

# Investigating English Teachers' Understanding of Materials Adaptation in Curriculum 2013

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**Abstract:** The implementation of curriculum 2013 urges teachers to be more productive, creative, and innovative in adapting various kinds of teaching materials. However, the tendency for over-reliance on textbook may cause teachers to have lack of experience and familiarity dealing with materials adaptation. This might lead them to not have the best insight into materials development. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating English teachers' understanding of their materials adaptation in relation to curriculum 2013. The data obtained through interview with six junior high school teachers were analysed qualitatively. The results indicated that teachers' understanding of materials adaptation was highly good. The teachers made some adaptations to their teaching materials which consisted of adding more language inputs, deleting and simplifying some difficult materials, modifying the contexts of materials as well as the language tasks, and reordering the contents of textbook. In spite of that, the teachers found it difficult to develop the materials optimally due to the limitation of the time they had. Accordingly, some of their adaptations failed to cater students' needs. Thus, it is important for the teachers to participate in any materials development training or workshop in order to become better materials developers and able to implement the curriculum well.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The implementation of curriculum 2013 had caused a lot of reforms in the development of education in Indonesia including reforms in how teachers teach, how students learn, how teachers assess students' result of learning, and also how teachers make the development of teaching materials. As stated in Center for Curriculum and Textbook Development (2012), the aim of curriculum 2013 is generally to generate productive, creative, innovative and affective human resources through the competence strengthening in the domain of attitude (spiritual and social), knowledge, and skills. Consequently, today teachers, particularly those who teach English are truly demanded to be more creative, imaginative, inventive, resourceful, and productive especially in developing innovative teaching materials.

Unfortunately, even though teachers are confronted by materials change, they still find it difficult to adjust themselves toward the change. This phenomenon can be seen from the fact that there are many teachers still merely rely on textbooks as their teaching materials (Dar, 2012; Larenas, Hernandez, and Navarrete, 2015), especially those who work

many hours at the different levels (Halim and Halim, 2016; Stec, 2016). Whereas, textbooks have a number of shortcomings: (1) they may distort content, (2) they may not reflect students' needs, (3) they can deskill teachers, and (4) they are expensive (Richards, 2002). In addition, Gebhard (2009) states that textbooks may lead to ideological conflict in teaching beliefs, loss of experiential learning, and cultural incompatibility. Lack of the variety of communication tasks (Akbari, 2015) and inadequate listening materials (Hasanah, 2016) were the other problems of textbooks designed and prepared by the Ministry of Education.

One way to cope with this issue is by adapting the materials. Adaptation of existing materials is the result of recognizing a mismatch between the teaching materials and the needs and objectives of the classroom (Marand, 2011). Accordingly, adapting materials is rationale; especially, if the focus is on making the teaching more relevant to the students (McDonough, Shaw, and Masuhara, 2013). Adapting the materials will enable teachers to achieve more compatibility and fitness between the textbook and the teaching environment, and maximize the value of the book for the most effective teaching outcomes to achieve. In doing materials adaptation, teachers can

provide additional materials by reflecting on what students like and dislike as well as what may interest them (Ibrahim, Aziz and Nambiar, 2013). It becomes apparent that having varied and supplementary materials apart from the main textbook will undoubtedly make the teaching and learning process becomes more effective.

It is important to note that the key to success in the development of teaching materials depends heavily on the ability of teachers in adapting the materials. However, the reality shows that there has been a tendency for over-reliance on textbook as classroom teaching materials. As a consequence, teachers may still have lack of experience and familiarity dealing with materials adaptation. Furthermore, some teachers are largely untrained to do materials adaption. Therefore, it can be postulated that they do not have sufficient knowledge about the development of teaching materials.

From the above elaborations in relation to the problems, this present study is undertaken to answer the following questions. (1) To what extent do the teachers make adaptation to the teaching learning materials? (2) What are the constraints encountered by the teachers during the process of materials adaptation? This study is expected to provide useful information for curriculum developers, teachers, students, schools, and people who have the same interest on the topic of this study. Furthermore, the result of this study hopefully will be beneficial for teachers to support better teaching materials through the process of materials adaptation especially English subject.

