

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This first chapter of the thesis unfolds the background of the study, the aim of the study and the associated research question that the thesis seeks to answer, the scope and the significance of the thesis, definition of the key terms and a brief overview of the thesis organization.

1.1. Background of the study

Some negative reactions towards the enactment of the 2013 curriculum of Indonesia were shown by some parties, such as those shown by the *Federasi Serikat Guru Indonesia*, the *Federasi Guru Independent Indonesia*, and *Sekolah Katolik and Kristen se-Indonesia* (Tan, 2013)

The *Federasi Serikat Guru Indonesia* and the *Federasi Guru Independent Indonesia* resisted the new curriculum while *Sekolah Katolik and Kristen se-Indonesia* postponed the implementation of it.

These unfriendly welcomes are caused by the assumption that the 2013 curriculum possesses so many weaknesses one of which is its top-down or centralistic nature (Tan, 2013; Suwandi, 2013).

However, schools which have been assigned as the pilot project for the implementation of the 2013 curriculum have no choice but to accept and implement it properly. As a teacher in one of the pilot project schools, the researcher of this study felt obliged to contribute to the success of the implementation of the 2013 curriculum.

However, the atmosphere within the school where the researcher teaches is still uncertain. Here, teachers view the new curriculum differently. Most of the teachers have the opinion that the new curriculum makes them even busier than before, despite the fact that they are free from the burden of preparing the

syllabuses and the teaching materials since now they have been provided by the government.

From many informal talks with some teachers, it was revealed that the need to implement the authentic assessment in the day to day teaching practices was still regarded to be the most complicated task for them.

This problem led the researcher of this study to start the quest for finding some feasible ways and useful techniques in implementing the authentic assessment in day to day teaching practices. In so thinking this study set off to find some answers to the question of “What steps are to be taken by teachers to assess students’ learning attitudes as the implementation of the authentic assessment as required by the 2013 curriculum?”

Based on the close scrutiny on the document and some interviews with some English teachers, the researcher recognizes three new aspects within the 2013 English curriculum, they are the materials, the process of learning, and the assessment.

Viewed from the materials to be taught to the students, the 2013 curriculum provides fewer teaching materials compared to the 2006 curriculum (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan*).

The teaching materials for grade seven (Buku Guru, page iv) consist of eight chapters for one year. It means that in one semester four chapters must be covered. The materials cover: 1) Interpersonal, 2) Transactional, 3) Specific Functional, and 4) General Functional (Buku Guru, page 6-7). These materials are covered in the topic, which are related to the life of the social, natural and in the immediate surroundings of students’ home and school.

The material for improving students’ Interpersonal skill, the materials are: 1) Greetings, 2) Taking leave, 3) Thanking, 4) Apologizing, and 5) introducing one self.

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To improve their transactional skill, the students of grade seven will be taught how to tell and ask about facts and feelings, and how to ask and offer goods and services.

The Specific Functional covers: a. Label, b. List, c. Instruction, d. Short notices, e. Warning/Caution, f. Songs.

The General Functional covers: a. Name of days, months, parts of the day, date and year, b. Personal identity, c. Names of animals, objects, and public buildings, d. The characteristics of people, animals, and objects, e. Behaviors/actions/functions of people/animals/objects, f. Descriptive text (people, objects, and animals).

Teachers view the teaching materials of the 2013 curriculum differently. The English teachers who teach in the suburbs and remote area, in which English was introduced for the first time in grade seven, view this as quite fair.

But for the English teachers who teach in big cities like Bandung, Jakarta, or Surabaya, where the students' abilities are already above the level of the content covered in the 2013 curriculum, view the materials to be too easy, boring and do not suit the need of their students.

This condition supports the argument of Tan (2013) who argues that the uniformity in the level of teaching materials does not suit the various needs of the students throughout Indonesia.

The second new aspect of the 2013 curriculum is the process of learning which adopts the scientific approach or inquiry learning (Kemendikbud, 2013: 151). This scientific approach to learning consists of the stages of observing, questioning, associating, experimenting, and networking.

The issue of the employment of the scientific approach to learning English also raises quite a confusion among the English teachers. This confusion seems to stem

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from the fact that the 2013 curriculum of English also still adopts the Genre-Based Approach, which is stated explicitly in the preface of the textbook for grade seven as follows:

The students are expected to have control over the types, the schematic structure, and the contexts of certain text (Kemendikbud, 2013).

