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Teacher agency and the implementation of CEFR-like policies for English for tourism and hospitality: insights from local vocational high schools in Indonesia

Kamaludin Yusra ^a, Yuni Budi Lestari ^a and M. Obaidul Hamid ^b

^aDepartment of English Education, University of Mataram, Mataram, Indonesia; ^bTESOL Education, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

ABSTRACT

Tourism is a service industry that demands well-trained professionals with internationally accredited skills including English language proficiency. Meeting such demands has been one of the foremost concerns of the ASEAN ministries of tourism and education. In collaboration with ASEAN member countries and the Australian government, Indonesian Ministry of Education and Ministry of Tourism piloted the integration of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP), Common ASEAN Tourism Curriculum (CATC), Regional Qualifications Framework and Skills Recognition System (RQFSRS), and Indonesian Qualification Framework (IQF) into the National Curriculum (K-13) for hospitality and tourism education. Successfully trying out at hospitality and tourism colleges, the project was subsequently extended to vocational high schools. The study reported in this article investigated how the various policies were integrated by English teachers for their implementation in vocational high schools in a local Indonesian context and what outcomes and experiences resulted from this process. The article illustrates micro-level teacher agency in meeting regional, national and local policy mandates for preparing tourism and hospitality professionals for the common ASEAN job market.

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Introduction

This article examines how English teachers as micro-level policy actors exercised their agency (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008; Zhao, 2011) to implement curriculum reforms related to tourism education in Vocational High Schools (VHSs) in a local Indonesian context. Specifically, we are interested in understanding what challenges these actors faced in integrating multiple frameworks and competency demands into English language teaching (ELT) for professional qualifications for tourism, what pedagogical practices they adopted to address those challenges, and how the local agency was implicated in this curricular and pedagogical work in local institutional settings.

CONTACT M. Obaidul Hamid  m.hamid@uq.edu.au  TESOL Education, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

Lucrative revenue has made tourism the main source of national income for Indonesia. In 2019, tourism was the largest source of revenue, defeating natural and palm oil as export primadona. With an annual increase of visitors by 15%, 20 million tourists were expected to visit the country in 2020, if not hampered by the coronavirus pandemic. Indonesia has become the third most visited country in Southeast Asia after Singapore and Thailand (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019).

This increase in visitors and revenue calls for professionalization of tourism to standardize service quality. Working together with the Australian government, the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) governments agreed to implement *Mutual Recognition Arrangement* (MRA), which led to the development of ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP), Common ASEAN Tourism Curriculum (CATC), and Regional Qualifications Framework and Skills Recognition System (RQFSRS) (see Hickman & Irwin, 2013). Modelled on the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR), MRA incorporated communication skills as well as professional skills and identities of ASEAN tourism workers. Covering the six divisions of labour in tourism (i.e. Front Office, Housekeeping, Food Production, Food and Beverages Services, Travel Agencies and Tour Operation), the policy introduced CATC to teach, train and assess the ACCSTP following the RQFSRS framework. As the official language of tourism in the region and of ASEAN (Kirkpatrick, 2020), English plays an essential role in the whole process of teaching, certification and job performance.

The language and professional competencies specified in CATC have been widely implemented in tertiary institutions for tourism education in the ASEAN countries. Although instruments and resources have been funded by the Australian government, the ASEAN Community, and the respective countries, the level of implementation has varied across nations. Hickman and Irwin (2013) correlated readiness for CATC implementation with the status of English in the ASEAN countries with some modification of Kachru's (1985) model of concentric circles. The Outer Circle countries (e.g. Burma, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines) have already set up all infrastructures required for training institutions and have fully executed the framework. Extended Circle countries (e.g. Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam) need more time to establish national professional organizations as accrediting agencies for CATC implementation and competency attainment and certification. Foreign Circle countries (e.g. Cambodia, Lao FDR and East Timor) are found to struggle in establishing basic infrastructures.

Researchers have attested to these varying levels of curricular attainment. For example, in Vietnam, Nguyen and Chaisawat (2011) have shown that there were issues with trainer qualifications, job opportunities, training quality, relevance to CATC, and limited involvement of tourism industries. In Thailand, Fu et al. (2016) have reported that the lack of industry involvement in tourism education led to incongruity between the skills offered by institutions and those required by the tourism industry. In Cambodia and Lao, as Mendoza et al. (2016) have suggested, CATC implementation was rather slow, as these nations had to restructure their systems before executing the policy.

In Indonesia, the focus of the present study, MRA and CATC execution was successfully piloted in 2012 at seven major tertiary tourism colleges¹ (Hickman & Irwin, 2013). These institutions were then assigned as accrediting and mentoring agencies for other tourism education institutions. Studies of CATC in the mentored institutions (e.g.

Kurniarini, 2019; Suherlan, 2017) reported success, even though they had to overcome obstacles related to low motivation and limited English proficiency of students and lack of learning support.

Since 2015, the Indonesian Ministry of Education has extended CATC implementation to tourism-related Vocational High Schools (VHSs), which have implemented the national curriculum (K-13) since 2013. In addition, since 2014 the VHSs have implemented the CEFR-like Indonesian policy called Indonesian Qualification Framework (IQF), which specifies learning outcomes from Level 1 (primary and junior schools), 2 (general and vocational high schools), 3 (one-year diploma), 4 (two-year diploma), 5 (three-year diploma), 6 (undergraduate), 7 (professional training), 8 (master's degree and first specialization) and 9 (doctoral and second specialization). Levels 1–4 are qualifiable as Operator, Levels 5–7 as Technician, and Levels 8–9 as Expert. For VHSs, the competencies are set at Level 2 (Operator).

Introducing the IQF together with CATC has added complexity, challenging ELT teachers and their practices at VHSs. In 2015, a national pilot project for implementing CATC was rolled out involving 24 VHSs nationally including one VHS in Lombok (Mataram VHS), the local context of the present study. As this project was considered successful (Herdianto, 2017), it was extended to other VHSs to be mentored by the pilot-ing VHSs. As the Indonesian Directorate of VHS Development reported (see Apriyadi, 2019), 90 VHSs were nationally assigned and funded to integrate CEFR, CATC and IQF into K-13. These VHSs were implementing the 2018 version of the K-13 curriculum at that time. In Lombok, six new VHSs were assigned to be mentored by Mataram VHS and these schools were our research sites.

