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# Celt

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# #566 Review

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# THE IMPLICATION OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHER'S BELIEFS ABOUT GRAMMAR FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE POLICY IN INDONESIA

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# THE IMPLICATION OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHER'S BELIEFS ABOUT GRAMMAR FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE POLICY IN INDONESIA

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**Abstract:** Recent studies have suggested that teachers' beliefs have a significant influence on actual classroom practice and, consequently, on students' achievements. However, little research has been done to investigate the influence of Indonesian language policy and teachers' beliefs. The study reported seeks to examine the influence of English language policy on pre-service teacher's beliefs about the teaching of English language grammar in Indonesian schools. The research participants were pre-service teachers who have taken the subjects of Structure, Teaching Methods, and Micro-teaching in three public and private universities in Central Java and Yogyakarta Special District. Due to time and scheduling limitations, the sampling method used in this study was convenient sampling. Documentation, survey schedules, interviews, focus group discussions were used to gather the data. The findings revealed that although the language policy in Indonesia has put English language teaching and learning within the framework of communicative competence since the enactment of the 2006 School-based Curriculum, the pre-service teachers still believed that traditional method of teaching grammar (explicit grammar instruction) was imperative to use. The pre-service teachers tended to exclude English language policy enacted by Indonesian government in their discussion about teachers' beliefs. Instead, the pre-service teachers constructed their beliefs about English language grammar teaching and learning process on their prior experiences in learning and teaching grammar.

**Key words:** language policy, teacher's belief, pre-service/in-training teachers



**Abstrak:** Studi terbaru menunjukkan bahwa pandangan guru sangat berpengaruh terhadap praktek pengajaran di dalam kelas dan prestasi siswa. Namun, penelitian tentang kebijakan bahasa di Indonesia dan pandangan guru belum banyak dilakukan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti pengaruh kebijakan bahasa Inggris terhadap pandangan calon guru tentang pengajaran tata bahasa Inggris di sekolah-sekolah di Indonesia. Responden penelitian adalah calon-calon guru di tiga universitas negeri dan swasta di Jawa Tengah dan Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta yang telah mengambil mata kuliah Structure, Teaching Methods, dan Microteaching. Metode sampling yang digunakan pada penelitian ini adalah metode convenience sampling mengingat waktu dan jadwal yang terbatas. Metode pengumpulan data menggunakan dokumentasi, survei, wawancara, dan focus grup discussion. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun kebijakan bahasa di Indonesia telah menempatkan pengajaran bahasa Inggris dalam kerangka kompetensi komunikasi (communicative competence) sejak diberlakukannya kurikulum 2006, calon guru masih percaya bahwa metode tradisional pengajaran tata bahasa (instruksi pengajaran tata bahasa eksplisit) harus tetap digunakan. Calon guru cenderung tidak menyentuh kebijakan bahasa Inggris yang telah ditetapkan oleh pemerintah Indonesia dalam diskusi tentang pandangan mereka terhadap pengajaran bahasa Inggris. Alih-alih, calon guru mendasarkan pandangan mereka tentang pengajaran tata bahasa Inggris pada pengalaman pribadi mereka ketika belajar tata bahasa Inggris.

**Kata kunci:** kebijakan bahasa, pandangan guru, calon guru

## INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the language policy and the preservice or in-training teacher's belief system of the students of English Teacher Education study program in three different cities: Semarang, Salatiga, and Yogyakarta. As a school subject which is mandated by the State in the context of a globalizing economy (see Indonesia Republic Government Enactment number 32, year 2013, chapter 771, article 1 c), English language program teaching and learning deem structured planning and execution to reach the expected result. Studies on preservice or in-training teacher's belief shows that the training given during their study at Teacher Education study program will influence the tendency of a teacher to act including how the preservice or in-training teacher perceive problems they face in teaching and



learning English (Rokeach, 1968). However, it is important to note that there is a belief these preservice can undergo changes as a result of the reality they face in their work later. The language policy of a certain country is one of the 'realities' the English teacher should accept. Law No. 20/2003 on the national education standard, chapter 38 article 2 states that,

