Yogyakarta, have not been optimal yet regarding the implementation of 2013 Curriculum for science learning. This study case is supported by Utama (2021). They found that teachers' ability to develop learning media for Distance Learning is still lacking, highlighting the need for reordering instructors and evaluating the effectiveness of the program. Hence, it can be concluded that the previous studies have quite a challenge in implementing the 2013 Curriculum into the school learning syllabus.

Fortunately, some positive studies can be found in some studies. Some study found that implementing 2013 curriculum is in fact successful (Choirotun Nisa & Nurhayati, 2019; Nur Agus Salim et al., 2021; Syukri et al., 2021). These studies stated that implementing 2013 Curriculum in school has a little to no problem.

From the studies, it can be concluded that most of 2013 Curriculum problems occurred at high school level and middle school level but only a few in elementary level. However, most of researchers conducted the research have little to no mentioning English subject in the 2013 Curriculum. Therefore, this research was conducted to inspect and highlight the problems of 2013 Curriculum in English subject for elementary students. The aim of this research is to fill in the gap in previous studies by focusing on the small problem encountered within the English subject under the 2013 curriculum for elementary students. By identifying these problems, the study seeks to provide valuable insights for educator and the education policymaker to improve curriculum development, English language instruction and policies, ultimately to help them in creating more conducive and effective English language learning environment with an intention to elevate the elementary students' learning experience within the 2013 Curriculum framework.

II   METHOD

2.1   RESEARCH DESIGN

The researchers used case studies as a supportive theory of the implementation of English subject in elementary school using 2013 Curriculum. According to Priya (2020), A case study is one of the most used methodologies of social research. From the statement, it can be said that case studies are abundant and easy to access. Furthermore, case studies are an effective method to understand the problems that occur. As stated by Patnaik and Pandey (2019), Case study research is an effective method for investigating complex issues in real-world settings, with rigor being crucial for achieving a comprehensive understanding of contemporary phenomena.

2.2   SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

Researchers used checklists and interviews to gather necessary data. Using face-to-face method ensures the validity of the gathered data. As stated by (Eby et al., 2020), checklists in article reviews can improve research quality, reporting consistency, and enhance the peer review process for authors, reviewers, and editors. For this reason, researchers used checklists to gather data. The checklists were adapted from Zaare (2013), Rogers (2016), Hong et al. (2020), and Ong et al. (2017). There are 3 main criteria of checklists that are related to the subject focusing on the curriculum, the classroom management, and the teaching methods and techniques.

2.3   INSTRUMENTS

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Table 1. Criteria of checklist

Focus on Curriculum		Rating Scale				
		Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
1.	Learning objective is evident to the students					
2.	Learning objective on target for grade-level standards					
3	The teacher applies exceptional knowledge of content and pedagogy within and across curriculum teaching areas to develop learners' lifelong learning skills.					
4.	The teacher extend knowledge beyond the curriculum requirements and stimulates learners' curiosity.					
5.	The teacher and learners collaboratively set and attain the learning goals using assessment strategies consistent with the curriculum requirements.					
6.	The teacher manages well-structured lesson with a developmentally sequenced teaching and learning processes to meet curriculum requirements and varied teaching context					
Focus on Classroom Management		Rating Scale				
		Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
1.	The teacher gives instructions (e.g., giving clear instructions before going through an activity, making sure that all learners understand exactly what they are required to do)					

Focus on Curriculum	Rating Scale				
	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
2. The teacher uses of both verbal and nonverbal communication appropriately					
3. The teacher manages group and/or pair work					
4. The teacher deals with learners' misbehavior/misconduct					
5. The teacher handles difficulties and emerges circumstances inside the classroom wisely and flexibility					
6. The teacher assists students in developing the skills to use learning resources.					
Focus on Teaching Methods and Techniques	Rating Scale				
	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
1. The teacher uses appropriate warm-up techniques/activities that stimulate and engage learners at the beginning of the lesson					
2. The teacher uses appropriate teaching methods and techniques to accomplish the objectives of the lesson					
3. The teacher uses various questioning and answering techniques					
4. The teacher uses various teaching strategies appropriate to learners' level					
5. The teacher follows a logical sequence throughout the whole lesson and organizing the activities accordingly					
6. The teacher draws links between old material and new material					
The teacher deals with the various types of language learning activities/tasks within					

Focus on Curriculum		Rating Scale				
		Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
7.	the lesson (e.g., grammatical exercises, language practice, speaking activities, listening activities, reading activities, and communicative activities) efficiently and properly					
8	The teacher employs non-lecture learning activities (e.g., technology, computer, video, overheads)					
9.	The teacher encourages students to use the provided technological equipment.					