Although, at the national level, the implementation of the curriculum reforms with particular reference to the integration of the existing K-13 curriculum with CEFR, CATC and IQF has been assessed, such evaluation has yet to be undertaken at the local level in Lombok, particularly by independent researchers. Local VHSs in the region may be faced with many challenges in synchronizing the K-13 curriculum (2018) with CEFR, IQF and CATC. The K-13 curriculum was already heavily-loaded, and incorporating the new requirements of borrowed reforms was expected to add to their institutional, curricular and pedagogical burden. Lack of expertise and financial resources characterizing these institutions may also result in a low-quality tourism curriculum and its inefficient implementation in the local school sites. Inadequacy of learning resources is another potential barrier for curriculum synchronizing experts. How English teachers at these VHSs exercised their agency – what they did to integrate these various reform mandates, and how they did it under such circumstances – has not been explored. The study reported in this article examines how CEFR, CATC, IQF and K-13 were integrated by English teachers as micro-level actors, what challenges were presented for them and how they addressed those challenges, what good pedagogical practices were demonstrated, and what factors may contribute to the successful implementation of the complex curriculum reforms.

CEFR, CATC, IQF and K-13 English curricula

Aiming to standardize language teaching and assessment by providing ‘a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations,

textbooks, etc. across Europe' (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 1), CEFR was developed in 2001 as the principal guidelines for training in European languages. Little (2007) describes CEFR as a scheme embracing general competences (i.e. knowledge, skills and attitudes) and language competences (i.e. linguistic, pragmatic, sociolinguistic and sociocultural). CEFR regulates not only the teaching of European languages but also assessment, certification, and levelling of competences. The competences are divided into 6 levels: A1/A2 Basic user; B1/B2 Independent user; and C1/C2 Proficient user. Despite being criticized on content and method of delivery (Westhoff, 2007), CEFR has been widely used in training and teaching practices in Europe and Asia.

The ASEAN governments responded positively to CEFR and its underlying philosophy of language training and assessment. They established *ASEAN Common Competency Standards* (ACCSs) for engineering, nursing and tourism-related professions (Hickman & Irwin, 2013) which were then expanded to training curricula in these three fields. In preparing trainees for these international and border-crossing professions, the ASEAN governments considered English as one of the essential components in each curriculum. The focus of the present article is the tourism curriculum.

For tourism-related training, the ACCSs have been transformed into *Common ASEAN Tourism Curriculum* (CATC). Six curricula have been developed for the six job sectors in tourism, as previously mentioned. Tourism experts, practitioners and other stakeholders were involved in identifying knowledge, skills and attitudes required in each category of jobs. The standard competencies are organized in a document called *ASEAN Common Competency Standard for Tourism Professional* (ACCSTP). ACCSTP only lists relevant competences, while materials and methods of delivery are left with institutions and teachers for development. In 2012, the design of the Housekeeping CATC was completed and piloted in the ASEAN countries. The positive results produced by the pilot project exercise (see Hickman & Irwin, 2013) were followed by CATC implementation in the other five fields.

Expecting more inflow of tourists and increased demands for tourism professionals, Indonesian authorities ratified CATC on 9 November 2012. As previously noted, the quality of tourism service needs improvement and standardizing in Indonesia and ASEAN. The implementation of CATC is considered part of the solution. Given high unemployment rates and the size of the unskilled labour force, Indonesian authorities warmly welcomed CATC as it could be used as guidelines for tourism education to train students and attain the ASEAN-standardized competencies and certificates required for working across ASEAN countries. Thirty-two tourism-related jobs were identified and lists of competencies for these jobs were approved by tourism agencies in each member country. In addition to field-specific professional skills, functional English competencies are considered essential to the quality of service in the industry. Prior to the introduction of CATC, Indonesia had set up its own Indonesian Qualification Framework (IQF), as previously noted. In 2012, the Ministry of Education issued the IQF as a guide for training goals and assessments at the previously mentioned nine levels of competency. For VHSs, Level 2 with generic and functional competencies relevant to each occupational field is considered appropriate. These competencies have been nationally ratified for use in training and certification of skills. For tourism, three Level 2 occupational competencies have been prescribed: IQF for Hotel Handling (including Front Office and Housekeeping), IQF for Food Handling and Production, and IQF for Tour and Travel (including Tour Operation and Travel Agencies).

Millar et al. (2010) have argued that there was a huge gap between the quality of service that tourism industries required and the quality of skills that tourism education provided. Weber et al. (2013) illustrated this gap by pointing out that tourism institutes usually trained students with general skills, while the industries required more specialized skills. Similarly, Hickman and Irwin (2013) reported complaints of poor English competencies among tourism workers in Asia and other countries resulting from a misalignment of English and other subjects in tourism education. Moreover, Kurniarini (2019) revealed that tourism students had negative attitudes towards English and that tourism institutes provided poor learning facilities. The Indonesian government intends to address these problems by integrating CEFR, CATC and IQF into the K-13 curriculum for tourism education in VHSs.

The growth of the tourism industry and the proliferation of tourism jobs have led to surging demand for tourism education (see Butler, 1999). However, the urgent need of producing relevant manpower has compromised quality (Supriadi, 2010). In 1996, as reported by World Travel and Tourism Council (2019), the need for tourism workers reached a critical point. Therefore, the number of training institutions was drastically increased to meet the demand with the result that their outputs doubled the number of job opportunities. Thus, there are a sizable number of unemployed people who are educated but unskilled. CATC promises to be a genuine solution offering ASEAN standards of tourism competencies and providing ASEAN-recognized certificates as a written recognition of skills and permits to work in member countries. Although this is a welcome policy, local conditions of training (see Butler, 1999; Kurniarini, 2019) and the global COVID-19 pandemic situations have interfered with the policy enactment.