The primary and secondary education curriculum is developed according to their relevance to each group or unit education as well as school/madrasah committee (*komite sekolah*) under the coordination and supervision of the District Education Office (DEO - *Dinas Pendidikan Kabupaten/Kotamadya*), the Ministry of National Education (MONE), or *Kantor Departemen Agama Kabupaten/Kota*, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) for primary education and the Province for secondary education

[Kurikulum pendidikan dasar dan menengah dikembangkan sesuai dengan relevansinya oleh setiap kelompok atau satuan pendidikan dan komite sekolah/madrasah di bawah koordinasi dan supervisi dinas pendidikan atau kantor Departemen Agama Kabupaten/Kota untuk pendidikan dasar dan Propinsi untuk pendidikan menengah.]

The article above becomes the base of eight national education standards - graduate competency, content, process, personnel, infrastructure, management, funding, and assessment standards. These education standards influence how the English language programs runs.

Unfortunately, the implementation of these national standards in the teaching of English does not go well. The seriousness of the parties involved in the implementation of national standards in education is in question especially those from the Ministry of Education. Yulia (2014) points out that while ELT is perceived as important by both the district and the individual schools, the way to run the program is differently understood by both parties. Yulia (2014) gives some examples of the drawback of implementing ELT standards: The documents which become the guide of the implementation such as curriculum, syllabus, and lesson plans are implemented without proper appraisal; teachers are rarely assessed and supervised, and given in-service training. The lack of monitoring and supervising from the district supervisor may affect teachers' performance in the classroom.

Yulia (2014) also writes that teachers' limited ability in the teaching of English is another major problem on ELT. She says that English teachers do

not have adequate ability in teaching English both in their pedagogical and professional aspects. The teachers' lack of pedagogical and professional aspects is shown by Yulia (2014) in the fact that despite the Government Regulation No. 19/2005 which clearly states that the focus of ELT in Indonesia is to develop students' communicative competence, the teachers tend to ignore the notion by focusing on structural approach to fulfil the students' need to prepare for the national examination. The development of linguistic competence then becomes more important than the communicative competence. The lack of communicate competence as well as motivation results in the students' inability to communicate in English (see Yulia, 2014).

Considering the problems of ELT in Indonesia above, the belief system of preservice or in-training teachers of English Language Education Program has an important role in improving national standard of education. As stated earlier the belief system resulted from the training receives by the preservice or in-training teachers during their study influences the way preservice or in-training teacher perceives a problem of teaching and learning, therefore the belief system which agrees with the national education policy should be encouraged.

Especially on the teaching of English grammar, previous studies show that teacher's belief, indeed, influenced the way teachers choose their method of teaching grammar. However, study on the teachers' belief on teaching grammar has not developed well. Studies on teaching grammar in Indonesia focus on the materials and teaching techniques (Baleghizadeh, 2011; Sugiharto, 2005; Meyer & Gallo, 1998). More studies on Indonesian teachers' belief on teaching grammar will boost the improvement of national standard of English education simply due to the fact that teachers play central roles in the teaching and learning process.

The findings on teachers' belief will encourage the improvement on ELT in Indonesia including the curricula and systematic evaluation of its implementation. ELT teaching improvement will produce highly qualified students who are proficient in English.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Crystal (2003) in his book *English as a Global Language* states that English is a language which has special roles in many countries; hence

English can be regarded as a global language. Crystal mentions two ways for a language to be considered global. The first way is when a language becomes an official language of a country whose mother tongue is not that language. The second way is when a language becomes a country's priority in foreign language teaching. The explanations clearly put English language as a global language as English is the official language in countries such as India, Nigeria, Singapore whose first languages are not English. English is also the priority of foreign language teaching in countries like Indonesia, China and Russia (Crystal, 2003: p. 4-5). Crystal further explains that English is needed by those countries as a medium of communication in areas of politics, business, entertainment, international relations, international travel, and education in order to increase the countries' positions in the world.

