Solve Education! English Curriculum Alignment within the National Curriculum of Indonesia

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Summary of the study

English is the most widely learned second language in the world and has become part of school curriculums in many countries around the world, including Indonesia. However, the quality of English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching in Indonesia is still low. Solve Education! recognizes the problems within the Indonesian education system and developed an educational game application, Dawn of Civilization (DOC), to help increase English acquisition among EFL learners. The question that often arises is whether Solve Education!'s educational game could be implemented to help teach English in support of the ongoing curriculum that students already follow at school. The study therefore attempts to present the process of identifying the alignment between the curricula of the Indonesian National Syllabus for English with the Solve Education! Syllabus for English, which is delivered in the form of a game app. In Indonesia's 2013 Curriculum (2017 revised edition), the English teaching topics are described for both the public junior high school (grade 7-9) and public senior high school (grade 10-12) since English is not anymore taught in the primary public school. On the other hand, Solve Education!'s curriculum was designed in orientation to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) with modifications to suit the needs of its target beneficiaries which typically come from low income backgrounds. The result of the comparative analysis shows that both syllabi are compatible with one another since the material taught in the Indonesian National Syllabus for English is within the range of levels A1-B2 in the CEFR framework used in Solve Education English learning game app.

Introduction

The English language is recognized as the global lingua franca[1]. It is the most widely learned second language in the world and has become a school subject in many areas around the globe. However, no global consensus has been achieved on the standards of English materials in the curriculum and how they are taught in classrooms. Consequently, various approaches exist in school systems across states and countries which result in various learning foci and outcomes.

For example, in Singapore, English is already formally taught since primary school alongside a mother tongue (Curriculum Planning & Development Division, 2010). This relatively 'young' country, only having become independent in 1965, confers English as a unifying language considering their highly multicultural community and its potential to help accelerate the country's economic development. It is indicated by, inter alia, the fact that Singapore has a higher GDP per capita and is considered as a high income country[2] compared to Indonesia which gained its independence years before Singapore did.

Unlike in its neighboring country Singapore where English is widely spoken as a second language, according to Sulistyo (2016), English in Indonesia is more likely to be taught and learned only as a foreign language (EFL) even though it has been formally taught in classrooms since the Dutch coloni-

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zation period (Komaria & Simatupang, 1998). This means that English learning occurs primarily in classrooms, rather than during daily communication. According to Oxford and Shearin (1994), a foreign language in this context is a language learned only during formal education. As such, English language teaching and learning in Indonesia presents particular challenges that are not encountered in countries such as Singapore, where English is more commonly used daily.

The first version of the National Curriculum of Indonesia was published a year after becoming independent in 1945, which included English as one of the teaching areas. Between the many versions of the Indonesian curriculum since then until now, the learning materials were relatively constant, focusing on reading, listening, writing, and speaking (Komaria & Simatupang, 1998). For Indonesian contexts, lessons being taught in classrooms are crucial because the target language is seldom used outside the classroom (Suryati, 2013). However, the quality of EFL teaching within classrooms in Indonesia is still low as it is indicated by the big class size, low student motivation, and poor quality of teachers experienced within the Indonesian education system (see Bradford, 2007 and Sulistyo, 2009)

Solve Education! recognizes the problems within the Indonesian education system and believes its expertise in education technology can contribute to the success of EFL teaching in the Indonesian schooling system. Its educational game application, Dawn of Civilization (DOC), was developed to help increase English acquisition among EFL learners particularly in Indonesia. The question that often arises is whether DOC, could be implemented to help teach English in support of the ongoing curriculum that students already follow at school. This study was therefore conducted to assess the alignment of Solve Education!'s syllabus for English with the Indonesian National syllabus for English. We compare the national syllabus with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) framework which served as the basis for the Core Curriculum implemented within Solve

Methodology

This study is informed by a comprehensive review of scholarly, grey, and official documents to identify and critically reflect upon key literature that underpins the alignment of Solve Education!'s syllabus for English with the Indonesian National syllabus for English. The study refers to or incorporates the following:

1. Prominent/celebrated peer-reviewed publications that exist within the curriculum studies;
2. Reports commissioned by national and international governments or government agencies —internal reports, strategic plans, and other forms of grey literature;
3. Online and open-access articles.

A broad literature search was conducted using the key terms and through a range of key academic or peer-review journals—academic search mechanisms, educational research repositories, and online research catalogues and interfaces such as Google Scholar.

Categorization was scaffolded including the identification of core themes by the primary research questions using a grounded theory approach with some degree of flexibility (see Bryman, 2008) to data analysis and built into an integrated account exploring the various conceptual and methodological issues of Solve Education! curriculum alignment in the Indonesian context, that is, within the school and educational system.