In general, CATC has 242 standard competencies including English language competencies for the six tourism job sectors. Developed based on *Competency-Based Training*, CATC also accommodates *Competency-Based Assessment*, which requires trainees to perform tasks in settings created as natural as possible, assessed by accredited assessors, and certified with recognized certificates. For English, CATC has eight competencies elaborated into 32 sub-competencies with specific criteria of assessment for each level.

Apparently, the list of competencies looks simple, but trainers are required to adapt them to the skills necessary for particular tourism jobs. In addition, the standard of attainment is very high for each job. The attainment is certified from Certificate Level 2 to Advanced Diploma with fixed criteria of achievement for each level. To qualify for tourism jobs, workers need to obtain all certificates for general tourism sectors and specific vocational certificates relevant to the tourism positions that job seekers may be targeting. The certificates, diplomas, and degrees obtained from the trainings are accepted by all ASEAN countries. Therefore, the country's investment in CATC is considered crucial.

Teacher agency and the integration of CEFR, CATC and K-13 curriculum

The introduction of global education policies interferes with local ones. The effective integration of the two sets of policies requires teacher agency for sense-making, adjustment and enactment. In particular, teachers as local policy actors bridge the gap between global-national expectations and local realities (Baldauf, 2006; Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008). Although agency is a core concept in language policy and planning, scholars

have started interrogating the concept relatively recently (see Bouchard & Glasgow, 2019; Glasgow & Bouchard, 2018; Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2021). We understand agency in the sense of ‘act[ing] in the world in situated and contingent ways’ (Glasgow & Bouchard, 2019, p. 11). In this view, intentional and goal-driven action serves as the manifestation of agency. Although our focus is on teacher agency, we acknowledge the relational nature of agency in the micro context where the processes of sense-making and policy enactment call for support from other individual, institutional and communal agency.

At the supra-national ASEAN level, CEFR and CATC were developed by people with power, socio-political authority and influence (Zhao, 2011; Zhao & Baldauf, 2012). Tourism educators, hotel owners, travel agents, religious personalities and community leaders have the power to influence policies and their implementation. With funding and expertise, tourism industries play a key role in deciding CEFR and CATC content, teaching procedures and methods of assessment. At the national level, the national curriculum shapes the content and delivery methods. In the absence of significant involvement of local teachers and students in shaping policies, local authorities may have no choice other than implementing what is dumped into local settings (Hamid & Nguyen, 2016; Phan & Hamid, 2017). At the national level, every ASEAN member country has their national curricula developed by national experts and other stakeholders in response to national needs. In Indonesia, the national curriculum is known as the 2013 curriculum which has been revised and updated annually since.

At the local level, the local government and schools have their own education plans, which are also part of the curricular agenda. Teachers need to integrate the global, national and local agendas in their lesson plans, learning materials and learning tasks, which will facilitate students to attain the skills set in the agenda. Lestari (2020) reported agency exercise by English teachers and students at a remote Indonesian junior high school in their response to the national curriculum. Yusra et al. (2020) have identified prospects and challenges facing the Indonesian tourism higher education sector in implementing CATC. The present study contributes to this research by investigating agency exercise by English teachers at local VHSs to understand the integration of the global, national and local curricula in English classes.

Micro-level policy implementation has received much research attention in the last three decades (Hamid, 2019; Borg, 2001; Gardinier, 2012; Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008; Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2014, 2021). Teachers create plans for policy implementation, constructing a ‘new’ policy based on their ideas about how to translate the policy into classroom learning activities in the interests of teachers and students. As Ng and Boucher-Yip (2017) have illustrated, teachers effectively implement policy when their expertise, content and facilities are within their reach. Lack of access to these enabling factors may lead to resisting the policy (Pessoa & Freitas, 2012).

Nevertheless, integration is only one of the many possible micro-level responses to external (national/global) education policies. Ali (2013) argues that integration is an accommodative reaction wherein teachers adapt the new policy to suit students’ learning needs and conditions. Given teachers’ subjectivity in policy interpretation and prevailing learning conditions, the wholesale adoption of policy may be unrealistic. However, the use of policy documents as guidelines may help teachers and students to devote themselves to the policy. Finally, policies are often resisted due to their irrelevance to the local setting, or their lack of alignment with local needs, interests and priorities. For

example, when CATC was implemented in Bandung Tourism College and Bali Tourism College (Suherlan, 2017), the lecturers resisted it and instead used their own teaching and learning materials in order to meet the ASEAN standards.

As teachers' agency exercise is common to micro-level policy implementation (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008; Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2014), one may wonder how teachers adapt global policies to local purposes and needs. Liddicoat and Taylor-Leech (2014) have suggested two helpful hints: 'address local needs' and 'open new possibilities.' In response to macro-level policy, teachers need to develop materials and activities that enable students to achieve target competencies. Most often, materials and resources are not available to teachers; they have to create learning opportunities by using whatever resources are available around. Teachers have to work out necessary adjustment and integration considering students' needs and contextual realities. This was the case with the micro-level integration of the top-down policies under investigation. Because CEFR, IQF and CATC do not come with supporting materials, teachers had to integrate them within K-13 materials. This agentic integration in local Indonesian VHSs is the focus of the inquiry.

Context and methods

Participants and data collection

The study was conducted in seven VHSs in Lombok in West Nusa Tenggara for three years (2017-2019). It was funded and approved by the local university where the first two authors work. All participants including teachers and students provided consent – either in writing or verbally – for their participation. One of the schools (Mataram VHS), located in the city with more than 1000 students, was the local site for the national pilot project, which was then appointed as a mentoring school. English teachers from this school assisted teachers in the six mentored schools. Two of the mentored schools were large (Praya VHS and Selong VHS) with more than 1000 students in each. The other four schools (Batu Layar VHS, Dasan Agung VHS, Gerung VHS, and Lingsar VHS) were newly established with 500–700 students in each. Each school had all six tourism-related departments and English was oriented towards the occupational needs of each department. Pseudo-names have been used throughout to refer to the schools and the participants.

