

Research article

English Language Teaching in Indonesia in the 21st Century: What Needs Reinforcing and Enhancing for the Teachers

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Abstract.

English has been the first foreign language taught in the secondary schools in Indonesia since 1946, a year after its independence in 1945, which means that the teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL) in Indonesia has run for almost 75 years. As the world has experienced the Industrial Revolution 4.0 since 2011 with its three principal characteristics that lie greatly on the employment of technology: innovation, automation, and information transfer, some reinforcement and enhancement need to be taken for the teachers of English to adjust with the current development, which basically centres upon the teachers' professional and pedagogic competences. The former includes the proficiency of the four English language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (language performance), and the mastery of the four English language components: grammar, vocabulary, spelling and pronouncing systems (language competence). The latter includes the theories of learning from the perspectives of functional-physiological, behaviouristic, cognitive/gestalt, and constructive-humanistic psychology and the insight and knowledge of innovative learning, such as digital learning, blended learning, and neuro-science-based learning. Furthermore, the latter also includes the knowledge of contemporary learning theories or alternative learning theories, such as transformative learning, disruptive learning, connectivism learning, and multiple intelligences theories. English teachers equipped with the content of the two competences can most likely face the challenges and changes of the 21st century.

Keywords: professional and pedagogic competences, learning theories, contemporary learning theories

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1. Introduction

The first English curriculum, for junior high school students, was officially issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia in 1946; whereas, the first English curriculum for senior high school students followed four years later, i.e. in 1950 [1, 2]. English therefore has been the first foreign language taught in secondary schools in Indonesia for more than 7 decades. As the world has turned to the 21st century and with the emergence of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, some reinforcement and enhancement

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on the competences of teachers, one of the crucial elements for the success of teaching-learning activities, need implementing. This article presents what needs reinforcement and enhancement for the teachers of English in Indonesia to adjust with the current development, which centres upon their professional and pedagogic competences.

2. Professional Competence

The Regulation of the Ministry of the National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 16, 2007 on the Academic Qualification Standards and Competences of Teachers states that one of the four major competences of teachers is the professional competence. The professional competence of an English teacher includes having good knowledge of various aspects of English language (contained in linguistics and its subfields) and good command of English or English proficiency (oral and written – productive and receptive). After more than seven decades of the implementation of English as the first foreign language in secondary schools, English teachers must not only possess this competence but also need to perpetually reinforce and beef up their competence.

Junior and Senior High School English teachers must have good knowledge of English language components or *language competence*, i.e. grammar, vocabulary, spelling and pronouncing systems. These components can be the foundation for building their English language skills, *language performance*, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Having good knowledge of English linguistics, i.e. a discipline that studies English language, can also reinforce and enhance their knowledge of language components and skills. Linguistics includes micro linguistics (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics) and macro linguistics (pragmatics, socio-linguistics, psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, anthropological linguistics, neuro-linguistics, applied linguistics, and so forth).

When reading and studying materials on English phonology, teachers can exactly know where precisely (place or point of articulation) certain English sounds are generated at their articulatory organs, how the air (manner of articulation) from the lungs flows through the mouth or nasal cavity, and whether or not the sounds are voiced or voiceless (condition of the vocal cords). With good knowledge of English phonology, having a sound knowledge of English pronouncing system, a teacher can have good speaking skill and become a good model for his or her students, especially in pronunciation. Knowledge of English morphology, i.e. how English words are constructed out of their smallest meaningful units called morphemes, not only can help teachers understand

how the words such as *irreplaceability*, *depersonalization*, *incomprehensibility* are formed, but also can add up their vocabulary repertoire. Besides, they can broaden their knowledge of English affixes, parts of speech or class of words, reduplicated forms, which in turn can strengthen and improve their language skills. Furthermore, the knowledge of English syntax, i.e. how phrases, clauses, and sentences are constructed, can broaden and strengthen their knowledge of grammar. This includes English phrases: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, prepositional phrases, et cetera, English clauses: noun, adjective, and adverbial clauses, dependent and independent or major and sub- clauses, relative clauses and so on, English sentences: simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences, and many other sentence structures such as the English inverted sentence structures and the like. Last is the knowledge of semantics, i.e. the study of meaning and interpretation of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, which includes the concepts of antonym, synonym, word association, collocation, figures of speech, ambiguity, and presupposition, just to name a few. With good knowledge of semantics, an English teacher is certainly rich with English vocabulary or diction, which will strengthen his or her language performance or skills [3, 4].