#### A. English Language in Indonesia

English language education in Indonesia is developed around the context of the national language, *Bahasa Indonesia*. The status of *Bahasa Indonesia* as the national language is shown in Indonesian constitution, UUD 1945, article 36. The constitution states that *Bahasa Indonesia* is the language of national unity; to unite Indonesians who speaks more than 550 local languages (Sneddon, 2003: p. 5). To foster the use of *Bahasa Indonesia*, it is taught as compulsory subject at all education levels - primary school up to university. With its position as a national language, *Bahasa Indonesia* is the official medium of communication in Indonesia and used in government, education, and business sectors. In its development, *Bahasa Indonesia* has characteristics as a diglossia (Sneddon, 2003). Although formally *Bahasa Indonesia* is standardized by EYD (Ejaan yang disempurnakan/perfected spelling) format, Indonesians use *Bahasa Indonesia* differently based on the context, whether it is in a certain situation or with certain people, or even in certain social level. Standardized *Bahasa Indonesia* (*Bahasa Indonesia Baku*) is usually used in formal settings like in the classroom, government meeting, business meeting, and in official documents. On the other hand, informal *Bahasa Indonesia* is used in casual conversations.

Dardjowijoyo (2000), as cited in Yulia (2014), writes that English is the first foreign language to be taught in schools and universities in Indonesia after their independence. He mentions that Indonesians, after their independence, felt the needs to master an international language for the medium of communication at international level. The decision to choose English, not Dutch, as the foreign language to be taught at all level of education in Indonesia, according to Dardjowijoyo (2000) as cited in Yulia

(2014) was that right after Indonesia's independence from The Netherlands' colonialism in 1945, Dutch language was still unfavourably considered as 'the language of the enemy'. At that time, English was made a compulsory subject starting from high school until university. It is important to note here that English was decided as a foreign language, not a second language, as Bahasa Indonesia is the sole national language. English continues to be a compulsory foreign language taught at Indonesian school and and at the university level as English increasingly becomes more commonly used as a medium of communication internationally (see Kachru, 1998; Kirkpatrick, 2007). In Asia, English becomes Asian lingua franca (McArthur, 2002). Countries in Asia use English to communicate and to conduct business with other countries. Countries joined in ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) use English as their de facto lingua franca (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Therefore, English language becomes more strategic for Indonesians to learn. English language teaching in Indonesia, then, should provide its learners with adequate ability to communicate in English.

## **B. English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indonesia**

As mentioned previously, after the revolution, English language was a compulsory subject offered at high schools and universities. In the early years after gaining independence, the teaching of English in Indonesia relied on the Grammar Translation Method, a method which, according to Dardjowidjojo (2000), as cited by Yulia (2014), was left over by the Dutch. Dardjowidjojo continues that audiolingual method was introduced in 1953 with the help from the Ford Foundation. The books produced from the project, *English for SLTP* and *English for SLTA*, were the compulsory books for SLTP (Junior High School) students and SLTA (Senior High School) students. Those books were the embryos of the 1975 curriculum (Yulia, 2014).

Madya (2008) describes English curriculum implemented in Indonesia from the early years of Indonesia's independence until 2006. Madya states that the subtopics in the books used in 1975 curriculum are mainly contained grammatical structures, thus it can be said that the 1975 curriculum is structure oriented. Madya adds that the target skills of 1975 curriculum are sequenced into listening, speaking, reading and writing. The learning of language forms is the focus of the 1975 curriculum.

The next curriculum, the 1984 curriculum, concentrates on language use, not language form anymore (Madya, 2008). Madya says that the 1984

English curriculum covers reading, dialogues, and writing which shows the features of communicative curriculum.