Reporting occurred thematically but also incrementally, allowing theoretical concepts to be seamlessly infused into practical hypotheses. The authors were cognizant of the need to represent what may be abstract modes of thinking in ways which are meaningful and substantive to those who are unfamiliar with ornate conceptualisations. Consequently, every care was given in ensuring the final report accurately represents findings and arguments in a simple manner to maximise accessibility and usability.

The Indonesian National Syllabus for English

The National Syllabus for English in Indonesia has gone through multiple changes since its first edition in 1946, a year after Indonesia became independent (Komaria & Simatupang, 1998). The most recent change was in 2013, when the Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (school-based curriculum) or in short KTSP 2006 curriculum was exchanged for the 2013 Curriculum which is still in implementation to the day that this paper was written. No new curriculum has been issued, however this curriculum has undergone multiple revisions. For the current comparative study, we focus on the 2017 revised edition of the 2013 Curriculum for both the public junior high school (grade 7-9) and public senior high school (grade 10-12) since English is not anymore taught in the primary public school.

	Indonesian Curriculum
Junior High School	Grade 7
	Grade 8
	Grade 9
Senior High School	Grade 10
	Grade 11
	Grade 12

Exhibit 1: Indonesian Secondary School years where English is taught

Despite high expectations being placed on the Indonesian students, the results of the secondary school final national examination are far from satisfactory, particularly when compared to other countries in the Asia-Pacific region (OECD, 2015). Particularly in English competence, Indonesia is falling behind Malaysia and Vietnam in the 2018 Education First's English Proficiency Index. In this latest report, Indonesia ranks at 51 of 88 countries and provinces which places it in a 'low' proficiency band. In contrast, Singapore ranks at 3 which places it in a 'high' proficiency.

Since Indonesia is far behind its neighboring countries, the importance of EFL in the classroom continues to be encouraged by the Indonesian government, with English lessons included as a compulsory subject for junior and senior high school students. However, low quality English teachers, inter alia, hinders the success of EFL teaching in school. In his study, Soepriyatna (2012) indicates that large numbers of Indonesian EFL teachers do not feel confident using the target language because they are not comfortable talking and writing in English. Moreover, many teachers are not sufficiently familiar with active learning and holistic assessments required by the curriculum even though the government has continuously been conducting teacher trainings across Indonesia to train them on those matters.

Moreover, policies and practices in the EFL classroom in Indonesia lack consistency (Lie, 2007). The 2013 curriculum (revised version) for English instruction in junior and senior high schools, referred to earlier, seeks to provide exposure to English texts and to develop English competence to help students enter the job market and improve their income prospects (Lie, 2007). Although English is officially taught to achieve this goal in Indonesia, the English competence of secondary school and university graduates in Indonesia remains low (OECD, 2015; Sulistiyo, 2008).

Solve Education! Syllabus for English

Understanding the need for more targeted and effective delivery system in education, Solve Education! created a core curriculum which serves as a basis for its pedagogical approach which is delivered through its educational game app, Dawn of Civilization (DOC). Solve Education!'s personalized game app, leverages artificial intelligence to help individual learners become successful independent English learners, confident in their ability to learn and solve problems. Literacy, especially English literacy, is vital in preparing young people to thrive in the 21st-century knowledge economy; helping them within education and entering employment (see Burroughs and Smagorinsky, 2009; Christenbury and Smagorinsky, 2011; Stacey, 2015). Through acquiring English literacy skills, learners can understand, analyze, communicate, or even challenge the information they get. Solve Education!'s English curriculum was designed in orientation to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) with modifications to suit the needs of its individual learner which typically come from low income backgrounds.