The study used multiple methods of data collection including a survey of English teachers and students when CEFR, CATC, IQF and K-13 were incorporated as an integrated curriculum and implemented in English classes. English teaching in the tourism-related departments was observed in a non-participant mode in order to collect data on teachers' exercise of agency underlying their classroom practices. Seven headmasters, twenty-one English teachers and more than a hundred students were interviewed in Bahasa Indonesia using semi-structured interview protocols. Headmaster and teacher interviews were conducted before, during and after the implementation of the integration. In addition to individual interviews, there were more than nine group interviews. Informal conversations were also conducted with the teachers before and after classroom observation or during class break. Teaching documents including lesson plans, textbooks, teaching materials, evaluation materials and students' works were borrowed from the teachers,

while policy documents (i.e. K-13, IQF, CATC, and CEFR documents) were downloaded from the internet. Information on students' competencies was obtained from the teachers and professionals involved in the project.

Data analysis

The larger mixed-methods project produced both quantitative and qualitative data requiring corresponding quantitative and qualitative data analyses. The present article mainly draws on qualitative data sourced from interviews, fieldnotes and documents which were analysed using content analysis. Occasionally, we have drawn on survey data, which have been interwoven with textual data. The analysis of the textual data went through the typical stages of thematic content analysis including transcribing and managing the data, reading and reading and coding at various levels such as phrases, sentences and chunks of texts (White & Marsh, 2006). Microsoft Exel was used for coding, tabulating and cross-tabulating the data. The data sources were classified and coded as A (for CEFR), B (for CATC), C (for IQF), D (for K-13), E (for fieldnotes) and F (for interviews). For the present article, data coding was utilized to pursue the research foci related to: teacher agency in curriculum integration; teacher agency in curriculum implementation; and identification of good practices. In the next section, we report our findings which also illustrate the coding process by showing data extracts from various sources including teacher interviews.

Findings and discussion

The study investigated how CEFR, CATC, IQF and K-13 were integrated in English classes by teachers in the VHSs. We present our findings and discussion under three headings in the line with the research foci.

Teacher agency in integrating the curriculum

Teacher agency in integrating ideas from CEFR, CATC, IQF and K-13 was examined by analysing the network of ideas in teachers' teaching documents including teaching syllabi, lesson plans and materials and relating these ideas to policy documents. Lestari (2020) labels such an approach 'a logogenetic analysis' in which key ideas are identified and relationships between them are established and categorized with definitions and illustrative examples. The English teachers in the VHSs under study integrated ideas from the policy documents into their teaching plans. One of the teachers, Vandik, in the focus group interview, explained:

According to the CEFR document, the main goal [of EFL learning] is the attainment of general English knowledge and skills. In the ASEAN curriculum, the content is related to knowledge and skills in English and in tourism. In the IQF, the skills and the standards for them are specified. We should add the tourism-related knowledge, skills and attitudes to contents of the K-13. So, we divide the content into English, tourism and non-tourism knowledge and skills. This is difficult work and we do not have enough time [for teaching them], but we have to do it. (Vandik, English Teacher, Dasan Agung VHS; authors' translation)

The other teachers also noted that language knowledge, language skills, tourism knowledge, tourism skills, and non-tourism skills were the main content of their integrated syllabi and these are summarized in Figure 1. Given that the content in the K-13 alone was too much to cover in one semester, adding contents from other curricula would be unrealistic. The majority of teachers acknowledged the challenge and juggled between the different curricula in making their choices. One of the teachers, Baiq Isti, explicated how he focused on tourism skills rather than language knowledge or attitudes:

... my students, sir, ... are those rejected from other schools. They don't like English. [But] at least, I want them to be able to say something when they work as porters for tourists traveling to Mount Rinjani. So, I don't always follow the K-13 and its contents. I include them in tourism. So, tourism [is the] first and English [is] next. (Baiq Isti, English Teacher, Selong VHS; authors' translation)

Nonetheless, there was inherent difficulty in integrating the multiple curricula and frameworks. Firstly, they have different learning goals. As Trim (2012) pointed out, CEFR Level II is aimed at general communicative skills in which students are expected to be able to comprehend communication in workplaces (B1.1); deal with most