To achieve the expected good command of English, English teachers can read relevant materials intensively and extensively that they can freely download from the Internet, attend seminars or webinars, workshops and conferences for current development and also resort to social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, podcast which today contain abundant information of the related issues. It has to be noted too that with the high variability of the teachers' language proficiency as shown in a study done by [5], a wide range of approaches and options of professional development activities is essential for teachers.

3. Pedagogic Competence

Another major competence of teachers, stated in the Regulation of the Ministry of the National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 16, 2007 on the Academic Qualification Standards and Competences of Teachers, is the pedagogic competence. One teacher core competence that needs highlighting is mastering the theories of learning. Theory of learning describes how students receive, process, and retain knowledge during learning, i.e. how learning takes place.

Physiological-Functional psychologists believe that every human has innate capacity to learn and learning is the process of activating the innate capacity – the mental

states, i.e. the internal states of thinking process. They also believe that the source of knowledge is physical environment; therefore, learning occurs through contacts with the environment, and implement the study of great books to improve learners' mind. The founders and advocates of the theory of learning and its principles are the prominent figures such as Wilhelm Wundt (1882-1920), William James (1832-1910), Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), and Kurt Koffka (1886-1941). When implementing the physiological-functional theory and principles of learning in language classrooms, teachers should activate the learners' innate capacity by asking the learners to memorize grammatical rules and vocabulary, implement reading activities on great books to improve learners' mind, and focus on reading-writing skills which they believe can activate learners' innate capacity more than speaking-listening skills.

Behaviouristic psychologists have different views on how learning takes place from that of physiological and functional psychologists. Behaviouristic psychologists believe that learning is basically a process of conditioning involving stimulus-response activities which needs repetition and reinforcement till what is being learned is mastered and becomes habit (learning is a matter of habit formation) and automatic. The founders and advocates of behaviouristic theory of learning and its principles are the prominent figures such as Edward L. Thorndike (1871-1949), John B. Watson (1878-1958), Edwin R. Guthrie (1886-1959), and Burrhus F. Skinner (1904-1990). When implementing the behaviouristic theory and principles of learning in language classrooms, teachers should use the language being learned (L2) as much as possible (exposure to form habit) and become the model in all steps of learning (to be imitated by the learners). Teachers should drill speaking and listening skills without showing the written forms (parroting to be automatic), and teach grammar through pattern practice not through explanation and vocabulary through contexts.

Different from the beliefs stated by the physiological and functional psychologists and those by the behaviouristic psychologists as to how learning takes place, *Cognitive* psychologists assert that learning does not merely involve the relationship between stimulus and response. They believe that a learner's perception and comprehension of the situation(s) associated with the objective of the learning determines his or her behaviour. Cognitive psychology studies about perception (how learners perceive the world), memory, attention, language and reasoning. In addition to it, cognitive psychologists also believe that anxiety affects academic performance of individuals; academic anxiety leads to academic difficulties; therefore, students with high depression or anxiety are generally unable to concentrate and disruption in attention and concentration leads to dysfunction of memory and it leads to low academic achievement. The founders

and advocates of cognitive theory of learning and its principles are the prominent figures such as Jean Piaget (1896-1980), Jerome S. Bruner (1915-2016), and David P. Ausubel (1918-2008). When implementing the cognitive theory and its principles of learning in language classrooms, teachers should create learning atmospheres that lessen students' anxiety and facilitate them to be able to perceive and comprehend the situation(s) associated with the objective of the learning. Teachers should also actively involve them in the learning process so that the process of knowledge and experience assimilation and accommodation can be well accomplished and connect new experience and information with what the learners have already possessed to elicit their interest and increase their retention.

