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THE DESIGN COMPLEXITY OF TWO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING CURRICULA IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: A pessimistic stigma that claims a new minister introduces a new curriculum, merely a political product, is believed by some people in Indonesia. The last two current curricula, Kurikulum 2013 and Kurikulum Merdeka, cannot avoid the stereotype. This study investigates the designs of the two curricula on their English language learning goals to find the fundamental reasons for curriculum reforms. This is a content analysis study. Six documents were coded by two coders. The design elements were used as the framework. The study finds that these reforms are based on complext consideration. The curricula changes was aimed at addressing educational challenges rather than being politically motivated. Kurikulum 2013 was designed to improve Indonesian students's TIMMS and PISA. Kurikulum Merdeka tries to make the learners ready to face disruptive era and society 5.0. Both curricula seems tried to accomodate many targets, a concern on obtaining the objective is questioned. The last, the curriculum developers should collaborate in promoting the substance of each design in order to minimize misconception among the society like strengthening the importance of discussions between parents and schools about the new curriculum and its goals.

Keywords**:** Adage, Complexity, Curriculum, Emancipated, Comparison

INTRODUCTION

Educational reforms in Indonesia have been an ongoing effort to improve the quality and effectiveness of the education system. Two significant curricula that have been implemented in recent years are Kurikulum 2013 (herein K-13) and Kurikulum Merdeka 2024 (herein Emancipated Curriculum/ EC). K-13 was introduced with the goal of developing a comprehensive and integrated curriculum that addresses various aspects of student development, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Kementerian Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan, 2013). It was developed to replace Curriculum 2006. Later, EC came to change K-13 (Pusat Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran, 2024).

The saying "ganti menteri, ganti kurikulum" (new minister, new curriculum) in Indonesia refers to a crucial problem with the nation's educational system (Santika et al, 2022; Nugroho and Narawaty, 2022), implying that curriculum modifications are frequently cosmetic and motivated more by political goals than by real educational requirements. Santika et al. (2022) found that frequent curriculum changes create instability in the educational environment, though they emphasized that the changes are important. While the society believes that these reforms often fail to address underlying educational challenges because it is more political motives (Nugroho and Narawaty, 2022). This assumption occurs due to limited access for teachers to know the reason behind English curriculum changes.

The focus of this study is on the English Language Teaching (ELT) components within the two curricula, K-13 and EC, specifically through the lens of curriculum design as outlined by Ornstein and Hunkins (2017). English, as a global language, holds a critical place in Indonesian education, where students are expected to develop competencies that align with both national and international standards. The analysis will evaluate key curriculum design elements (Ornstein and

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Hunkins, 2017) such as the curriculum's goals, sources, conceptual framework, dimensions, theoretical underpinnings, and design type related to English language instruction. This examination will cover critical aspects like the pedagogical approaches, content delivery, and assessment methods specified in each curriculum. By analyzing these design elements in the context of ELT, this research aims to determine whether the transition from K-13 to EC reflects genuine educational improvements or is primarily influenced by political motives.

The study seeks to answer the following research question: "How do the design elements of the two curricula differ in their approach to English Language Teaching? This analysis will provide a clearer understanding of how the curricula align with contemporary ELT needs and global educational standards, offering insights into the broader implications of curriculum reform in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum Design

Curriculum design refers to selection and organization of curricular components in ways that learning will occur (Ornstein and Hunkins, 2017: 176). There is no single agreed-upon goal for education, with ideas ranging from eliminating ignorance to promoting social mobility (Holford, 2014). Education should cultivate critical thinking and social responsibility, not just knowledge acquisition. Curriculum design considers various factors, including knowledge, emotions, experiences, and societal influences. Thus, Lattuca and Stark (2009) implies that educators' own backgrounds and beliefs shape their design choices that can be reflected on learning process and outcomes. In regards of the complexity of design consideration, educators must navigate diverse viewpoints and design choices to create effective learning experiences as stated by Peterson (2000). There are two ways on occupying the considerations, they are horizontal and vertical. The horizontal organization blends disciplines, vertical organization places elements like sociology, anthropology, and history in a sequential order.

The Diverse Sources of Curriculum Design

There are five curriculum design source based on Orstein and Hunkins (2017). The first source is science. It is signed by curriculum designers who often use the scientific method, focusing on problem-solving and teaching students how to learn. The second source is society. Curriculum designers should analyze social situations to develop curricula. Whitty (1989) reminds that political pressures from various groups, such as liberals, conservatives, and radicals, influence educational initiatives and curriculum content. The third source is moral doctrine. This source relates to spirituality and religion. The fourth source is knowledge. This relate to the belief that knowledge is foundational to curriculum design (McPhail and Rata, 2016). The modern curricula often focus on interdisciplinary knowledge. The last source is learner. Curriculum designers should consider learning experiences, attitudes, interests, and values of the students. The understanding about complex nature development of brain impacts how educators approach curriculum design (Lattuca and Stark, 2009).