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Table 2. Interviews list of questions

No	Question
1.	From your perspective, What is "Engagment"?
2.	How do you engage yourself on the English teaching on Kurikulum 13?
3.	Does Engagment effect teaching skills?
4.	What are the teachers thoughts on "Motivation"?
5.	How do you motivate yourself on teaching English based from 2013 Curriculum?
6.	What are the primary strategies that teachers can use to enhance the students engagement?
7.	How do you implement the strategies in class?
8.	How can the teachers guarantee that the strategies they use are align with the objectives and the standard of K13?
9.	How can the teachers evaluate the impact of the strategies on the students engagement and academic achievment?
10.	If some students are uncooperative, what will you do?
11.	Does K13 differ in teaching process from other curriculum?
12.	Does the English teaching process use student- centered learning?

No	Question
13.	How does the K13 curriculum guide teachers in designing and implementing student-centered learning activities that promote active engagement and participation in English language lessons?
14.	Does the K13 curriculum encourage teachers to utilize authentic materials and real-life contexts in English language instruction to enhance students skills?
15.	Does the teacher come across challenges in implementing curriculum especially Kurikulum 13?
16.	Is it crucial for teaching if the challenges occures occasionally?
17.	What strategies can teacher employ to overcome challenges in teaching English based on Kurikulum 13 effectively?
18.	How can teacher ensure that curriculum is inclusive and meets the diverse needs of all students?
19.	Does the current curriculum support the use of technology in class teaching?
20.	How can technology be effectively used into teaching practices to enhance student learning outcomes while aligning with the goals and requirements of Kurikulum 13?
21.	Is there some innovative ways that teacher could leverage technology to deliver curriculum content in a more engaging and interactive manner, while ensuring alignment with educational standards and learning objectives?

2.4 DATA COLLECTION

Researchers conducted classroom observations to identify the appropriate criteria for the observation checklists. Researchers analysed the classroom to try to find out the problem regarding the teachers' implementation of English teaching in elementary level. The necessary data is then input in the checklists criteria. As for the questions specific to the teachers, researchers conducted interviews to analyse and determine each of the teachers' answers. Researchers then record the interviews to be reviewed for each one of them.

2.5 DATA ANALYSIS

When the data has been fully collected, it would be sorted out based on the category of the checklists and interviews for the purpose of identifying the correct criteria. Each of the data is then put on the observation checklists spreadsheet with the theme on the focus of the curriculum, classroom management, teaching methods and techniques. The spreadsheet also included rating scale ranging from very good to very poor to determine which categories to put the data into. As stated by Jacobs (2019), Performance rating scales are important for ensuring learning, documenting actions completed, and measuring skill or ability levels. It also contains notes to discuss strength in classroom observations, suggestions for improvement, and the overall impression. The data then were analyzed to accurately place the data in the correct criteria. While the observations checklist focused on the classroom teaching, the interviews were focused on the teacher's perspective. The interviews were conducted with the questions from the questionnaire blueprint. The questionnaire is focused on the aspect of teacher's engagement, motivation, strategies, teaching process, and challenges. The results of the interviews were then transcribed to be inspected for the right criteria.

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 RESULTS

The data that was gathered are split into interviews as the primary data, and observation checklists as the secondary. There were three teachers interviewed by researchers. The first teacher is called A, has

12 years of experience in teaching English for elementary students. For the second teacher, he is called B. B has 2 Years of experience as English teacher for young learners. Lastly, the third teacher is called C. C has 3 years of experience in teaching English for elementary students.