Psychologists of *Constructivism* and *Humanism* present different views as to how learning takes place from those previously presented. These psychologists believe that learning is a process of knowledge construction by the learners themselves and teachers' role is to facilitate them to construct their knowledge. Learning should optimally help learners achieve learners' self-actualization and self-realization, their self-concept therefore is crucial. In addition, learning must be free from threat and intimidation and must be meaningful, contextual, authentic and fun. The founders and advocates of the learning theories of constructivism and humanism and their principles are the prominent figures such as Jean Piaget (1896-1980), Lev S. Vygotsky (1896-1934), David A. Kolb (1939-), and Jurgen Habermas (1929-). When implementing the learning theories of constructivism and humanism and their principles in language classrooms, teachers should implement cooperative/collaborative learning and create meaningful, authentic, contextual, and fun learning (including providing authentic materials and conducting authentic assessment). They should also intentionally reinforce learners' self-concept so that they are more aware with their potentials and have greater self-confidence [6, 7, 8].

Reading books and materials, attending seminars, webinars, workshops and conferences, and engaging in discussions on theories of learning can broaden and strengthen teachers' knowledge on topics and issues.

4. Challenges of the 21st Century and the Industrial Revolution 4.0

Not only must English teachers have good command of English and be knowledgeable with the different kinds of theories of learning and their principles, but also they must

be prepared and adjustable with the challenges of the 21st century with its Industrial Revolution 4.0.

The industrial Revolution 4.0 began from a project of the German government that formed a working group that in October 2012 finally recommended the implementation of Industry 4.0 to the German Federal Government. The Industrial Revolution 4.0 is marked with the emergence of supercomputers, smart robots, driverless vehicles, genetic engineering, and the development of neuro-technology that enables human to optimize his or her brain. Three characteristics of the era are innovation, automation, and information transfer, which brings great changes in human daily life. Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) and portals of toll roads do not need manpower to guard them anymore because of automation. People now can buy flight tickets from travel agents or food from restaurants and watch films using a set of technological application because the data have been stored in “clouds”. The development and advancement of science and technology will continue and change all aspects of human life [9, 10].

The field of education is not immune from the changes and challenges of the 21st century with its Industrial Revolution 4.0. Conventional classroom facility commonly had desks or tables, chairs, blackboard placed in front of the class, and a box of pieces of chalk. The next development was that classrooms replaced blackboard and pieces of chalk with whiteboard, board-markers and overhead projector with its plastic slides. Today it is common to see classrooms use Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) projector or monitor supported with computer, usually a laptop connected to Internet network. Multimedia classrooms usually utilize electric board, computer tablet, Interactive Personal Application Device (iPAD), smartphones and other sophisticated devices with high-speed internet network. Like the classroom facility, teacher role has also changed. Today teacher is not the only source of information since students or learners can easily access information from the ‘big data’ available in the Internet and many times they can obtain more actual information than that provided by the teacher. Furthermore, teachers today face a different kind of generation of learners. Sociologists classify people into generations, namely Traditional Generation for those born in 1922-1945, Generation X or Baby-Boomer Generation for those born in 1946-1965, Generation Y for those born in 1966-1994, Generation Z for those born in 1995-2010, and Generation Alpha for those born in 2011-present. Sociologists usually term the last two as the Digital Generation.

Unlike the learners of Traditional Generation, Generation X and Y, those of Generation Z and Alpha have unique characteristics. These learners are familiar with sophisticated gadgets and capable of operating them, smartphone for instance, active in social media and fond of doing multitasking activities. They are good at obtaining information from

the 'big data' in the Internet, like to do self-directed learning, determining their own objective, source, strategy and assessment of learning, feel secure and sound in an environment connected to internet network, and tend to dislike listening to a long lecture and explanation, instead they like exploring activities [11].

Teachers furthermore must also have good knowledge of the concepts of contemporary learning theories or alternative learning theories, such as transformative learning, disruptive learning, digital learning, blended learning, neuroscience-based learning, connectivism learning, and multiple intelligences theories. First is *transformative learning*. Transformative learning is defined as an orientation that holds that the way learners interpret and reinterpret their sense experience is central to making meaning and hence learning. In other words, transformative learning is the idea that learners who are getting information are those who are also evaluating. The aim of transformative learning is to create autonomous thinking and self-governing conduct and three of its crucial elements are critical reflection, awareness of context, and acting on exploratory premise. Transformative learning centres on fundamental change in the way learners see themselves and the changing world in which they are living [12]. Second is *disruptive learning*. Disruption is a sudden break or interruption. Disruptive learning therefore is that which intends to break with the existing established learning models to improve or change them. Disruptive teaching constitutes teaching practices that disrupt marginalizing processes by encouraging students to identify and challenge the assumptions and discourses constructing categories of dominance and subservice within contemporary society, which in turn can generate critical thinking learners [13, 14]. Third is *digital learning*. Digital learning, often called Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) or e-Learning, means learning that innovatively involves devices and digital technology during the teaching-learning process. In digital learning, learners learn from different places, meaning that they are not necessarily at a similar learning venue. Learners and teacher must be active, participative, and collaborative in the learning process and they must be able to easily access the learning platform used. Examples of digital learning application are Mobile Learning (M-Learning), Social Media Learning (SM-Learning), and Games Based Learning (GB-Learning) [15, 16, 17]. Fourth is *blended learning*. Blended learning constitutes learning that combines offline (conventional) learning and online learning. In blended learning, learners are facilitated to independently study and review some part of the materials that has been taught offline using online materials and sources. Thus offline and online activities are complementary, which in turn improves learners' access and flexibility in obtaining learning experiences through different learning sources. A few of blending learning models include Rotation Model, Flipped Classroom Model, Self-Blend