Most English teachers who have been used to employing the Genre-Based Approach (Hyland, 2004; Gibbons, 2002; Emilia, 2012), which consists of the stages of Building Knowledge of the Field, Modeling, Joint Construction of Text, and Independent Construction of Text, become confused with the enactment of the 2013 which necessitates the English teachers to apply the scientific approach as stated above.

The third new aspect of the 2013 curriculum, which is also the overarching aspect, is the assessment techniques employed. The 2013 curriculum embraces the authentic assessment principles. The assessment of students' achievement is no longer only based on the written test (paper and pen) but must also be based on their performances and their portfolios (Kemendikbud, 2013: 280).

This is in line with the suggestion from Hargreaves, Earl, & Schmidt (2002) that teachers are now expected to assess progress toward the outcomes by planning rubrics, identifying indicators of reaching the outcomes, developing appropriate modifications for individual students, assessing both the process and the product of learning, encouraging self-assessment, and using frequent and varied assessments.

The implementation of the authentic assessment is the primacy in the 2013 curriculum. It implies that the 2013 curriculum necessitates all teachers to deliver the learning experiences for their students that will develop knowledge and skills on the one hand, and supportive attitudes and values on the other. This has the aim to graduate informed, well-rounded and productive workers and citizens.

Since the 1990s, there have been numerous advocates of authentic assessment as one of the critical pieces necessary to help students learn (Neely and Tucker, 2012).

The effectiveness of the authentic assessment in improving the students' learning has also been researched by many proponents of the field such as Smith (2005), Hildebrand (2005), Poikela (2004), Fook and Shidu (2010), Hammond and Snyder (2000), Gulikers et al. (2006), and Neely and Tucker (2012).

The most relevant definition of authentic assessment of the 2013 curriculum is the one proposed by Gulikers, Bastiaens, and Kirschner (2004) which reads:

require students to use and demonstrate the same (kind of) competencies, or combinations of knowledge, skills and attitudes, that are applied in this situation in professional life (Gulikers et al, 2004).

The inclusion of the attitudes in the definition above makes it similar to the assessment intended by the 2013 curriculum of Indonesia.

From this and some other definitions of authentic assessment (Khaira and Yambo, 2005; Mueller, 2006) it can be stated here that the authentic assessment has to do with students demonstrating that they know a body of knowledge, have developed a set of skills, and can apply them in a real life situation and can solve real life problems.

The authentic assessment is primarily important in the 2013 curriculum because it can realize the concept of teaching and learning experiences which develop not only knowledge and skills but also supportive attitude.

The researcher of this study believes that the authentic assessment is quite feasible to be implemented in the Indonesian school setting and at every level of education including the junior high school level.

However, based on some interviews with some English teachers, both in big cities such as Bandung and in rural towns such as Lembang, most of them are still not

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sure about how to implement the authentic assessment. What they are sure of being only one thing, i.e. it will surely make them even busier than preparing the syllabuses and the teaching materials which they used to do during the time of the 2006 curriculum or the KTSP.

The implementation of the authentic assessment embodied in the 2013 curriculum is evidently a big problem for most English teachers, because they regard it as a new thing. It is reasonable for previously most teachers might have not implemented the authentic assessment appropriately, although actually it was mentioned as the principles of the whole assessment embodied in the 2006 curriculum or KTSP (Departement Pendidikan Nasional, 2007: 32).

Almost all of the teachers regard the implementation of the authentic assessment is the most complicated task to carry out. Implementing the authentic assessment implies that every day the teachers must observe and document the attitudes of their students during the teaching/learning processes regarding their students' discipline, confidence, honesty, respect, activeness, team-work, and their communicative competence. Almost all the teachers have not had any idea and are a little bit pessimistic regarding their ability as how to carry out this responsibility.

Based on these facts, conducting a study which addresses the implementation of the authentic assessment at this early stage of the implementation of the 2013 curriculum, especially in the design of an action research which tries to find some techniques of how to implement the authentic assessment properly is of great value as this can pave the way to the achievement of the goals of the 2013 curriculum.