Reading is aimed at developing the students' ability to comprehend various texts and increasing their vocabulary and structural experiences... Dialogues are used to teach skills to use English orally to express various communicative functions. Writing is aimed at developing the students' skills in constructing correct and acceptable sentences and arranging them into a paragraph and various simple texts (Madya, 2008: pp. 13-4)

Madya (2008) claims that despite its objective as communicative English curriculum, 1984 curriculum is still structurally oriented based on the structure-related instructional goal. Madya categorizes the 1984 English language curriculum as the weak functional type.

The 1994 English curriculum concentrates on the mastery of communicative skills using meaning-based approach. This curriculum mention some of the crucial points; they are, first, the themes of linguistic elements of English, such as grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation, focus on four English language skills. Second, the teaching and learning process are taught under the related themes. Third, in the teaching and learning process, the four language skills are basically inseparable, and the students involved in meaningful learning activities (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1994a, 1994b). Those points aim to develop learners' social communication skills. Kasihani (2000) writes that the 1994 curriculum uses the communicative approach. On communicative approach, Kasihani (2000) notes that the implementation of such an approach is difficult as English as a foreign language is not used in every-day Indonesia, therefore the teaching remains on the cognitive knowledge of English. For the 2006 curriculum, the schools, or educational units, need to develop their own curriculum. These school-level curricula are assisted by the Government through a guide book for school-level curriculum development, and school-level curriculum development training. The 2006 curriculum does not set standards on the level of English proficiency for each level, only differences in vocabulary items and types of expressions used. Like the 1994 curriculum, the 2006 curriculum emphasizes the mastery of communicative competence.

The 2013 curriculum aims at the development on competences and character building and focuses on the values of moral education. The



emphasis on values and moral education instead of competencies cannot be evaluated as the implementation of this curriculum in the national level is postponed. The most important thing to note in 2013 curriculum for English language teaching is that English in primary schools depend on school policy as it is not mandatory.

In the implementation of 1975-2006 curriculums, Madya (2008) evaluates that the teaching and learning of English has become unsatisfactory as a result of some factors. First, many teachers use outdated methods and have very little training in English teaching. Second, many teachers are not trained in English teaching methodology. Third, there is a lack of quality materials. Fourth, classes are too large.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Data in this study was collected qualitatively from interviews and focus group discussions. The qualitative data aimed to know teacher's belief in detail. The population of this study was preservice or in-training teachers at English Language Education Programs in in three public and private universities in Central Java and Yogyakarta Special District. The method of sampling used is convenient sampling due to time and scheduling limitations.

## **FINDINGS**

Grammar is the most challenging subject in English teaching. It is unarguable that the teaching of English grammar includes the teaching of the structure of that language. Therefore, it is the way to teach grammar which is debatable. Some researchers argue that the teaching of grammar should be fun, communicative, and interactive as Krashen (1981) states that implicit grammar instruction where the learners study the grammar used in the real situation is the best to teach grammar. However, a report by Farrell & Lim (2005) shows that experienced grammar teachers in Singapore heavily believe that the traditional approach of teaching grammar which does not emphasize on communicative teaching strategies is the most effective method of teaching grammar although the same respondents are willing to teach grammar more communicatively.

Respondents basically believed that grammar is important to master English. It is "the most basic" as reported by one member of this study's focus group discussion:

I think grammar is the most basic skill. I mean, it is important when we learn reading, writing, and speaking. We have to master grammar, whether we like it or not. If we master grammar, everything will be easier. This basic skill is really difficult, so we have to struggle to master grammar. This is the most important, I think (Suri, focus group discussion, June 24, 2014).

It can be inferred from the respondent's opinion that teaching grammar to English language learners is a must. Additionally, respondents of this study stated that grammar served as the foundation for communication as stated by one of the respondents:

Well, if we meet, communicate with other people, if our sentences are ambiguous, people won't understand us. So we need to understand that one first, structure. After we have a good grammar mastery, we can express our opinions well, and people will understand us (personal interview, June 24, 2014)

The respondent's emphasis on the close relation between communicative competence and the mastery of the grammar implied the respondent's belief that grammar should be taught to support the communicative competence. This respondent's opinion represents other respondents' beliefs.