Model, and Enriched Virtual Model [18, 19]. Fifth is *neuroscience-based learning*. Neuroscience based learning, sometimes called brain-based learning, refers to the teaching-learning activities that are based on the latest scientific research about how the brain works and learns, including such factors as cognitive development, i.e. how students learn differently as they age, grow, and mature socially, emotionally, and cognitively. Neuroscience research has discovered that the short-term memory in human brain is at its best condition to store information in the morning and at least effective condition in the afternoon; on the other hand, the long-term memory is at its best to store information in the afternoon. This explains that the best time for teachers to disseminate information and for students or learners to absorb the information is in the morning and the best time to review, manage, and reflect the information is in the afternoon. Further, left hemisphere of human brain is responsible for absorbing information in the forms of words or language; whereas the right hemisphere is for pictures, colours and music. This explains that the information disseminated using combination of words, pictures, and music will be absorbed and stored more promptly in the learners' brain than when disseminated using only words or pictures or music [20, 8]. Sixth is *connectivism learning*. Connectivism learning is a theoretical framework for understanding learning in this digital era that emphasizes on how the internet technologies such as web browsers, search engines, wikis, skype and the like can contribute to new paths of learning. In other words, connectivism learning is about forming connections among people and with technology [21, 22]. Last is *multiple intelligences learning*. The theory of multiply intelligences proposes the differentiation of human intelligence into specific modalities of intelligence, instead of defining intelligence as a single, general ability. Howard Gardner introduces eight different intelligences, namely linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and naturalist intelligence. Applying multiple intelligences theory in the classrooms, teachers consider the different types of learners they may have in their classes, reinforce all types of intelligences in every learner, and allow for individual learning process that ultimately enables each learner to use their intelligence(s) to succeed. In other words, employing the multiple intelligences theory in teaching allows each of the diverse students to have opportunities to succeed in learning [23], [24].

5. The Wrap-ups

Good command of English (professional competence), good knowledge of theories of learning and their principles, including the contemporary or alternative ones (pedagogic competence), and awareness and understanding of the rapid changes in all aspects of life in the 21st century with its Industrial Revolution 4.0 will enable English teachers to efficiently and effectively assist their students to succeed in learning.

With the proficiency, knowledge, awareness and understanding, English teachers now know that their students are of Generations Z and Alpha who are digital technology oriented. They should not focus on the presentation of materials, formula, and rules in teaching because it soon becomes obsolete; besides, their students can trace information and various kinds of knowledge themselves by making use of digital resources via certain search engines at any time and any place. Instead, teachers should focus on helping their students develop crucial skills of the 21st century and serve as their facilitators. Furthermore, teachers should be committed to implementing student-centred learning and not teacher-centred learning and they should provide their students with the opportunities to construct their own knowledge by accessing the ‘big data’ via the Internet. Teachers should also encourage their students to have High Order Thinking Skills – HOTS) by providing them with activities of tracing, finding, managing, applying, analysing, synthesizing, evaluating and creating via the use of digital technology and physical environment. English teachers equipped with the proficiency, knowledge, awareness and understanding can most likely face the challenges and changes of the 21st century.

All in all, English language teachers must equip, enhance and reinforce themselves with both, professional and pedagogical competences to be able to face the challenges of the 21st century and the Industrial Revolution 4.0. This is done to ensure that they are able to teach their students, the Z and Alpha Generation, well.

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