

## HISTORY OF TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN INDONESIA

Florentina Suharjati

Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris  
Fakultas Bahasa Dan Seni Universitas Indraprasta PGRI  
Jl. Nangka 58C Tanjung Barat, Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia  
*florentinatotok@yahoo.co.id*

### Abstract

This is a brief history of the development of teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia. It covers the period from the Dutch rule up to the present. During the Dutch time, TEFL was relatively speaking successful, during the Japanese period, Dutch and English were banned, and in early independence period, there were quite a few problems relating to the materials as well as teachers. Technically the situation began to improve with the improvement of the country as a whole; however, there remains a number of persistent problems beyond the teacher's capacity to solve. TEFL and the development of English in Indonesia continue to conduct research.

Keywords: History, The Materials And Teacher, Rule

### *Sejarah Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing di Indonesia*

#### *Abstrak*

*Ini adalah sebuah ringkasan singkat sejarah perkembangan pengajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing di Indonesia. Ringkasan ini meliputi zaman dari era bahasa Belanda sampai dengan sekarang. Pada waktu zaman Belanda, TEFL secara relatif sukses dalam berbicara, selama jaman Jepang, bahasa Belanda dan bahasa Inggris dilarang, dan diawal jaman kemerdekaan, terdapat sedikit masalah yang berhubungan dengan bahan-bahan pelajaran maupun gurunya. Secara teknik situasi mulai membaik dengan perbaikan dari seluruh negeri itu; namun, ada sejumlah sisa-sisa masalah yang sangat sulit untuk diatasi diluar kemampuan guru. TEFL dan perkembangan bahasa Indonesia berlanjut menjadi sebuah topik yang menarik untuk diamati dalam melakukan penelitian.*

*Kata kunci: Sejarah, bahan-bahan pelajaran dan guru, zaman*

### A. INTRODUCTION

English is taught as a foreign language in Indonesia, beginning from the junior high school through the university. In some places, particularly in big cities,

some schools even use it as a medium of instruction starting from kindergarten. At the college level, TEFL varies, some non English departments still teach English and some others do not for a number of reactions. At some universities, English is the medium of instruction, while the others it is practically abandoned. In society, it is only used in very limited circles where a substantial number of expatriate workers and tourists are found. As English is not spoken in society at large, thus there is currently no such thing as 'Indonesian English' as yet; however, there are certainly a minuscule number of Indonesian families that begin to use it at home.

## **B. DISCUSSION**

### **The Dutch Period**

TEFL was taught from junior high school (MULO) to the senior high school. At junior high school, English was a compulsory subject given three or four times a week. In addition, the students still had to learn Dutch every day. Textbooks and supplementary readings were plentiful, so they could improve their English fast by reading a number of books. The teachers were well-paid. At the end of the third year they had to have written and oral examinations. As a result, MULO graduates could speak, read and write good English.

### **The Japanese Period**

During the Japanese occupation of Indonesia for three and a half years, Dutch and English were totally banned, and all the books in those languages had to be burned. The education system was radically changed. Instead of Dutch, Japanese was taught intensively as it was designed to become the second language of Indonesia. The Indonesian language was nominated to become the national language. Linguistically, the Japanese occupation was a blessing in disguise for bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian). A lot of books were translated into Indonesian, and from then on Indonesian has developed phenomenally. Ironically, the rapid development of Indonesia later poses an unsurmountable

obstacle for the success of tefl in Indonesia. When bahasa Indonesia can meet all the primary and secondary needs of Indonesia, it would be very difficult for a foreign language to share a place in society as another medium of communication

### **The Independence Period (1945 –Up To Present).**

With the Japanese gone and Dutch books burned, there was a considerable paucity of English textbooks and dictionaries. English was taught beginning from the junior high school (Sekolah Menengah Pertama) using course books, one of them was called step by step used in the Dutch era, and the method of teaching was grammar-translation method.

Most of the dictionaries were English-Dutch dictionaries, so it was a big problem for the junior high school students as they did not know Dutch. The method of teaching for senior high school is as well as junior high school. Most English classes were virtually grammar classes, reading was not very much emphasized, and the teachers virtually paid no attention to speaking and writing as they themselves were not proficient in those skills.

The Dutch returned to Indonesia after world war II and occupied this cities and towns. Guerrilla schools were set up in remote village and teachers were university students. The lessons were often interrupted by the Dutch troops patrolling the country side. When the Dutch left Indonesia for good in 1949, the educational situation began to improve slowly.

English textbooks began to appear and English – Indonesian dictionaries were gradually available. The teaches also were getting better as they were graduated from the so-called B-I course.

The central inspectorate of the English instruction paved the way to improve TEFL in Indonesia.

In 1953 – 1957, a committee was established to be in charge of developing syllabi for the secondary school English language instruction and teachers manual.

In 1958, the English language materials development project was set up to prepare new instructional materials for the junior and senior high schools.

By 1962 it had developed into three co-ordinated sub-projects: The materials development board, the English language testing centre, and the English language pilot project. The Ford Foundation played a vital role in all these projects. Due to a number of reasons logistical, political and financial, these materials were later discontinued.

In the 1968, the Ministry of Education set up an English language project to address the problems of English instruction in schools.

The project consisted of two sub-projects; the English Teachers Upgrading Projects (ETUP) and the English Materials Development Project (EMDP).