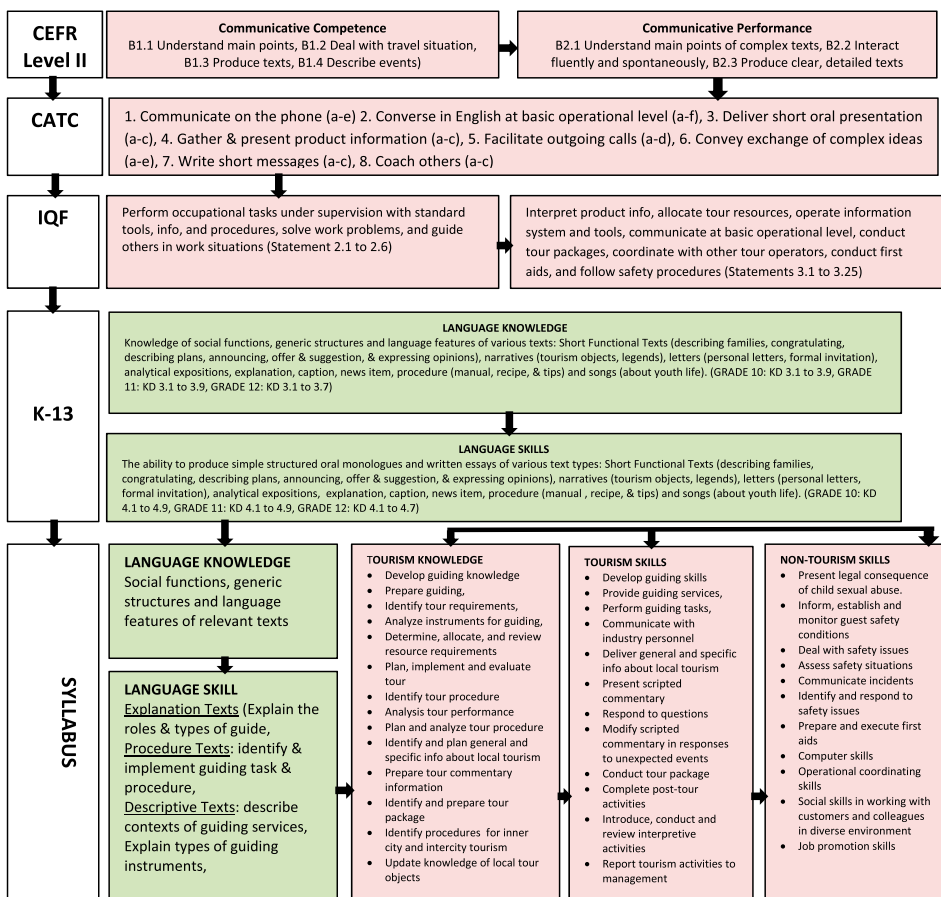


Figure 1. Teacher integration of the CEFR, CATC, IQF and K-13.

communicative situations (B1.2); produce simple connected texts (B1.3); talk about ideas and comprehend key ideas in complex texts (B2.1); interact fluently and spontaneously (B2.2); and present texts clearly and in detail (B2.3). CATC Level II, on the other hand, is designed for hospitality and tourism-related skills, where students are expected to be able to comprehend workplace communication (1a-c); produce simple connected and work-related texts (2a-f); share work-related ideas, share ideas in complex texts (3a-c); present texts in clear and detailed presentation (4a-c); interact fluently and spontaneously in a number of work-related contexts (5a-c); and convey work-related messages (7a-c). Continuous on-the-job self-learning (6a-e) as well as job coaching of others (8a-c) is also accentuated in CATC. IQF Level II for Tourism contains these skills but tourism-related attitudes (statements 2.1–2.6) and skills (statements 3.1–3.25) are added. Finally, the K-13 curriculum integrates attitudes, knowledge and skills, but focuses on language knowledge (KD 3 for each grade) and skills (KD 4 for each grade) for general communicative purposes.

Given the divergent learning goals and contents included in these policy documents, English teachers in the VHSs could not accommodate all policy contents into their syllabi and teaching materials. They were mainly constrained by limited time allocation for English, students' limited English proficiency and limited learning resources. Through their agentic response to these challenges (Biesta & Teddlers, 2007; Ali & Hamid, 2018), the teachers utilized their expertise and selected language knowledge (KD 3 for each grade) and skills (KD 4 for each grade) that were most relevant to the tourism departments. As actors, they were motivated by the need to help students attain the standards of performance expected in the policy documents. Such motivated efforts are classifiable as exercise of teacher agency (Biesta & Teddlers, 2007).

The teachers, as illustrated by Baiq Isti quoted above, reorganized their teaching plans and materials to redefine learning goals into language knowledge and skills, tourism-related knowledge, tourism-related communicative performance and non-tourism skills. Teaching materials were reorganized to pursue 'competence' if the materials contained lexico-grammatical knowledge, while the aim was related to 'competency' when they contained work-related communication and operational skills. The general communicative competence and communicative performance in the CEFR document were extended to the competence (KD 3) and the performance (KD 4) sections of the K-13 document. Communicative knowledge and skills were modified further at the CATC Level II syllabus to accommodate skills relevant to hospitality and tourism services. CATC Level II delineates language knowledge into more specific tourism-related communicative skills (i.e. communicating on the telephone (1a-e), conversing in basic operational procedure (2a-f), presenting skill (3a-c), presenting tourism products (4a-c), maintaining positive telephone manners and etiquettes (5a-d), discussing skills (6a-e), writing telephone messages (7a-c) and coaching fellow workers (8a-c)).

Communicative competence and performance were also integrated with the skills expected by the national curriculum (K-13). Designed for general purposes, the K-13 contains general communicative competence (language knowledge and skills). As none of these knowledge and skills is directly linked to tourism jobs, the teachers reoriented them by replacing the general language skills therein with tourism skills from CATC and IQF. In this way, they developed guidelines for developing micro-level syllabus. They adopted job related contents from CEFR, CATC and IQF but they focused on

tourism knowledge and tourism skills. They also extended the content to include tourism-related ethical issues (i.e. protection of children from sexual exploitation and abuse, safety issues, first aid knowledge and practice, identification of potential local tourism objects and promotion of local objects).

In addition, the English teachers extended the learning materials to cater for job promotion skills contained in CATC. Preferred learning styles for self-development (6e) and strategies for coaching co-workers (8a-c) were presented to students in school projects whereby they could play client-supervisor roles. Though unrelated to English, computer skills explicated in CATC and IQF were also integrated and categorized as specific job-related operational skills: computer skills (e.g. hotel and flight processing (3.15 & 3.20)), operational skills (e.g. coordinating with stakeholders (3.8 & 3.9), working with tools and technology (3.23)), and social skills (e.g. working with customers and colleagues (3.24), and working in diverse environment (3.25)). The teachers believed that when students acquired all these skills, they would be able to attain the competency level expected by IQF and CATC.

The above practices of the teachers reflected their agency exercise based on criteria reported by researchers: reorientation of target skills (see Zhao & Baldauf, 2012); development of local syllabus (see Priestley et al., 2013); selection of relevant content (see Biesta & Teddler, 2007), and extension of curricular content (see Ali & Hamid, 2018). As micro-policy actors, the teachers exercised their agency to bridge the gap between global expectations and local realities (Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2014).

Teacher agency in implementing the integrated curriculum

We would argue that the integrated curriculum was more or less effectively implemented in the observed schools. Based on our analysis of classroom observation, interviews with headmasters, supervisors, teachers and students, factors that contributed to the implementation of the integrated curriculum included *teacher factors*, *facility factors* and *student factors*.