However, when asked about the best way English grammar should be taught, the opinions differ. Similar to previous studies done by English scholars, the respondents of this study showed different ideas of how grammar should be taught. Some respondents reported that grammar was best taught using communicative approach. One respondent pointed out the necessity to use communicative approach to teach grammar since learning grammar was commonly perceived as boring by students in the classroom.

Yes learning grammar is boring, yes. In the classroom (we) only listen to the teacher ... The teaching of structure must be communicative and interesting too in the classroom, then the students will understand (grammar) better (Vivien, personal interview, June 24, 2014).

The need to make English grammar teaching interesting and communicative is also voiced by other respondent who said that grammar teaching should encourage active learning.

First, the students themselves. They should be more active. I think ... want, what I teach will make the students active. They should search for themselves, that is the first point (Sari, personal interview, June 24, 2014).

The respondent implied the teaching of grammar should not be the teaching of the form, but most importantly the teaching of the grammar use. A similar opinion is expressed by other respondent:

In my case, I prefer to have examples first; I prefer to know when and in what context we use certain formulas. I apply deductive method. Later, the teacher teaches the formula. Personally, when I was given the rules (of grammar) first, I would get confused. I prefer examples, how to use them, to formulas (Focus group discussion, June 24, 2014).

The respondent clearly believed that grammar teaching should focus on the application of rules, the context, so the students would be more familiar with the use of English grammar.

Yet, some respondents sounded reluctant to apply the communicative approach. These respondents reported that there were other factors that should be considered in applying communicative approach such as class size which was usually big, the time, and the teaching target which usually aimed to prepare students for written test. The mixed feeling toward the implementation of communicative approach was expressed by the respondent:

Yes, it can be done, but in fact it is not effective... May be we can use games in the first few minutes to create better atmosphere. But we can't do it for every meeting (Focus group discussion, June 25, 2014).

The opinion above shows that the respondent is willing to use game, one way to implement the communicative approach to teach grammar, but at the same time the respondent voices the objection for using much of the method.

As explained previously, English language teaching in Indonesia is regarded as unsatisfactory to produce qualified English language competence. One of the factors mentioned is the lack of teacher's professionalism, thus teacher's belief can be one of them. The most important finding to be noted in this study regarding teacher's belief is the strong role modelling. The interview with the respondents revealed that their choice of method used for teaching English grammar depends heavily on the method chosen by their teacher/lecturer that they considered the most appropriate. Thus, teachers' prior experiences in learning grammar influence their choices of teaching approaches. The respondents say:

Later, when I teach grammar, I, Mam, will refer to my grammar lecturer last semester. Yes, I will do ice breaking by asking questions, so the students learn from them. That is, (we) start with questions, then we explain the rules and then do the exercises (Annette, personal interview, June 24, 2014).

Later, when I teach grammar I will teach it the way my former lecturer taught me. So the focus is not written English but oral (English) ... using oral (English). So we will be able to apply (the grammar) and to think hmmm so this is the way to apply the grammar (Debbie, personal interview, June 24, 2014).

During the interviews and focus group discussions, the respondents never referred to the national standard of English language teaching. The respondents' indifference to the English language policy in Indonesia may be the result of the 'imperfect' national language curricula, the lack of government's supervision and training, or the lack of awareness of the teacher's training program on the importance of putting the national language policy to their curriculum.

## CONCLUSION

The result of this study show that English language teaching and learning in Indonesia emphasize on communicative competence. On the teaching of English grammar, preservice teachers acknowledged the importance of communicative approach in teaching grammar. However, the pre-service teachers still believed that the traditional method of teaching grammar (explicit grammar instruction) was imperative to use. The other finding is that the pre-service teachers tended to exclude English language

policy enacted by Indonesian government in their discussion about teachers' beliefs. Instead, the pre-service teachers constructed their beliefs about English language grammar teaching and learning process from their prior experiences in learning and teaching grammar.

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