Design Dimension Considerations

It is necessary to consider the relationships between curriculum elements in order to attain scope, sequence, continuity, integration, articulation, and balance as summarized by Baysal, et al. (2022). The scope takes into account the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains and encompasses all subject matter, learning objectives, and experiences. Sequence, which is frequently informed by developmental and psychological theories, assures cumulative learning. Continuity refers to going over important concepts and abilities again over time. Whereas articulation concentrates on the vertical and horizontal connections between curriculum items,

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integration unites knowledge from different subjects to create a coherent understanding. Curriculum must be adjusted continuously to maintain balance and meet students' intellectual, social, and personal objectives (Baysal, et al., 2022). The combination of the dimensions and frameworks of curriculum design can be reflected in the three broad curriculum design types, they are subject, learner, and problem-centered designs.

a. Subject centered-designs

Aslan (2022) summarize there are five subject centered-designs, they are subject, discipline, broad-fields, correlation, and process designs. The first is a traditional approach that emphasizes subject matter and knowledge acquisition. Come to the second type design, it is discipline design. This design focuses on academic disciplines like math, science, history, etc. The design emphasizes the inherent structure and logic within each discipline. The third type is broad-fields. It seeks to break down subject divisions and integrate topics across disciplines. The fourth design is correlation. It aims to connect different subjects while maintaining their distinct identities. The fifth design of the subject centered-type is process design. It focuses on how knowledge is produced, encouraging students to analyze research processes. Overall, the subject-centered designs offers strong content knowledge but potentially neglects students' needs (Aslan, 2022).

b. Learner-Centered Designs

There are four design types in this domain, they are child-centered, experience-centered, romantic/ radical, and humanistic designs (Cullen et al, 2012). The first is child-centered design. The second design is experience-centered. This approach prioritizes the exploration of students' interests and fosters their creativity, enabling them to actively engage with knowledge. The third design is romantic/radical. Radical educators believe that schools frequently perpetuate social injustices. The last type is humanistic design. It focuses on self-directed learning and the comprehensive growth of persons. Cullen et al (2012) indicate that the learner-centered focuses on empowering students, encouraging exploration, and fostering the ability to critically analyze society.

c. Problem-Centered Designs

The designs address societal issues and real-world problems while preserving cultural traditions, considering learner progress and subject matter, with some prioritizing long-term life circumstances or societal reconstruction. There are two types of problem centered designs, they are life-situation and reconstructionist designs. The first is life situation design. It places a strong emphasis on activities that enrich life, foster childrearing, maintain social relationships, and increase leisure, tasks, and emotions (Stetson-Tiligadas, 2018). The second type is reconstructionist design. The advocates think that social justice and the advancement of social, political, and economic growth ought to be emphasized in the curriculum. The education should encourage students to build a more just society and become civic-minded people (Stetson-Tiligadas, 2018). The curriculum aims to solve the problems facing humanity by promoting critical examination of communities at different levels.

d. Theoretical Frameworks

The last, Ornstein and Hunkins (2017) divides the theoretical frameworks of curriculum design into two, they are modern influenced design and postmodern influenced design. Modernism has been the prevailing force after the introduction of the scientific method. The emphasis on cause and effect in this approach to reality analysis continues to have a significant impact on curriculum design. Most curriculum with modern influenced design view curricula as a collection of goals, materials, experiences, and assessments.On the other hand, Postmodernism,

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which arose in the second half of the 20th century, prioritizes uncertainty and the methods of investigation rather than the certainty sought after by modernism (Macdonald, 2003 and Slattery, 2012).

K-13 and EC

K–13 is one of education curricula adopted in Indonesia. It took the place of Kurikulum 2006 with the intention of raising educational standards. The government argues some reasons why the curriculum reform must take place (Kementrian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2012). The first reason is globalization. As the globe becomes more interconnected, the students must possess cross-cultural awareness and global competencies. Then economic reason such as knowledge-based economy, creative industries and culture, and shifting global economic powers have motivated Indonesian government to develop K-13. The third is low score of Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results. Indonesian students need to improve the attainment of international examinations such as TIMSS and PISA. The prompted curriculum reforms should be conducted to fill all of these gaps. In addition, the Indonesian government (Kementrian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2012) also argues that there are competencies that must be mastered by future generation.