Priestley et al. (2012) have argued that teachers' exercise of agency is context-dependent. Teacher factors have an important role to play in agency enactment. Factors including education, training and English language proficiency supported the implementation of the integrated curriculum at the VHSs. The majority of the teachers (76%) had bachelor degrees in English language education, which is the basic level of education required for teaching in Indonesia. The rest (i.e. 24%) of the teachers had master's degrees, which were above the minimum national standards. The majority (52%) of the teachers were competent in English, based on documented TOEFL scores (500-549) as measures of proficiency. Other teachers had somewhat lower levels of proficiency, as indicated by the score range of 401-499. Additionally, the English teachers had received on average four trainings related to curriculum implementation and four trainings supporting the implementation. The former were related to the project phase both at national and local levels. The latter were part of teacher development programmes conducted by national and local educational authorities, and these included effective lessons development related to K-13. All teachers had acquired basic and advanced training in English, the teaching of English, and the assessment of English language skills as part of their educational qualifications. Three teachers received CATC-related trainings at the national

level and obtained statuses as master trainers and skill assessors. With these capacities, they trained other English teachers, assessed all tourism skills of students, and accredited them for teaching and assessing students' skills. The master trainers worked with other national trainers at national workshops and developed materials and activities for training at the provincial level. At the provincial level, the master trainers worked with local English trainers and created materials and activities for school-based trainings, where English teachers developed materials for their own classes. All these activities indicate that the teachers developed expertise, experiences and skills that supported them in their exercise of agency (see Biesta & Teddler, 2007; Priestley et al., 2013).

The teachers, however, felt the need for more training for job-related English, real-life job operation, and on-the-job assessment of English language skills. They established cooperation with tourism practitioners and invited them to visit classes, or took students on excursion to visit practitioners in workplaces where tourism-related English language skills were in use. Incorporating these skills is essential for competency accreditation, work qualification, and worker mobility. However, tourism-related English competencies that the teachers had developed were of lower levels, which created challenges for them in their teaching practice. Therefore, the teachers had to look for creative and agentive ways of meeting professional challenges. As the English teacher, Ketut, narrated her experience:

I didn't have enough experience in dealing with English [used] in ticketing and travel agency, but I had to teach the skills to my students. [So] I invited a friend working in a tour agency. I asked her to show my students [how] the system [in the tour agency worked]. The school had [the] money [for the visit] but not much. So, I added the transport money out of my own pocket. That's ok with me. (Ketut, Lingsar VHS; authors' translation)

Collaboration with tourism experts and practitioners was not an isolated event. Other teachers also used local and private resources to address contextual challenges (see Biesta & Teddler, 2007).

Teachers' knowledge, exposure and awareness of programmes, as Uri and Abd Aziz (2018) have argued, contributed to their exercise of agency in the implementation of the curriculum. Our survey of 245 out of 422 teachers in the schools showed that 56% of them were familiar with the integrated curriculum, while others obtained information about the curriculum from the school bulletin (27%), words of mouth (12%) and by other means (4%). More than half of them (54%) were exposed to the details of the programme through training, while others were informed through school bulletin (27%), words of mouth (14%) and by other means (4%). A large majority of teachers (81%) considered the programme essential for the schools and the future of their students. This awareness encouraged them to be more agentive and provide more support for student learning.

Learning facilities at the VHSs appeared to have facilitated the English teachers to exercise agency in implementing the curriculum. These included classrooms, language laboratories, library collections and student textbooks. With 5829 students and 228 classrooms, there were sufficient spaces for students to work comfortably in the classrooms. But with limited practice materials in the language laboratories and with limited library collections, the teachers did not have sufficient resources to pursue the competencies established in the curriculum. The textbooks were limited for Guide and Tour and

Travel departments in particular, as these materials were not compatible with their curricula. The textbooks were required to be integrated by master trainers before they could be used by other teachers. While English teachers in the Housekeeping departments adapted their textbooks to the integrated curriculum, teachers in other departments (i.e. Food Production, Food & Beverage, Front Office, Tour Operation, Hotel and Travel Agency) needed to develop new learning and assessment materials during the initial phase of the project. There was a shortage of printed textbooks, which could not be compensated by digital textbooks as they were not accessible by students. Therefore, the teachers mobilized their agentive self and developed their own materials, which were made available to students.

Students' motivation to learn English showed only slow improvement due to their negative views of English and low levels of English proficiency at the entry point. Although 68% of students believed that English was important for future vocational purposes, 56% of them noted that it was difficult to learn. Based on tourism-related English role-play speaking tests administered and scored by the English teachers, 73% of the students' English language competency fell into Basic II category. To attain Level II of CEFR, CATC and IQF, the students were required to have at least Pre-Intermediate Level II, which was two or three levels above the current level of the students. Apparently, this was an unachievable target, but many teachers took it as a common challenge. For example, Hanan, an English teacher at Praya VHS, believed that preparing unqualified students to achieve high standards was a case of 'jihad pribadi' (a personal holy war) fought by the teachers.

Teacher agentive practices were motivated by the felt need to enhance English competency among students. At the beginning of the research in 2017, the majority (73%) of student competencies were at the basic level, which refers to the ability to understand basic phrases spoken slowly and clearly, while others were at the elementary level (18%) which refers to the ability to talk about familiar topics. Nine per cent of the students were at the pre-intermediate level, which represents the ability to produce simple connected texts. At the end of the project in 2019, despite all agentive efforts of the teachers, 68% of students were still at the elementary level, 20% at the pre-intermediate level and 7% at the intermediate level (i.e. being able to produce complex texts). Although 5% of students failed to increase their level of competency, an average increase of 33% in itself was an outstanding achievement.