The main objective of the ETUP was to upgrade the junior high school teachers; whereas the EMDP was to prepare materials for the senior high school (Djojosoekarto, 1973: page: 17-23)

Since then, a number of projects on in-service teachers training and materials development in the Ministry of Education have come and gone, and some times blunders are made and conflicts of interests arise such as two similar projects under the same directorate went on with different bosses, text books with millions of rupiahs (at that time) had to be thrown away due to innumerable typographical errors reflecting the incompetence of the administrators in charge of the projects.

In terms of educational projects, the demography and the condition of Indonesia dictate that any project dealing with elementary and secondary education should be carefully deliberated and continually monitored as it entails financial risks of enormous proportion

In 1985, the PKG approach (PKG - Pemantapan Kerja Guru or the reinforcement of teacher's work) in ELT at the secondary school was launched (tomlinson, p.1)

The World Bank and the United Nation's Development Program (UNDP) funded the project and the directorate of basic and secondary education carried it out.

Basically the PKG approach was a combination of the total physical response, Krashen's monitor model and the communicative approach, and their motto being "*from the teacher, by the teacher, and for the teacher*"-- a truly radical approach. As it was a bottom-up approach, teachers seemed to enjoy it. One of the negative aspects of this is the abuse of power by the local education authorities, that is they frequently forced the teachers to make use of materials of their choice which implied kickbacks from the writers or publishers.

The teaching of English in the primary school is now the latest trend in Indonesia. It is based on the assumption that if English is taught beginning from the primary school, then it is hoped that ELT in the higher levels will be successful. It is not compulsory and usually it starts from the fourth or the fifth grade.

Many primary schools in big cities have been taught English and it is included in the so called 'local load', meaning that each school can teach any thing not provided by the curriculum from the ministry of education which theoretically

should relate to the local needs. As such the term 'local load' has been liberally interpreted to accomodate the teaching of English.

Recently, we can find TEFL at playgroups and nurseries as well, mainly in big cities.

According to the one of the owner of nursery, the reason she taught English not exactly teaching the babies them selves but for their mothers and caretakers to use English to the babies.

Her phylosophy is that when the babies are exposed to English, they will be able to learn the language more easily later on. This a new trend in the elite families in big cities. Naturaly social reaction is devided between those who are for and those are against the teaching of English to young learners.

Those who are against argue that:

1. There are no English teachers for the primary school,
2. Teacher training institutions do not provide such training ,
3. It is irrelevant, particularly for those having in rural areas,
4. It may damage the mastery of the national language,
5. It will cause some problems for the English teachers at the unior high school as in the first year the classes would be heterogeneous, consisting of those who have been exposed to English and those who have not,
6. There are already too many subjects in the primary school,
7. Primary school teachers teach all subjects and their training in English is minimal, so they can not be good English teachers, and
8. It is used as a promotion to attact new pupils.

Those who are for argue that:

1. It will help improve the teaching of English in the higher levels,
2. It is the right period for starting to learn a foreign language ,

3. If children learn a foreign language at an early age, the chances are that they will continue linking and learning it through the university level,
4. To prepare for the age of globalization, long preparation to master English well is needed.

### C. CONCLUSION

The development of English learning in Indonesia will be interesting to watch and it will remain an interesting topic for discussion for year to come. The authorities (in the Ministry of National Education and other concerned bodies) have been trying hard to solve the tefl problem in Indonesia, but what they have been doing so far is to approach the multi-faceted iceberg partially such as changing the curriculum only when the other issues and problems need to be seriously addressed as well. In the final analysis, the solution and the success depends on the individual concerned, that is the survival of the fittest.

### REFERENCES

Buku

- Coleman, H. 1996. *Moving the goalpost: project evaluation in practice*. In Alderson, J C and Barretta, A. *Evaluating second language education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Djojosoekarto, G.K. 1973. *A study of several development factors in the revision and updating of the national English language program with reference to in-service teacher-training and the preparation of teaching specific materials*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Austin: University of Texas at Austin.
- Hayakawa, S.I. 1939. *Language of Thought and Action*. Ch. 1. In Crystal, D. & Crystal, H (2000). *Words on Words*. London: Penguin.
- Sadtono, E. 1988. *Problems and progress in teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia*. In Sadtono, E. (ed.) Malang: Penyelenggaraan Pendidikan Pascasarjana, IKIP Malang. 1-28

## Internet

- Cahyono, B. Y. 1999. *Bahasa Inggris di sekolah (English at school)* (Internet. yudi@hotmail.com). Accessed July 3, 1999.
- Chotijah, I. (2000), *Bahasa Inggris di SD (English at the Primary School)*. (Internet: karce@cbn.net.id. Accessed August 1, 2000)
- Diptoadi, V.L. (2000). *Bahasa Inggris di SD (english at the primary school)* (Internet: vero@mail.wima.ac.id. Accessed July 24, 2000)
- Djiwandono, S.M. (2000). *Bahasa Inggris di SD (English at primary school)* (Internet: soenardi@mlg.mega.net.id. Accessed July 21. 2000)
- Kaswanti, B. (2000). *Bahasa Inggris di SD (English at primary schppl)*. (Internet: bkaswanti@FKIP.atmajaya.ac.id. Accessed July 20, 2000)
- Setyadi, S. (2000). July 24. *Bahasa Inggris di SD (English at primary school)* (Internet: setyadi@malang.wasantara.net.id. Accessed July 24, 2000)
- Soejadmiko, W. 2000. *Bahasa Inggris di SD (English at primary school.)* (Internet: wuri@sby.centrin.net.id. Accessed July 21, 2000)
- Triyono, T. 2000. July 28. *Bahasa Inggris di SD (Englis at the primary school)* (Internet: tottri@indosat.net.id. Accessed July 28, 2000)