## **2 THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **2.1 Curriculum 2013**

Curriculum 2013 is the improvement of the previous curriculum. In this curriculum, education does not only emphasize knowledge (competence) and skills (performance), but also moral education (religious values and attitudes). The curriculum is expected to generate productive, creative, innovative and affective human resources through the competence strengthening in the domain of attitude (spiritual and social), knowledge, and skills (Center for Curriculum and Textbook Development, 2012). Besides, the newest curriculum also concerns with the changing of teaching-learning methodology towards teaching learning process which gives priorities on the learning experiences through observing, questioning, associating, experimenting and communicating

(Deputy Minister of Education and Culture, 2014). Therefore, the objective of the new curriculum will be achieved by paying attention to the educational content, switching the learning paradigm from the teacher-centered approach into student-centered approach (Suherdi, 2013).

### **2.2 Language Teaching Materials**

Teaching materials play an important role in EFL classrooms. As Richard (2002) suggests, teaching materials is a key component in most language programs. They serve as the basic of the language input learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom. According to Brown (1995), teaching materials are any systemic description of the techniques and exercises to be used in classroom teaching. Materials will represent types of activities that go on in the classroom. Tomlinson (2003), furthermore, claims that language learning material is (1) anything which is used by teachers or learners to facilitate the learning of a language and (2) anything which is deliberately used to increase the learners' knowledge and/or experience of the language. Thus, materials could obviously include cassettes, videos, audios, dictionaries, grammar books, workbook, photocopied exercises, all kinds of realia, lectures and talks by guest speakers, internet sources, and so forth. This spectrum of teaching resources indicates teachers are supposed to utilize other types of materials rather than just do the language teaching based on the textbook.

### **2.3 Materials adaptation**

It is likely to be true that no single material can possibly work in all situations. Regarding to this, Rodrigues (2015) claims that a classroom teacher should have the capability to evaluate, adapt and produce materials in order to ensure a match between the learners and the materials used. Adaptation of existing materials is the result of recognizing a mismatch between the teaching materials and the needs and objectives of the classroom (Marand, 2011). According to Tomlinson (2011), materials adaptation is the process of making changes to the materials in order to improve them or to make them more suitable for learners.

McDonough, Shaw, and Masuhara (2013) suggest a framework for materials adaptation which involves several steps. It starts with matching external and internal factors. External factors comprise both the overt claims made about materials and, more significantly for the characteristics of particular

teaching situations such as learner characteristic, physical environment, resources, and class size. Meanwhile, internal factors are concerned with content, organization, and consistency that include choice of topic, skills covered, proficiency level, and grading of exercises. To adapt materials means to try to bring together these individual elements or combinations of them, so that they match each other as closely as possible.

The next step is to change content that lead to greater appropriacy in terms of a need to personalize, individualize or localize the content. Personalizing refers to increasing the relevance of content in relation to learners' interests and their academic, educational or professional needs. Individualizing will address the learning styles both of individuals and of the members of a class working closely together. Localizing takes into account the international geography of English language teaching and recognizes that what may work well in some areas may not do so in the other sites.

The last step refers to selecting techniques that can be applied to content in order to bring about change. There are some techniques used in materials adaptation, namely adding, deleting or omitting, modifying, simplifying, and reordering. Adding technique includes extending (the technique to supply more without methodological framework of the original materials such as providing more exercises) and expanding (the technique which affects methodology like by putting in a different language skill or a new component). Deleting means taking out some materials which can be done on a small scale (over part of an exercise) or on the large scale (a whole unit of a course book). Modifying refers essentially to a modality change, to a change in the nature or focus of an exercise, or text or classroom activity. Simplifying is the technique usually applied to texts, most often to reading passages in terms of sentence structure, lexical content, and grammatical structures. Reordering belongs to the possibility of putting the parts of a course book in a different order which be done through adjusting the sequence of presentation within a unit, or taking units in a different sequence from that originally one.

### 3 METHOD

Since this study was concerned with providing descriptions of teachers' understanding of their teaching learning materials adaptation in relation to curriculum 2013; hence the use of qualitative method offers greater opportunities for conducting exploratory and descriptive research that uses the context and setting to search for a deeper

understanding of the phenomena being studied. The subjects of this study were 6 English teachers who have been teaching in junior high schools for more than 2 years. The respondents were selected due to some considerations. First, they have a lot of experiences dealing with teaching activities. Second, they also have experiences in adapting a number of teaching materials. The last, they have been familiar with curriculum 2013. Therefore, they are expected to have a lot of concepts of how to make materials adaptation which is relevant to the curriculum 2013.