Nonetheless, our survey of scores from accredited teachers scoring students' competencies provided contradictory results. The survey revealed that the students developed a high level of competency in knowledge and skills. Compared to the national minimum mastery level of 85%, the large majority (98%) of knowledge-based skills were achieved. Only two out of the 79 skills were below the standard: (a) knowledge about on-site tour guiding; and (b) knowledge about how to facilitate on site tourist interaction. With regard to skills, however, the majority (88%) were below standard: transfer-in (68%), transfer-out (68%), planning and evaluating tour and travel programmes (68%), performing intercity tour and travel (68%), documenting tour and travel (68%), first aids (68%), preparing and setting-up tour equipment (67%), on-site guiding (63%), communicating with relevant industries (63%), conducting personal tour (63%), conducting special interest tour (59%), conducting group tour and travel (58%), and reporting tour and travel activities (53%). English teachers in the Tour departments realized

these problems and planned on-site or mediated practices to solve them. As two of the English teachers reported:

... I had only told stories of guiding. When the students performed [in class], the language was limited. They didn't say much. [I think] a real trip can be useful. I'll try it next time. (Yanti, English Teacher, Batu Layar VHS; authors' translation)

... There are too many students in my classes. I'll find cheaper ways of teaching [tourism] skills to them. Karaoke guiding with videos might work better. I'll make them for my next classes. (Mukti, English Teacher, Praya VHS; authors' translation)

All in all, success in the attainment of language knowledge and skills was associated with teachers' exercises of agency facilitated by trainings, workshops, cooperation with other English teachers, and availability of learning facilities at the schools. Job-related orientation of the integrated curriculum explicated directly or indirectly during classroom discourses had also influenced the students who in turn took more responsibility for their own learning. Although still failing to meet the national standards, the change in the students' learning attitudes could in itself be a driving force for more independent learning of tourism English.

Good practices: lessons learned

Good practices were extracted from the ways through which facilitating factors were enhanced while inhibiting factors were overcome in the VHSs.

Facilitating factors

Despite weaknesses in the scope and quality of competency mastery reported above, several good practices were noted in *political*, *institutional* and *instructional* realms.

At the macro-national ministerial levels, CEFR and CATC for English were dedicatedly responded to with strong political support from the national government. The programme was aligned with IQF and the 2013 curriculum (see Hickman & Irwin, 2013), which integrated the contents and the level of professional competencies at all levels of Indonesian education (see Lestari, 2020). There was also strong financial support for setting up associations of tourism professions and these associations were financially supported for training and certifying master trainers (see Hickman & Irwin, 2013).

At the meso-provincial and institutional levels, dedication strategies to the global and the national policies were apparent in the provision of pedagogical training at local levels. The local governments recruited local professional consultants who selected one model vocational school from which facilitator teachers were recruited. For English, one consultant and two English teachers from the mentoring school were appointed as master trainers and they were sponsored for receiving training from the national level and providing training at the local level. At the local training, the consultant and the mentoring teachers developed local training packages and delivered them to local trainers. In these trainings, the English teachers at the participating schools collaborated with meso-level actors in achieving the national standards. With the involvement of macro-level consultants and master trainers as well as meso-level trainers in supervising and providing feedback, the teachers as policy actors were facilitated in improving quality of materials and teaching practices so that they could

implement the policy at the classroom level. National and international tourism institutes and experts were involved in these trainings and this was crucial for upgrading teachers' knowledge of tourism-related English (Gursoy et al., 2012; Millar et al., 2010). Cooperation among the schools enabled them to share training duties ahead of time and in this way they saved time and resources.

At the micro-instructional level, the quality of the schools, the teachers and the students, to a great extent, accommodated all basic qualifications that the policy documents expected. As Stritikus (2003) identified, school contexts and teachers' capacity are key factors in the implementation of policies. As in the case of the present study, the schools were prepared with learning facilities, the teachers were nationally trained, certified and accredited for teaching and assessing skills and these boosted their self-confidence. In addition, 68% of teachers were also certified and accredited in other fields of tourism. More than 64% of them were involved in national tourism teacher exchange programmes and 15% of them experienced studying and teaching at tourism education institutions in other ASEAN countries. With such expertise, the teachers were able to adopt, adapt or integrate the curriculum to the students' competencies. Though limited, local, national, regional, and international professionals were also involved in the schools, sharing their expertise with teachers and students, and these were primarily the sources of real-life English practices for them. A number of students also experienced learning at other tourism institutes in Indonesia and other ASEAN countries for more advanced and accredited professional trainings. In this case, as Biesta and Teddler (2007) suggested, English teachers as micro-level policy actors successfully enacted their agentic responsibilities, making use of available resources for students' learning.

Inhibiting factors

At the national and provincial levels, the strong ministerial and financial support provided for tourism as a national agenda has recently weakened as the national financial resources have been shifted from tourism to infrastructure and, more recently, to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. The speedy construction of Mandalika Circuit in south Lombok expected to be ready for the Indonesian grandprix in Lombok in July 2021 has absorbed the national funds allocated for other local commitments including school education, teacher training, and educational innovations. However, the event is expected to create tourism opportunities by establishing new hotels and restaurants, and, consequently, new job opportunities for tourism students. Exhibitions and championships show-cased VHS students' readiness for the event and would help them to overcome their concerns about limited job opportunities. Successful workers and businessmen with VHS backgrounds were frequently invited to schools, and students were scheduled to visit their exhibitions in town. These have been important ways of maintaining students' motivation for their study. Although the loss of tourism jobs due to the virus outbreak has weakened the students' learning spirit, English teachers as motivational actors encouraged them to keep improving their skills, anticipating positive occupational situation after the pandemic. In a focus group interview, one of the teachers, Baiq Hury, summarized the situations and reported what she had done to remotivate her demotivated students:

[It is] difficult, sir! In normal situations, making the students learn is hard. Now is the virus. Learning is online. People lose jobs. [There are] no tourists [around]. But, we told them [the students] “Things will get better soon” “Prepare yourselves.” [There will be] more jobs when the circuit is open”. We also gave extra teaching hours to those in need of English improvement. (Baiq Hury, English Teachers, Gerung VHS; authors’ translation)