The English syllabus within Solve Education!'s curriculum is delivered in the form of the DOC app which is divided into two significant parts: the meta-game (a city-building game) and mini-games which contain the lessons. The meta-game, the fun part, is designed to retain learners so that they will stay and continue learning. It is designed as a city simulation game where students can create and manage a city as a mayor. They can construct buildings, place landmarks in their town, and earn taxes from their citizens. To develop the city, they need resources and reward cards, which can be obtained by playing the mini-games. It is through these mini-games that Solve Education! delivers the lessons.
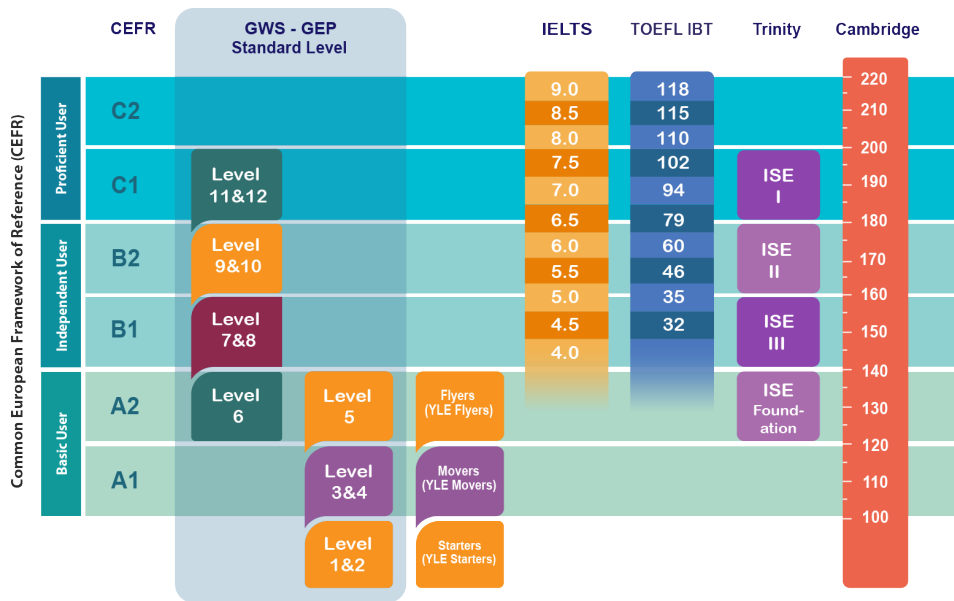

Exhibit 2: CEFR Leveling System in comparison to other frameworks

Solve Education!'s English syllabus follows the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) to describe students' performance level. CEFR was published in 2001 by the Council of Europe to provide a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabi, curriculum guidelines, textbooks, and tests across Europe. It has been translated into 40 languages and is now widely accepted as one of the most comprehensive and reliable sources of language teaching reference and used by educators all around the world.

The main aims of the CEFR are "to encourage reflection by users over the way their current practice meets the real world language needs of their learners and to provide a set of defined common reference levels (A1-C2) as points of reference to facilitate communication and comparisons." (British Council EAQUALS, 2010) The classificatory scheme of the CEFR is useful to help formulate and review curriculum objectives, content, testings, syllabus definition, material organization, and even certification of proficiency that can be made specific to the local context.

The six reference levels of the CEFR has been adapted to Solve Education!'s teaching context by adding an opening level below A1 and omitting C2 levels. The first reason for doing that is because of many of Solve Education! target beneficiaries have limited knowledge of the English sounds and letters. The second is because Solve Education! understands its technological

DOC Competency Levels
Pre-A
A1
A2
B1
B2
C1

Exhibit 3: DOC Competency Levels

It is important to investigate the alignment of the Solve Education! CEFR-based Syllabus for English with the Indonesian National Syllabus for English to fulfil the CEFR's promise of a flexible English teaching framework that can be made accessible and suitable for a local context.

Findings and Discussion

The content taught in the Indonesian national syllabus for English for junior to senior high school students are found to be within the range of A1-B2 CEFR levels. Compared to the Indonesian national syllabus for English, Solve Education!'s syllabus for English has a wider coverage of CEFR levels, ranging from the very beginning to advanced levels. It was found that aside from Year 7, the materials taught in each school year were equivalent to more than one competence level in the CEFR. All the learning goals stated in the Indonesian National curriculum were stated in the CEFR competence descriptors, however not all the competence descriptors stated in the CEFR are covered in the Indonesian National curriculum. Since DOC uses CEFR framework and bases all its teaching materials from the CEFR-based English teaching inventory, DOC learners are facilitated to learn a lot more than learning in a typical Indonesian public school.