To collect the data, this study used interview as the main instruments, conducted by the researcher himself. The interview was carried out in a more probing, open ended, and less structured way. The participants were addressed several questions in order to get the information related to each teacher's understanding about materials adaptation in terms of kinds of adaptation (what) and the ways to make the adaptation (how), as well as the constraints encountered while making materials adaptation. The interview guidelines used were formulated based on the framework for materials adaptation suggested by McDonough, Shaw, and Masuhara (2013). The interviews were done in Indonesian. The responses were then transcribed and translated into English.

### 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the transcriptions of interviews, some relevant data have been identified and analyzed. The results of analysis have been organized in terms of the questions that this study is trying to answer. Hence, each data will be presented in accordance with the questions.

Question 1: To what extent do the teachers make adaptation to the teaching learning materials?

This seek answers about teachers' understanding of their teaching materials adaptation. From the results of the interview, it was noted that the adaptation of teaching materials made by the teachers comprised of adding, deleting, modifying, simplifying and reordering (see figure 1). Figure 1 indicates that the highest responses from the participants were adding and modifying. It can be seen that there were six teachers who used adding and modifying as the techniques to conduct materials adaptation. Four participants selected reordering as the next technique mostly used. Meanwhile, three respondents preferred to simplify the materials. The last but not least, only two participants tended to use deleting technique which means they liked to omit and take away some materials found.

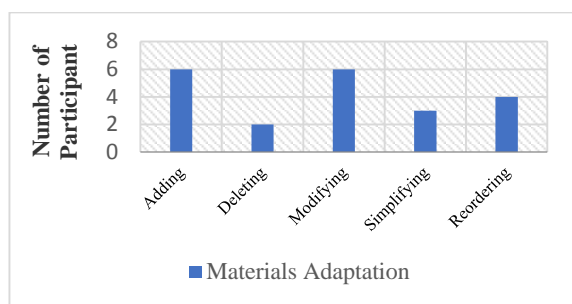


Figure 1: Techniques of materials adaptation.

In terms of adding, teachers either add supplementary materials needed by students or provide them with certain materials using media. The materials chosen to be exposed to students were mostly highly related to students' culture. In line with this, Rashidi and Safari (2011) also discovered that many ELT materials base their content on culture. The using of the materials were not only intended to ease students' learning, but also to reach one curriculum 2013's objective: that is to strengthen the attitude skills of the students.

The limitation of language modality encouraged teachers to start adding other inputs by using several media such as video, power point, and audios like songs or dialogues from native speakers. Besides, in order to meet the curriculum demand, teachers are pushed to use multimedia to support the new teaching learning methodology which prioritizes the learning experiences through observing, questioning, associating, experimenting, and communicating (Deputy Minister of Education and Culture, 2014). Computer and the internet-based technologies provide variety of facilities for teachers to involve different attractive activities. Suherdi (2015) and Wilkinson (2016) also claim that the integration of technology as materials can establish high quality teaching and learning in nowadays education. In addition, such media lead students to know the actual use of language. Tomlinson (2008) reminds materials should provide students the exposure to English in authentic use through spoken and written texts. Studies done by Meraji and Zamanian (2014), Akbari and Razavi (2016), and Bajrami and Ismaili (2016) revealed that by using the appropriate authentic materials, teachers can enhance students' communicative language competence. However, some teachers may lack of familiarity with guidelines on how to utilize ICT properly to support their teaching. As consequence, they still rely on printed pictures and handout.

The adding of materials also includes the addition of tasks to enhance students' understanding. As suggested by the curriculum 2013, teachers need to

encourage students to be more creative, productive, independent, and responsible in doing the tasks given (for example, students are required to look for additional materials such as images, text, etc.). Curriculum 2013 expects a change in the teaching and learning process, from transferring knowledge by the teacher to allowing students to collect information by themselves (Lengkanawati, 2017). This learning paradigm will make students become more independent of teachers and more responsible for their own learning. Besides, the materials produced by the students might also be very possible to match their interests since teachers cannot determine every student's interest.