At the institutional level, tourism education institutions are facing new problems and challenges. The commitment to producing alumni with competencies expected by tourism industries (see Gursoy et al., 2012; Millar et al., 2010) has recently been questioned because the government and the community expect students to graduate within a three-year period. As a result, competencies below standards are often tolerated. The support to staff and student development has also been compromised due to the annually diminishing number of fee-paying students and other sources of funding. Due to the annual increase in the rate of unemployment, higher education is considered an alternative to escape early unemployment. Therefore, prospective students prefer non-vocational academic high schools and, consequently, the number of fee-paying students have declined in the VHSs reducing the institutions’ revenue. The much-needed learning resources (e.g. books and videos) and programmes (e.g. ASEAN internship, student exchange, and tourism competitions) have also been cancelled due to financial losses. In headmaster interviews, we heard how they were looking for ways of addressing these challenges. As one of the headmasters, Dirman, noted:

Tourism is a priority in this region. But, we need to approach the local budgeting agency for more funding [from the government]. It is hard but we need to find ways. (Dirman, Headmaster, Gerung VHS; authors’ translation)

Some schools addressed these problems by recruiting sponsorship from business partners, although not all schools were able to follow these strategies.

The financial loss has created an unexpected situation at the micro-instructional level. In interviews, the headmasters reported to have lost trained and accredited teachers, and they had to replace them with inexperienced and freshly graduated ones. Employing paid native-speaker teachers has become unviable financially and native-speaker volunteers are the only viable teacher options. Expert and subject-specialist teachers in hospitality and tourism fields complained about difficulties in working with new teachers because the latter had not entered the teaching profession, in their views, with required levels of knowledge and skills. Some students have developed professional skills and are eligible for international level of trainings, but they do not have the requisite English language skills. Opportunities for ASEAN student exchange programmes for tourism trainings are available, but the majority of students cannot participate in them because of their limited English. Arranging extracurricular English classes was considered strategic solutions, but they could not be highly optimistic about the results.

Conclusion

This article has illustrated how English teachers as local policy actors exercised agency by bridging the gap between the global-national expectations in the CEFR, CATC, IQF and K-13 documents. As the study has demonstrated, the implementation of the curriculum integration was dependent upon locally situated realities at schools (Glasgow &

Bouchard, 2019). It has illustrated how the local actors had intentionally used local knowledge and expertise to select the competencies in the global-national policy documents as their curricular goals driving essential pedagogic adjustment, enactment and actions to accommodate local needs and create new opportunities for students at local schools (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008; Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2014). The global-national challenges were also used as policy guidelines for developing, standardizing and certifying hospitality and tourism competencies for students. From a language policy point of view, while micro-level actors usually operate locally, their agency exercise may respond to policy flows that may blur transnational, national and sub-national scales.

The agency demonstrated by the teachers can be characterized as ‘ecological’ (Priestley et al., 2015), showing ‘how it is either constrained or enabled by contextual variables’ (Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2021, p. 10). Of the various roles of actors described by Ball et al. (2011), the ‘narrator’ appears to be the most appropriate description, as the teachers were found to ‘interpret policy by selectively focusing on aspects of a policy and making decision about its implementation, creating local versions of policy through the selection and enforcement of meanings in their context of work’ (Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2021, p. 8). Their agency can also be seen as relational in nature, showing its collective and interdependent working in the local setting.

The article has illustrated that teachers’ agency exercise was facilitated by their access to local resources (Biesta & Teddlers, 2007) in order to meet local challenges (Glasgow & Bouchard, 2019). The English teachers working closely with tourism practitioners had collaboratively selected 14 tourism knowledge items, 12 tourism skills, and 11 non-tourism skills out of 242 tourism competencies. They used this selection as a ‘new’ curriculum and policy (Ng & Boucher-Yip, 2017) agentively enacted in the participating schools. The implementation of the curriculum also reflected agency exercises by individual experts, funding institutions and practising communities indicating the relational, situated and contingent nature of agency exercise in micro-level contexts (Glasgow & Bouchard, 2019). However, although the teachers’ exercises of agency had overcome many challenges, provided tourism-related pedagogical practices and improved students’ English skills from the basic to the elementary level, these exercises still fell short of meeting external policy expectations.

The complex and difficult work of integrating national and regional curricular mandates in relation to tourism education requires desirable agentive practices, and teachers have to continue their agency work in challenging circumstances at present and in the future. Minimizing these challenges will be the expectations of students and teachers populating the local VHSs. Pursuing active engagement and cooperation between English teachers, tourism experts and practitioners would be a priority recommendation. It is also recommended that some of the competencies be introduced as early as Year 7, rather than Year 10, in order to allow more time and experiences for students to attain the targeted competencies demanded by the global-national hospitality and tourism industries.

Note

1. (1). Bandung College of Tourism (STP Bandung), (2). Bali College of Tourism (STP Bali), (3). Medan Academy of Tourism (Akpar Medan), (4). Makassar Academy of Tourism (Akpar Makassar), (5). Sahid Institute of Tourism, (6). Pelita Harapan University, and (7). Dhyana Pura Hotel & Tourism Institute.

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Notes on contributors

Kamaludin Yusra, PhD is a Lecturer in Applied Linguistics at the English Education Department University of Mataram Indonesia. He received his MA in Applied Linguistics from Macquarie University and PhD in Applied Linguistics from The University of Sydney, Australia. His interest includes Applied Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Educational Research, Cross-cultural Understanding, Pragmatics, and English for Tourism.

Yuni Budi Lestari, PhD is a Lecturer in English Education at the English Education Department University of Mataram Indonesia. She received her MA in TESOL from Sydney University Australia and PhD in TESOL from The University of Queensland, Australia. Her interest includes TESOL, Language Planning and Policy, Curriculum, and Educational Research.

M. Obaidul Hamid, PhD is Senior Lecturer in TESOL Education at the University of Queensland, Australia. His research focuses on the policy and practice of TESOL education in developing societies. He is Co-editor of *Language planning for medium of instruction in Asia* (Routledge, 2014).

ORCID

Kamaludin Yusra  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8713-8357>

Yuni Budi Lestari  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6849-214X>

M. Obaidul Hamid  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3205-6124>

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