In the following paragraph, the detailed proportions of CEFR level competence descriptors within each grade are displayed and elaborated.
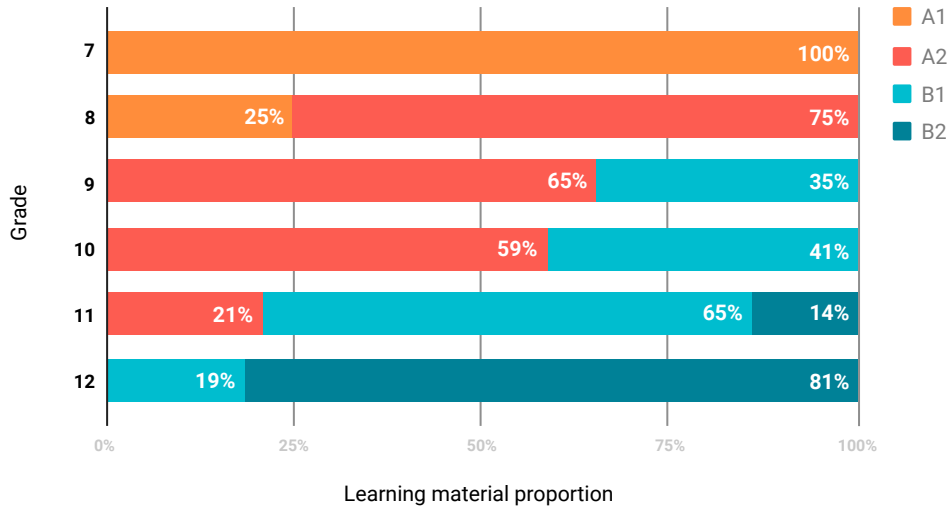

Exhibit 4: Detailed proportions of CEFR level competence descriptors

All of the competence indicators and grammar components taught in the Grade 7 syllabus are equivalent with the A1 level of the CEFR level. In this stage, the students are expected to be able to provide personal information as well as participate in basic factual conversations.

Of all the taught materials stated in the Grade 8 syllabus, 75% of the lessons fall into the A2 category. The students in this stage should be capable of exchanging simple direct information and describe aspects of her/his background, and surroundings. However, there are still 25% of Grade 8 lesson component is A1 level of grammar such as adverbs of frequency, prepositions of place, and unconditional adjectives.

In the Grade 9 syllabus, 65% of the competence descriptors are equivalent to A2 level. The students are expected to be able to understand complete sentences and frequently used expression through the materials given in Grade 9 such as brand information and procedural text. A fewer amount, about 35%of B1 level materials begin to be introduced, such as passive voice and information report.

Although it continues to decrease, the A2 level of the materials within the Grade 10 still have a high portion of percentage, as much as 59%. Mostly are the grammatical materials such as possessive pronouns, modals, and past continuous tense. The rest of 41% lesson component are B1 level writing materials including descriptive, announcement, recount, and narrative text.

Most of the the materials in Grade 11 such as analytical exposition text, and formal invitation letter are categorized in B1 level because it requires students to produce simple and coherent text based on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. The students should also demonstrate comprehension on a particular subject. However, at the end of the syllabus, the students should be able to produce explanation texts. This particular rubric is categorized in B2 level because it requires the capability to express cause and effect, and contrast in a technical discussion.

For Grade 12, 81% of the materials are equivalent to the B2 level. The writing materials included such as news item text and application letter are set to encourage the students to be able to produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects. The rest of the materials are categorized in B1 level such as giving and requesting a favor and advice.

Conclusion

Although it is clear that the Indonesian English curriculum does not follow CEFR framework, the DOC covers all the concepts being taught in the Indonesian national curriculum based on the explanation above. This means that Solve Education!'s syllabus for English applied on DOC can be used as a complementary teaching method for junior to senior high schools in Indonesia. Not only can it help the students to learn better, DOC also allows the students to access more advanced English learning content which is necessary for basic and further education, as well as for entering the job market.

To conclude, this study was conducted to assess the alignment of Solve Education!'s syllabus for English, delivered in the form of a game app, with the Indonesian National syllabus for English. Through the identification and categorization of the learning materials in the Indonesian National syllabus, we found that these materials were within the range of levels A1-B2 of the CEFR framework. We therefore conclude that both Solve Education!'s syllabus and the Indonesian National syllabus for English are compatible with one another

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Appendix 1

Pre A
Demonstrate an understanding of basic communication of using predictability and fundamental concepts of the English phonological processing system. Listening: Able to understand discourse using phonemic awareness and one's own prior knowledge Reading: ● Possess simple phonological awareness ● Able to decode words using the English ● Ability to recognise and understand most Speaking: ● Pronounce English phonetics ● Reply with a one-word answer Writing: Able to spell simple words and English names

A 1
Capable of understanding familiar everyday words and expressions as well as very basic phrases with the purpose of satisfying concrete type needs. Can introduce him/herself and others as well as answer and ask personal questions such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she possess. Can interact in a simple manner given the other person talks slowly and clearly and is willing to help. Listening : Keep up with basic instructions. Reading : Interpret basic information. Speaking : Participate in basic factual conversations. Writing : Write an informal request, instructional text, make a list.

A 2

Capable of understanding complete sentences and frequently used expressions (e.g. personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can exchange simple and direct information to communicate familiar and routine matters. Can describe aspects of his/her background, surroundings and issues in areas of immediate basic needs in simple terms.

