



WRITING FOR INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS: REVIEWERS' PERSPECTIVES

WHAT DO REVIEWERS LOOK AT?

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The portrait of primary school English in Indonesia: policy recommendations

ABSTRACT

In response to the need for teaching English in primary education, this exploratory case study examines the enactment of English as a locally tailored school subject in Indonesian primary schools. Data of this study were collected from multiple interviews with six English teachers teaching in two Indonesian primary schools that offer English as an additional language (EAL). The findings reveal that the status of English as a locally-tailored school subject brings about such problems as no official curriculum guidelines, English teachers' quality, and a lack of learning resources and facilities. Drawing on these findings, policy recommendations are discussed in this article.

**DO TITLE AND ABSTRACT
CLEARLY AND
ACCURATELY DESCRIBE
THE CONTENT OF
THE ARTICLE?**

**DOES THE MANUSCRIPT CONTAIN
NEW AND SIGNIFICANT
INFORMATION TO JUSTIFY
PUBLICATION?
(NOVELTY OR RESEARCH GAP)**

Therefore, the high demand of English learning and teaching in primary schools has been of great concern among researchers across the globe (Chao, Xue, and Ming 2014; Hamid and Kirkpatrick 2016; Hu 2007; Lestariyana and Widodo 2018; Widodo 2016). **However, particularly in the Indonesian context, little empirical research** (e.g. Hawanti 2014; Zein 2017a, 2017b) **has been undertaken to investigate** concerns and problems faced by primary school English teachers when implementing English as a local content subject in their school contexts. **To fill this void**, this exploratory case study aims to examine the enactment of English locally-designed subject in two Indonesian primary schools.



IS THE PROBLEM SIGNIFICANT AND CONCISELY STATED?

The purposes of this study are to examine:

- 1) How English teachers enact English as a local content subject in primary schools, and
- 2) To which extent the Indonesian Government supports English teachers to teach English as a local content subject.

ARE THE THEORETICAL METHODS AND RESEARCH ETHICS DESCRIBED COMPREHENSIVELY?

This exploratory case study was conducted in two primary schools in the Western part of Indonesia (Sumatra). We selected these schools: public and private because they had a strong commitment to the implementation of English, and these schools were exemplary in terms of the national curriculum enactment and the school accreditation (Grade A accredited by the Indonesian National Accreditation Body/INAB). These schools met certain high standards of school management and quality.

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ARE THE THEORETICAL METHODS AND RESEARCH ETHICS DESCRIBED COMPREHENSIVELY?

Six English teachers (2 male teachers and 4 female teachers) were recruited as participants of this study. Regarding research ethics, they were asked to read, complete, and sign an informed consent form which indicated that their participation in this study was voluntary. They also deserved the right to withdraw their participation in any phases of this study.

Over a period of two months (from May to June 2017), empirical data were collected through multiple semi-structured interviews. The interview guidelines were used that included interview questions related to such issues as the objectives of English as a local content subject, how English has been implemented, the challenges that teachers face, and what sort of support central and district governments provide.



ARE THE THEORETICAL METHODS AND RESEARCH ETHICS DESCRIBED COMPREHENSIVELY?

In order to help us focus on key aspects of investigating a phenomenon. As Van Manen (1997) suggests, deeper and exploratory interviewing was used to explore and gather richer data. The participants were coded as Teacher #1, Teacher #2, and so forth to maintain participant anonymity. During the interviews, we used Bahasa Indonesia in order to get richer or deeper information about the participants' opinions and views on the enactment of English as a local content subject in primary schools. Each interview lasted for approximately 45 min. All the interview sessions were audio recorded so that each data could be replayed many times.

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ARE THE THEORETICAL METHODS AND RESEARCH ETHICS DESCRIBED COMPREHENSIVELY?

We developed provisional codes based on the research questions addressed and the topics and questions from the interviews. Data reduction is a 'form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such a way that final conclusion can be drawn and verified' (Miles and Huberman 1984, 11). In data reduction, we focused on relevant data and reduced the irrelevant ones. We looked for patterns and found themes to answer the research questions. From the interview responses, a number of issues related to the implementation of primary school English emerged, such as teaching objectives, English teaching policy, teachers' challenges, and the governmental support of primary school English instruction.



ARE THE THEORETICAL METHODS AND RESEARCH ETHICS DESCRIBED COMPREHENSIVELY?

Afterwards, we displayed the interview data to find sub-themes and themes by elaborating and aligning all the data. Based on the analysis, there were two emergent themes: the implementation of primary school English and the governmental support of the implementation of primary school English. In data conclusion and verification, the themes and sub-themes that emerged were verified by confirming other evidence to make sure that conclusions drawn were consistent. Finally, two emergent themes were confirmed and verified.

In order to ensure trustworthiness, member checking was conducted. Each of the participants was given special access to their interview transcripts and invited to read the transcripts thoroughly for data clarity and accuracy as well as to provide additional insight into their lived experience.

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ARE THE INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS JUSTIFIED BY THE RESULTS?

The enactment of English as a local content subject

- ❖ Teachers' perceptions of English as a local content subject
- ❖ The design of syllabus and teaching materials
- ❖ Classroom practices
- ❖ Learning assessment

The governmental support of the implementation of primary school English

- ❖ Curriculum support
- ❖ Professional development support
- ❖ Resource- and facility-related support

Table 2. Sample data analysis.

Emergent themes	Data	Sources
Implementation of English as a local content subject	<i>The introduction of English to students in primary school is very important to provide them with knowledge they might need in the future [teaching objective] I think that English is not appropriate to be local content, because English is not our content/local culture. Please include the English language as a core or main subject in the curriculum [policy]. Teaching English is not an easy job, the big number of students in one class is another challenge. Limited time allocated for English is another obstacle [challenges]</i>	Semi-structured interview
Governmental support	<i>I create my own teaching resources using very limited resources since less support from the government [support]. There is no governmental support of the implementation of primary school English in the 2013 curriculum [support]. We really need professional training since teaching English in primary school is different from that in secondary school [support].</i>	Semi-structured interview

CONCLUSIONS: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

We have to acknowledge that a limitation of our research in terms of transferability or generalizability. The present study only recruited six (6) teachers teaching English in two primary schools in Western Indonesia. This makes it impossible to generalise the results of the study. A study with a larger number of teachers from different schools may produce different results or outcomes. Despite this limitation, this study provides insight into policy recommendations which can be the point of departure for conducting larger studies on the same issue.



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RECOMMENDATION

- 1) Improving the quality of primary school English
- 2) Changing the status of primary school English
- 3) Incorporating teaching English to young learners (TEYL) courses into pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development programs

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IS THE LANGUAGE ACCEPTABLE?

With the growing demand of teaching English in early schooling/education, universities or colleges that offer pre-service and in-service teacher programmes will need to prepare English teachers with adequate knowledge and skills to take this responsibility. Teacher educators need to train student teachers how to teach English in primary schools. In response to this need, schools of education will need to offer relevant TEYL-related courses, such as the design of EYL syllabus and materials, methodology in TEYL, assessment in TEYL, as well as technology-enhanced TEYL so that prospective teachers will have technological pedagogical content knowledge and skills of TEYL.



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**IS ADEQUATE REFERENCE
MADE AND RELEVANT TO
OTHER WORK IN THE
FIELD?**



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