In implementing strategies, researchers found that A's method in teaching is to implement strategies by planning interactive lessons, facilitating group discussions, and using multimedia resources. B implements the strategies by carefully planning and structuring lessons to include a variety of engaging activities, encouraging active participation and collaboration among students, and adapting teaching methods based on students' feedback and learning progress, and C have a look on their lesson, then creating interesting exercises such as games, encouraging dialogue, making good use of multimedia, and providing opportunities for less interested students. Additionally, A and C had the same opinions regarding engagement in teaching English. Both were focused more on adapting 2013 Curriculum while B was focused more on incorporating interactive activities. Each of the perspectives are backed by their perspectives of implementing the strategies while still aligning with the 2013 Curriculum by reviewing and assessing student process.

The three also mention using technologies really support their teaching process. A mention that the current curriculum often supports the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning experiences. B mentions that technology encourages teachers to integrate technology tools and resources, such as multimedia presentations, interactive apps, online platforms for collaboration and communication, and digital assessment tools, to enhance student learning outcomes and facilitate active engagement in lessons. Lastly, C mentions that technology emphasizes the integration of devices and innovations to support instruction, encourage communication, and provide intuitive learning experiences in English teaching. Every teacher has the same perspective regarding the learning process is focused on student-centred learning.

Based on the observation, while it is true that the teacher implemented technology as a support of the teacher, unfortunately one teacher contradicted the claim of using student-centred learning. One of the teachers implemented teacher centred learning by only explaining the material without giving the students any explanation about the learning topic. The teacher only gives a presentation slide about the material and only explains without letting the students have their opinion about the subject.

Each teacher has almost the same opinion regarding challenges while teaching English with 2013 Curriculum. A's stated that limited resources, large class sizes, and varying student abilities are the challenges. B opinion is that adapting teaching methods to diverse student needs, integrating character education into lessons, aligning assessments with competency-based learning goals, and effectively utilizing technology in teaching practices. Lastly, C stated that limited resources, different substitute needs, and time are some of the challenges. They stated that most challenges come from adapting to the curriculum itself, the limitation of learning resources and occasional misbehaviour of the students. This statement is further proved by the teachers' response to how to deal with uncooperative students is to understand the students' problems and needs. From the observation, it is proven that the teacher can handle the student uncooperativeness by giving the students group work and group discussions.

All teachers agree that 2013 Curriculum is different from other curriculums. A stated that differs from other curricula in terms of its objectives, content, and teaching approaches. B stated that teaching process from other curricula in several ways. It emphasizes competency-based learning, integration of character education, and the use of scientific approaches in teaching and learning. C stated that 2013 Curriculum emphasizes a competency-based approach, advancing dynamic learning, basic considering, and real-life application of information, which may vary from conventional educational module. Their statement is backed up by their opinion on utilizing authentic material and real-life context in English language instruction in English teaching.

3.2 DISCUSSION

Based on a classroom observation conducted in a private elementary school in Batam, specifically in a grade 6 class, a variety of student behaviours were noted during the lesson. While the teacher was presenting the material, some students were noisy, some were less active than others, and a few were walking around the classroom. The teacher attempted to engage the students through pre-class games designed to capture their interest in the lesson. This approach seemed effective as students were excited and highly engaged, particularly when assigned group tasks. However, it was observed that the materials provided by the teacher did not fully align with the module content and mainly focused on delivering information rather than fostering curiosity and enthusiasm for the subject.

All teachers emphasized that teaching methods are a crucial factor in English instruction. Modern English teaching approaches that focus on student interest and motivation are more effective than traditional methods (Djumabaeva, 2023). Moreover, they point out that the 2013 curriculum is more effective than previous curricula as it leans toward student-centred learning rather than teacher-centred learning. Student-centred learning shifts the focus from traditional lectures to active participation, incorporates self-paced learning programs, and holds students accountable for their educational progress (Tang, 2023). It promotes self-discovery and encourages independent research, contrasting with teacher-centred instruction that positions the teacher as the primary source of information (Ghafar Z, 2023).