Listening: Locate simple opinions or requirements in a familiar context.

Reading: Identify straightforward information on familiar matters.

Speaking: Express simple opinions in a familiar context and immediate the usage of the colloquial structure.

Writing: Write a formal request or leave a simple message giving information.

B 1

Capable of understanding the main points of clear, standard input on familiar matters encountered in everyday situations such as work, school and leisure activities. Is able to deal with most circumstances that arise when travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple and coherent text based on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Is able to describe personal experiences, events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions as well as briefly give reasons and explanations for their opinions and plans.

Listening: Summarise selected opinions on cultural matters and understand instructions.

Reading: Identify routine information or the gist of non-routine information in a familiar area.

Speaking: Express selected opinions on cultural matters.

Writing: Write an informative passage.

B 2

Capable of understanding the main points of complex texts or speech arising from both concrete and abstract concepts, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Is able to interact fluidly with native speakers with a degree of fluency and spontaneity. Can produce clear and detailed texts while capable of evaluating and explaining their viewpoints on various issues.

Listening: Follow and keep up with conversations.

Reading: Assess texts for relevant information and understand detailed instructions or advice.

Speaking: Plan and talk and converse interactively.

Writing: Produce clear, detailed short text on a wide range of subjects.

C 1

Capable of understanding a broad range of demanding, longer texts, including the ability to draw out implicit or nuanced meanings. Possess the ability to express him/herself fluently, spontaneously and use the language flexibly in a social, academic and professional context. Can produce clear, well structured and detailed text on complex subjects as well as showing clear evidence of control in use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

Listening: Understand, follow and keep up with formal and non-formal conversations and discussions.

Reading: Assess appropriacy of materials and understand demanding texts with implicit meaning.

Speaking: Contribute effectively to formal and informal conversations and discussions.

Writing:
Draft a set of straightforward instructions
Write a long text with fluency, accuracy and cohesion in discourse

Appendix 2

Grade 7 materials

Written and spoken interaction of giving and requesting information related to:

- Personal information
- Name of days, months, time of the day, numerical time
- Name, number, characteristics, behavior/action/function, and description of people, animals, things

Grammar:
- Preposition of time
- Preposition of location
- Possessive adjectives
- Simple present tense
- Demonstrative adject
- Declarative and interrogative sentences

Grade 8 materials

Written and spoken interaction of giving and requesting information related to:

- The capability and willingness to do an action
- Necessity, prohibition, and advice
- Ordering, inviting, and asking permission
- Location of a person, animal, or thing

Grammar:
- Modals: can, will, must, have to, should
- Uncountable adjectives, place prepositions
- Adverbs of frequency
- Present continuous tense
- Simple past tense
- Comparative and superlative adjectives
- Sequence adverbs

Grade 9 materials

Written and spoken interactions of:
- Wishes, prayers, and felicitations
- Giving and requesting information related to the intent or agreement of an action/event
- Procedural text, recipes and manuals
- Fairy tales
- Information report on the topics of other school subjects

Grammar:
- Imperative sentences
- Present perfect tense
- Past continuous tense
- Passive voice
- Connecting words: when, while, since, for etc.
- Connecting words: first, next, then, finally etc.

Grade 10 materials

- Identify the generic structure and grammar within:
  - Descriptive text
  - Announcement text
  - Recount text
  - Narrative text
- Giving and requesting written and spoken information of related past events

Grammar:
- Felicitation: congratulations, I hope so, etc.
- Modals: be going to, would like to
- Intensifiers: quite, very, extremely
- Declarative and interrogative sentence in simple past tense and present perfect tense
- Past continuous tense

Grade 11 materials

- Identify the generic structure and grammar within formal invitation letter, analytical exposition text, personal letter, explanation text

- Written and spoken interaction related to giving and requesting information: advice and offering it, an opinion, in passive voice, cause and effect

Grammar:
- Modals: Should, can
- Expressing opinion phrases
- Adverbs: first, then, following, finally
- Conjunctions of cause: therefore, consequently, based on the arguments
- Declarative and interrogative sentence in passive voice
- Cause and effect phrases

Grade 12 materials

- Identify the generic structure and grammar within application letter, caption, news item text, procedural text

- Written and spoken transactional interaction of:
  - Giving and requesting a favor
  - Conditional sentences with imperative

Grammar:
- Offering phrases: May I, Would you like, etc
- Passive sentence
- Direct and reported speech
- Articles
- Direct and indirect quotation
- Prepositions
- Conditional IF with imperative