With regards to deleting and simplifying, the teachers confirmed that the mismatch of teaching materials with the ability of students caused them either to omit or to simplify some materials. Somehow, it is good to make students feel comfortable with the materials. Tomlinson (2011) also claims that materials should help learners to feel at ease. However, the tendency to delete and/or to simplify may hinder the development of students as well because they are put in their comfort zone all the time. As a matter of fact, curriculum 2013 emphasizes students to be creative in solving the problems. Therefore, learning is supposed to enhance what the students have gained. For this, Tomlinson (2011) and Timmis (2016) assert materials should have challenging activities which push learners slightly beyond their existing proficiency.

In the data gathered, a number of changes made by teachers in attempt to modify the materials are apparent from the tasks given which emphasized the understanding and using of the language through experience. The teachers modified tasks in the book that typically consisted of language exercises into more authentic tasks in which students can learn how to use English for real life communication (e.g. talking with native speakers, sending emails). By this, teachers can activate students' prior knowledge and experience to help them relate to today's lesson. Mustafa (2010) says that children learn better from direct experiences and from scripts which serve as their guidelines in understanding the lesson based on what they have experienced before.

Modifications were also made to cover the weaknesses of the book in terms of language skills such as lack of listening materials, so the teacher applied the text as listening material by reading it loudly. However, it is much better for teachers to provide more authentic materials because one goal of listening instruction is to help learners to understand real life language (Maftoon, Kargozari, and



Azarnoosh 2016). Teacher sometimes does not have the capability to produce the same language as native speaker. Moreover, the data confirmed that teachers would prioritize the topics in the syllabus rather than in the book. Therefore, they sometimes reordered the subject matters in the textbook in attempt to make them relevant to the curriculum.

Question 2: What are the constraints encountered by the teachers during the process of materials adaptation?

This question seeks to find the constraints confronted by the teachers during the process of materials adaptation. The data revealed that the time limitation teachers had was thought as one constraint in adapting learning materials. Teachers' other responsibilities besides teaching made them had difficulties in managing time. Therefore, some teachers ended up using an available material instead of adapting it. Marand (2011) along with Halim and Halim (2016) also found teachers rarely develop their own materials because it is time consuming and difficult. The other constraint referred to materials inappropriateness resulted from teachers' insufficient capability to make materials adaptation. The lack of opportunity in making materials adaptation hindered them to develop their ability. Macalister (2016) points out that problem will occur when teachers have little or no experience of developing teaching materials. Consequently, some materials adapted by the teachers were not always suitable for their students. In this case, McDonough, Shaw, and Masuhara (2013) argue that activity of adaptation should take place with good understanding of the principle and procedure of materials development. By this, they mean it is difficult to change something unless we are clear about what it is we are changing.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the findings of the current study, it can be concluded that teachers' understanding of materials adaptation was highly good. In order to cope with the hindrances in learning and to fulfil the curriculum 2013 demands, teachers made some adaptations to their teaching materials which consisted of adding, deleting, modifying, simplifying and reordering. By adding, the teachers provided students with more texts that were considerably associated to the culture of the students. Moreover, with the advancement of knowledge and technology, they facilitated the language learning by utilizing numerous media (e.g. videos, power point, audio, etc.) from which students obtained more inputs of the

actual use of language. Besides, adding allowed the teachers to foster student-entered learning (e.g. students sought additional materials based on their interests).

Meanwhile, materials considered difficult or complicated to the students were typically deleted and simplified by the teachers. These strategies should be employed cautiously since the tendency to delete and/or to simplify may hinder the development of students. In terms of modification, the teachers highlighted the contexts revision and tasks adjustment. Some contexts of materials were revised to emphasize the students' experiences. Language tasks were modified to be more authentic so that students could learn how to use the language for different purposes. The last, teachers reordered some contents of the textbook by prioritizing the topics in the syllabus.

Furthermore, the finding made it apparent that the time limitation teachers had due to abundant tasks was the main obstacle that hamper them to develop the best materials they should have. The lack of opportunity in making materials adaptation caused them to not having adequate insight into materials development which then led to materials inappropriateness. Thus, it is important for the teachers to participate in any training or workshop to get deep understanding about materials development since such activities will help them to become better materials developers and able to implement the curriculum well.

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