From the preliminary stage of this study what seems to be the most complicated issue in the implementation of the authentic assessment is the administering the assessment on students' learning attitudes.

1.2. Research Question

As stated in the background of the study that administering the assessment of students' attitudes is regarded the most complicated task, this study addresses the research question:

1. What steps can a teacher take to administer the authentic assessment?
2. What impacts do the steps taken have on students' competencies?

1.3. Purpose of the study

This study is aimed at finding some efficient, effective and feasible techniques in implementing the authentic assessment embraced in the 2013 curriculum. The findings of this study will equip the English teachers with the knowledge and skill of assessing their students based on daily observations and documentations.

Such knowledge and skill will lift up one of the problems faced by the English teachers at the moment. When the purpose is achieved it is hoped that the findings can be implemented by all the English teachers in their day to day teaching practices.

1.4. Significance of the study

This study deals with helping the English teachers in implementing the authentic assessment embodied in the 2013 curriculum. The significance of this study can be viewed from at least two points of view, theoretically and practically.

Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the literature on the techniques of the implementation of the authentic assessment in the 2013 curriculum of Indonesia. So far as the researcher of this study knows there has not been any document regarding what steps are to be taken by teachers in implementing the authentic assessment. It is hoped that this study can become a stepping stone for the later study of the same issues.

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Practically, this study will equip the English teachers with the knowledge and skill in their teaching practices on how to implement the authentic assessment in their daily teachings.

Those skills and knowledge will place the teachers in the position of creative and innovative teachers not as robot as stated by Suwandi (2013). This is also in line with the statement of Dharma (2008), who places the teachers in the position of overarching agents in bringing success to the implementation of the curriculum.

Richards (2001: 209) suggests that teachers ultimately determine the success of the program (curriculum). He also adds that good teachers can compensate the deficiencies in the curriculum, the materials, or the resources they make use of in their teaching.

Another proponent of education, Alwasilah (2013) from Indonesia University of Education, regarding the enactment of the 2013 curriculum, states that what matters is the teacher not the curriculum. Further, he states

A new curriculum is always a good notion. However, drawbacks invariably stem from implementation (The Jakarta Post, 5/1/2013).

Realizing that the role of teachers is the key factor in achieving the goals of the curriculum, it is evident that this study, practically, is of great significance.

1.5. Definition of the key terms

There are three key terms that most frequently come up in this study, i. e. the 2013 curriculum, the authentic assessment, and the learning attitudes. To make them clear, it is necessary to define them in advance. A brief review of the definition of the terms is presented as follows:

The 2013 curriculum in this study refers to the curriculum for junior high school in Indonesia, which was enacted in 2013 and was first implemented in June of 2013.

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The authentic assessment in this study refers to the assessment that teachers must implement along with the implementation of the 2013 curriculum of Indonesia. The authentic assessment necessitates the teachers to assess the knowledge, skill, and attitude of the students.

The learning attitudes in this study refer to the attitudes mentioned in the 2013 curriculum which covers: respect for others, honesty, care, courage, confidence, social awareness, and curiosity (Kemendikbud, 2013: 282).

1.6. The organization of the paper

Following the tradition put forward by the proponents of educational research (Swales and Feak, 1994; Evans and Gruba, 2002; see also Emilia, 2009), this study report consists of a title page, a declaration page, an approval page, a preface, an abstract, an acknowledgement, a table of contents, five chapters as the body of the study, a reference, and appendices.

The five chapters as the body of the study are organized as follows:

Chapter one is the introduction to the study. This chapter sets out with the background of conducting the study and followed by some important notions of the study covering research question, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, and the definition of the key terms.

Chapter two addresses the literature review that underpins the study and become the theoretical reference during the overall process of the study. The theories covered in this section are the 2013 English curriculum of Indonesia and the basic notions of the authentic assessments.

Chapter three presents the methodology which contains the research design, research site and participants, the criteria of success, data collection methods, and data analyses.

Chapter four unfolds the results or findings of the study. In this chapter the data are presented and analyzed. The inclusion of the analysis of the data in this chapter follows the suggestion put forward by Swales and Feak (1994; 2004).

Chapter five, as the last chapter, presents the conclusions, limitation of the study, and implication for further research.