After K-13 implementation, the assessment has reported a number of important findings (Pusat Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran, 2024). First, students are subjected to an excessive amount of academic load, which can cause them to become overwhelmed and reduce the effectiveness of their learning. Second, the curriculum's content is inconsistent, which makes it difficult to integrate and coordinate different disciplines. Third, a major problem that teachers face is their tremendous administrative burden, which takes away from their time for professional development and instruction due to the copious documentation and reporting requirements. Fourth, it is difficult for instructors and schools to modify the curriculum to fit the demands and circumstances of the local community because of the rigidity with which it is implemented. These results show that K-13 needs to be revised and adjusted in order to improve its efficacy and applicability in Indonesian education as supported by Palupi (2018) and Lestari (2023).

Pusat Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran (2024) argue that the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted education, leading to a decline in students' abilities, learning outcomes, and knowledge gaps. Challenges in implementing distance learning include limited internet access, digital devices, and teacher capacity. Learning loss occurs when students lose competencies or fail to complete grade-level learning. The Ministry of Education and Culture issued Ministerial Decision No. 719/P/2020 on Guidelines for Implementing the Curriculum in Educational Institutions under Special Conditions to address these issues. This was called Kurikulum Darurat (Transitional Curriculum).

There come the initiation of EC. It aims to enhance students' faith, devotion to God, noble character, and creativity as lifelong learners with Pancasila character, known as Pancasila Learner Profile (Kementrian Pendidikan Kebudayaan Riset dan Teknologi, 2024). Pancasila student profile is formulated to face global changes, including work, social, cultural, and political changes, and national interests. The profile consists of six dimensions: faithful, devoted to God, cooperative, critical thinking, global diversity, independent, and creative. This profile serves as a guide for competency in education and aims to develop knowledge and skills in Indonesian students.

METHOD

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The primary aim of this content analysis (Kochalski et al., 2026; Neuendorf, 2002) is to examine the underlying designs to English language teaching as presented in both curricula. This study allows for the systematic examination of the ELT elements within the two curricula. The content analysis is also employed to capture emerging themes related to the specific context of Indonesian ELT.

Materials

The data for this study consist of two official curriculum documents. The first ones were issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture around 2012 to 2014. The second documents were released by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology in 2023 to 2024. The both reviewed documents include supplementary materials such as teacher guides and policy. The data is able to provide a comprehensive understanding of how English subject is positioned within the broader educational framework in both curricula.

The K-13 documents consisted of Kerangka Dasar dan Struktur Kurikulum 2013 (The Framework and Structure of K-13), Pengembangan Kurikulum 2013 (Development of K-13), and Konsep dan Implementasi Kurikulum 2013 Paparan Wakil Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan R.I Bidang Pendidikan (Concept and Implementation of K-13: Presentation by the Vice Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia from Education Division).

On the other side, there were three documents to represent EC, they were Capaian Pembelajaran pada Kurikulum Merdeka Perubahan Kedua Nomor 033/H/KR/2023 (Learning Outcomes in the EC Second Amendment Number 033/H/KR/2023), Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Tentang Kurikulum pada Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Jenjang Pendidikan Dasar, dan Jenjang Pendidikan Menengah Nomor 12 Tahun 2024 (Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology on the Curriculum for Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, and Secondary Education Number 12 of 2024), Kajian Akademik Kurikulum Merdeka (Academic Review of Emancipated Curriculum). As the study relies on publicly available documents, no formal ethical approval is required.

Procedure

The initial step involves identifying key curriculum design elements(Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017). These elements include sources, conceptual framework, dimension, types, and theoretical framework which serve as the coding system. The coding process was conducted manually by two coders. Two students enrolled in master degree in English Language Education at a public university in West Java were recruited as coders. To ensure the consistency of the coding, the study incorporates coder training (Kim et al., 2024). The training was given to understand the curriculum design elements based on Ornstein and Hunkins (2017) by annotating text chuncks realizing specific element. Then a pilot coding was conducted by giving a document i.e. the development of K-13. After the pilot coding the coders were allowed to discuss to made consensus among them. The last, the final coding was conducted, the coders worked individually without discussion.