One teacher highlighted the use of student discussions as a means to engage learners, while others incorporated interactive lessons and encouraged dialogue among students who might be less inclined to participate. Interactive lessons involve actively engaging students through various methods, such as multimedia tools, role-playing, and discussions, which foster critical thinking and enhance learning outcomes (Bezkorovaina & Olha, 2020). The research indicates that each teacher's approach aligns with the 2013 Curriculum teaching methods, which positively influence student outcomes by emphasizing student-centred learning, active engagement, critical thinking, and self-directed learning (Rachma Assyifa et al., 2023). This shift in focus from teacher-centred instruction to more interactive and participatory methods empower students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Every teacher had mentioned the approach of teaching strategies. A's employs interactive lessons, group discussions, and multimedia resources. His approach is supported by research indicating that interactive classroom methods enhance student reasoning and divergent thinking, ultimately leading to increased self-learning and higher approval rates in school subjects (Gallach et al., 2020). Interactive teaching fosters communication, exploration, and student initiative, contributing to improved educational outcomes and greater enthusiasm for learning (Yang, 2022). However, challenges persist in implementing interactive lessons, with a noted scarcity of innovative ideas (Moses Adeleke Adeoye & Olaolu Paul Akinnubi, 2023).

Regarding teaching strategies approach, B emphasizes engagement and collaboration to capture students' interest. His methods align with the notion that student engagement is critical for successful English language learning, regardless of whether the setting is online or offline ((Ginting, 2021) While his strategies are appropriate for 2013 Curriculum, they may inadvertently hinder teaching effectiveness (Fan, 2022).

Lastly, C focuses on providing opportunities tailored to students' individual needs. Effective English instruction involves motivating students by capturing their attention, utilizing instructional media, and engaging them in active learning through eye contact, discussions, and clear intonation (Sani & Asty, 2023)

All three teachers acknowledged the supportive role of technology in their teaching processes. One teacher utilized presentation slides, which increased student engagement. Others noted that technology facilitates collaboration, enhances the learning environment, and offers personalized learning experiences. Their statement is supported by (Priyadarshini et al., 2023). However, challenges related to technology integration remain, such as time constraints, insufficient facilities, and the potential to create less conducive classroom environments (Ridha & Fithriani, 2023). Thus, while technology can enhance teaching, it can also pose challenges.

Each teacher faced challenges in implementing 2013 Curriculum while teaching English. Common challenges include students' prior knowledge in English, lack of motivation, negative perceptions of the language, time constraints, insufficient teaching resources, disorganized classroom conditions, and anxiety related to speaking (Pertiwi et al., 2022). A identified limited resources and large class sizes as significant challenges, which are well-documented in the literature (Nia & Fithriani, 2023; Adamu et al., 2020). B aced challenges related to integrating character education into lessons and aligning assessments with competency-based goals, echoing findings from (Pratiwi et al., 2021). Lastly, C's challenges revolved around varying substitute needs and time constraints, a concern also noted in other studies (Pertiwi et al., 2022). All three teachers recognized that adapting to the curriculum posed significant challenges, yet they also indicated that overcoming these hurdles is possible through the alignment of their teaching strategies with the 2013 Curriculum. Effective teaching strategies for young learners encompass careful planning, implementation, and evaluation, employing methods such as demonstration (Ridha & Komariah, 2022). In terms of the 2013 Curriculum, all teachers expressed similar views regarding its distinctiveness compared to the previous KTSP curriculum. The 2013 Curriculum emphasizes community-based learning, life skills development, and self-growth, while KTSP focused on self-development and community involvement (Setiawan & Ahla, 2023)

IV   CONCLUSION

This study is focused on Teaching strategies, Teaching challenges, and curriculum adaptation in teachers' perspective, especially in English subject. Teachers' teaching strategies on the 2013 Curriculum include implementing interactive lessons, engaging in group discussion, encouraging students in activity and collaboration, providing opportunities to students, and the use of technology. While the strategies could benefit teachers, sometimes they could create problems such as limitation of teaching resources, large class size, and time limitations. Although the 2013 Curriculum implements student-based learning approach, teachers could adapt to the curriculum for learning environments. For further study, it is recommended to conduct a research study regarding students' perspective on the 2013 Curriculum.

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