After receiving the coding results, the reliability is maintained through calculating percent agreement. The percent agreement was chosen since the coding did not meet discrepancy among the coders during the pilot coding, it is because the coders were common with the curriculum design elements. In addition, the coded documents are written in formal Indonesian language which had been reviewed by linguists before its release, it helped the coders interpreting the text chunks easily. As the result, the final coding agreement percentage was 100%. To ensure the agreement, the second and third researchers reviewed and cross-checked the coding categories randomly. They found that the consistency in the identification and interpretation of curriculum

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elements was accurate. After coding, the classification was conducted. This process involved grouping similar codes from both curricula to highlight patterns and distinctions between K-13 and EC. The classified data were presented in Table 1, making it easy to compare the curriculum elements across the two curricula.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Complexity of K-13 and EC

The aspects of curriculum design from the two curricula presented on Table 1 indicates the complexities of K-13 and EC. Each aspect of the curriculum design is filled. Both curricula tried to respond the challenges that existed at that time, resulting crowded objectives and content to cover.

Table 1. K-13 and EC Designs

No	Aspects	K-13	EC
1	Sources	• Science (NA): Not only about thinking • Society: Consider current and future society at the local, national, and global levels. TIMSS and PISA • Moral Doctrine: Religion, attitude, cognitive, psychomotor and spiritual • Knowledge: Science becomes the center, natural science, social science and mathematics as the focus. Thematic learning in the elementary. • Learner: How learner acquire knowledge reflected in scientific learning approach	• Science (NA): Not only about thinking • Society: Consider current and future society at the local, national, and global levels. Global understanding is one of Pancasila Profiles, SDGs, CEFR • Moral Doctrine: Pancasila philosophy (includes all aspects) • Knowledge: Main disciplines like language, natural science, social science, mathematics are core discipline • Learner: Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, Differentiated Learning
2	Conceptual Framework	• Horizontal (Blend): Thematic learning and textual learning • Vertical (sequence): Starting from personal life materials to broader community, narrative to exposition. It's harder for the students. Too many materials.	• Horizontal (Blend): Textual learning combines language feature and generic structure • Vertical (sequence): Starting from personal life materials to broader community, narration, description, and procedure.
3	Dimension Consideration	• Scope: The curriculum is breadth since it has many texts to cover from narrative to exposition. The depth is not achieved because many materials to cover. • Sequence: Simple to complex learning: text types from narrative to exposition. Prerequisite learning: benchmark as standard (KKM) • Continuity: No continuity in the text target, the text in the grade VII is not a focus in grade VIII. • Integration: Integration is done in elementary level. • Articulation: Vertical and horizontal articulations. • Balance: English learning contributes to learn other subjects as well improving knowledge. In regards of science and mathematics like in PISA and TIMMS.	• Scope: It is less breadth due to not many texts to cover, only three main texts, narrative, descriptive, and procedure. (on phase D) • Sequence: Whole to part reflected by genre-based pedagogy. Complete text then to deconstruct it. Differentiated: learning target might differ the process. • Continuity: The text learned in the grade VII can be revisited in the grade VIII and IX. • Integration: The integration is not stated clearly but it is possible to be conducted since the differentiated learning and project learning are open for that. • Articulation: Vertical and horizontal articulations. • Balance: English learning is a way to attain the bigger goal like being person who are competitive in industry 4.0 and society 5.0
4	Curriculum Design Types	• Subject-centered: Science becomes the center since the PISA and TIMMS indicate Indonesia in the low rank.	• Hybrid: • Learner-centered: learner's needs and progress become a center of program. Natural development of human indicated by phases (foundation to F). • Problem-centered: Local to Global citizenship, Industry 4.0, Society 5.0, and Environmental and Health Problem (SDGs)
5	Theoretical Framework	• Modern influenced design. Clearly contribute to PISA and TIMMS score as the goal.	• Postmodernism-influenced design. Prepare for current and future global generations in Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA) era.

Criticism of K-13 and EC

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K–13 emphasized knowledge, skills, social factors, and spiritual values in order to nurture students holistically. Palupi (2018) and Pawero (2018) advocate that it placed a strong emphasis on competency-based learning, efficient evaluation, and active learning strategies including scientific inquiry and project-based learning. The curriculum also attempted to incorporate environmental awareness and global capabilities. However, it confronted a few difficulties. Junita and Ismail (2018) complain that the curriculum has come under fire for having too much material, which makes it challenging for learners to learn things properly. Furthermore, integration across topics was hampered by inconsistent curriculum content. Some researchers, Sabon (2017), Aisyah and Astuti (2021), Ardaya et al (2022), and Rohimajaya et al (2022), highlight that teachers have to spend less time on professional development and instruction due to a significant administrative load. Lastly, the curriculum's inability to be tailored to the unique demands of local communities was a result of its strict execution.

Recommendations for improving K–13 included reducing the amount of content to lessen the burden on students, adding flexibility to enable educators and schools to modify the curriculum locally, reducing the amount of administrative work teachers had to do, and enhancing consistency and coordination amongst various disciplines are made. These recommendations from Sabon (2017), Aisyah and Astuti (2021), Ardaya et al (2022), and Rohimajaya et al (2022) are supported by the government by developing EC (Pusat Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran, 2024).

EC promises new education. Its adaptability is a major benefit. Nugroho and Narawaty (2022) are content that today's educators are allowed to modify the curriculum to fit each student's unique needs and interests, making for a more interesting and applicable learning environment. Furthermore, the curriculum reduces the burdensome academic load that students traditionally faced by concentrating on vital content. Moreover, Lestari (2023) argue that EC incorporates Pancasila principles, encouraging social responsibility and a global perspective.

But there are certain difficulties in putting EC into practice. Abidin and Malisa (2023) report that the capability and resource levels in different Indonesian regions differ significantly. This discrepancy may result in inconsistent application, which could give rise to an educational system with disparate standards across several domains. Another difficulty is keeping assessment criteria constant as stated by Dirwan et al (2023). Since schools now have more autonomy, it is important to give considerable thought to how to measure student progress in a fair and consistent manner.

There are a few suggestions that can be made to mitigate EC's possible negative aspects. First and foremost, it is imperative to fund teacher preparation and professional development. Some suggestions are in line with Abidin and Malisa's (2023) recommendations like giving teachers the right tools to guarantee that the curriculum is delivered successfully and optimize student learning outcomes. Second, fair access to resources in all areas is needed. This can entail giving schools in resource-poor locations more assistance in order to guarantee that every student has the chance to succeed in the new curriculum. Lastly, it is critical to promote cooperation throughout stakeholders, communities, and schools, especially teachers as concerned by Abidin and Malisa (2023) and Dirwan et al (2023). Schools can efficiently address local needs while implementing the national curriculum with collaboration. By addressing these challenges and implementing the recommendations, EC has the potential to revolutionize Indonesian education.

Curriculum for Anticipation

After comparing the two curricula especially for ELT, it turns out that both K-13 and EC are built holistically and adaptably to the condition and situation during their development. English subject is seen as the heart of knowledge (Derewianka & Jones, 2016) that can help

leaners cope with subject matter in global scale. Not only for preparing the learners in international competition, local aspects are maintained to build strong identity like integrating Pancasila philosophy in the subject. It is in line with what Razali et al (2024) reminds that infusing local culture to language learning may help the students to contextualize the material into their real life. Supardi et al (2024) affirm that many things should be considered on designing language course curriculum. It is because the language course will not only prepare the students to comprehend the language but also form the students' mindset with ideal ideology.

Both curricula are also a comprehensive and adaptable to prepare learners for the complexities of the contemporary and future world as supported by Rohimajaya et al (2022), Lestari (2023), Muslim and Sumarni (2023) and Amiruddin et al (2024). It is because both curricula follow Fraser et al's (1990) suggestion elaborated in Mnguni (2021) that the curriculum designer should consider a wide variety of students' opportunity in the future, thus combining many elements enables them to be ready to meet uncertainty. However, Fraser et al (1990) also gave clue that each aspect taught to the students must lead them to mastery. Citing four Tyler's rationale for designing a curriculum (Ivanna et al., 2026): defining educational objectives, selecting learning experiences, organizing learning experiences, and evaluating the achievement of objectives, both curricula might face difficulty. Many objectives to cover lead the other three rationales to manage material selections, many teaching methodology, and evaluation. Instead of reducing teachers' workload, the curricula may cause additional burdon for teachers. In short, more objectives require more chores.

CONCLUSIONS

Finally, it is essentially incorrect to believe that every new minister brings a new curriculum. The curriculum designers should promote the designs to minimize the stereotype. The shift from Kurikulum 2006 to K–13 and then EC are motivated by changes in society, the recognition of deficiencies in earlier curricula, and the necessity to educate the next generation to be global citizens. Extensive study is always the foundation for these modifications. K-13 sought to improve Indonesia's educational standards internationally with its globally-minded design. On the other side, EC is the result of extensive study meant to improve Indonesian education for equipping students with the necessary skills to compete in the global competition. Differentiated learning serves as an example of the EC's flexibility in meeting the varied needs of students.

Each curriculum has pros and cons and implementation issues of its own. K-13 focuses more on global scientific ranks that brings English subject integration into other subjects, especially in primary level. On the other hand, EC's complex design better serves stakeholders' diverse targets and offers a more comprehensive educational experience but it becomes a compulsory subject in primary grade. However, the complexities of both curricula design and targets raised an issue on obtaining the objectives. Many targets mean many burdens for learners and teachers. The teachers should be trained to translate and breakdown the targets to be attainable.

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