

## English Core Competencies, Basic Competencies, and Assessment for Junior High School in Curriculum 2013; Between Facts and Hopes

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### Abstract

This paper focuses on some problems faced by Junior High School English Targeted teachers concerning with the content, formulation, and the order of Core Competencies (known as KI) and Basic Competencies (known as KD) and the assessment in K '13 (known as K'13). The material in K '13 is regarded as being arranged in balance covering the student's attitude, knowledge, and skills competencies stressing on language skills as a means of communication to convey ideas and knowledge. Based on the K '13 implementation mentoring, 13 out of 15 teachers (87%) interpret the Core and Basic Competencies differently and most tend to be unclear. This happened due to the formulation, content, and order of the KIs/KDs which were illogical, in contrary to mind mapping, and confusing the Targeted teachers. Moreover, the assessment system, especially attitude assessments are too complicated.

**Keywords:** *Core Competencies/Basic Competencies and assessment in K '13, revision of the formulation, content, order of core competencies and basic competencies, and the simplification of attitude assessment*

### Abstrak

Makalah ini membahas masalah yang dihadapi oleh para guru sasaran mata pelajaran Bahasa Inggris SMP Kota Semarang yang kesulitan dalam memahami konten, rumusan, dan susunan dalam Kompetensi Inti (KI), Kompetensi Dasar (KD) dan penilaian dalam Kurikulum 2013 (K'13). Kurikulum 2013 mengklaim bahwa materi di dalamnya disusun seimbang yang mencakup sikap, pengetahuan, dan ketrampilan dan menekankan kompetensi berbahasa sebagai alat komunikasi untuk menyampaikan gagasan dan pengetahuan. Berdasarkan hasil pendampingan implementasi Kurikulum 2013 yang dilakukan penulis, 13 dari 15 guru (87%) menafsirkan KI/KD secara berbeda dan sebagian besar belum jelas arahnya. Hal ini terjadi karena rumusan, konten, dan susunan KD sangat tidak logis, tidak mengikuti peta konsep/pemikiran anak, dan membingungkan guru.

**Kata kunci:** *KI/KD, penilaian sikap, pembenahan rumusan, konten, dan susunan KD, penyederhanaan penilaian sikap.*

## **Introduction**

Curriculum is all the subjects taught at educational institutions (Kamus Bahasa Indonesia, 2008). The term curriculum is used to refer to the overall plan or design for a course and how the content for a course is transformed into a blueprint for teaching and learning which enables the desired learning outcomes to be achieved (Richards, J.C., 2013).

The course setting is tailored to the circumstances and the ability of each level of education in the implementation of the education and employment needs. Length of time in the curriculum is usually adjusted with the intent and purpose of the educational system implemented. The curriculum is intended to be directed towards education and the intended purpose in learning activities as a whole.

The community needs are always changing. To that end, the educational curriculum should match the needs of the community so that the curriculum needs reforming in accordance with the changing needs of society. The curriculum which is easily understood by teachers with clear formulations, the material in the core competencies (KIs) and the basic competencies (KDs) which support each other and consecutively, not too complicated for the assessment will greatly assist teachers in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning.

As the curriculum is intended to direct education towards the overall direction and purpose, the curriculum should provide a clear description and be easily understood by the teachers as the spearhead of education.

Based on the results of the implementation of K '13 mentoring by the writer in 15 public and private junior high schools in Semarang, nearly 87% of teachers still do not understand about the content, formulation, the order of KIs/KDs and assessment in K '13. Some teachers misinterpret KD formulations so that they choose wrong teaching materials. By teaching the wrong materials, they will assess wrongly. The reasons are that the KIs/KDs written in confusing words or phrases, the KDs which are illogical, overlapping, jumping, and too narrow, make the teachers meet difficulties in preparing, implementing, and evaluating learning. As a result, teachers teach only what they understand. This would be detrimental to students. The improvement of the content, formulation, and the order of KIs/KDs and the simplification of the assessment, especially attitude assessment will ease teachers to execute their main duties.

This paper aims at changing of the content, formulation, and the order of KIs/KDs and simplification of the assessment, especially attitude assessment to make teachers easier to plan, implement, and evaluate learning.

Richards (2013) proposed that before we can teach a language, we need to decide what linguistic content to teach. Once content has been selected, it then needs to be organized into teachable and learnable units as well as arranged in a rational sequence. This statement is clear enough to understand that if curriculum content and formulation confuse teachers, it's impossible for them to implement them correctly. Confused teachers forced to implement wrong formulation content will fail to execute the process and assessment of learning. At the end, overall education will fail.

Good tests are those that do the job they are designed to do and which convince the people taking and marking them that they work. Good tests also have a positive rather than a negative effect on both students and teachers (Harmer, 2007). How can teachers design a good and proper test if they misunderstand the content stated in the basic competencies? Furthermore, he added that tests have a powerful effect on student motivation. Students often work a lot harder than normal when there is a test or examination in sight. Students can be greatly encouraged by success in test, or, conversely demotivated by doing badly (Harmer, 2007). A serious test design by teachers will be useless when it doesn't test the proper competencies just because teachers misunderstand the content and formulation in KIs/KDs. What do the students work hard for?

## **Discussion**

Some changing elements in K '13 are Output Competencies Standards (known as SKL), Process Standard (known as Standar Proses), Content Standards (known as Standar Isi), and Assessment Standards (known as Standar Penilaian). In this paper, the writer focuses the problem only on changes of Content and Assessment Standards, especially in English for Junior High School. The following paragraphs discuss them one by one.

### **Content standard**

Changes in Content Standard are composed of materials that include a balance among attitude, knowledge, and skills competencies. This is in contrast with the previous curriculum which only emphasizes on knowledge and skills. K '13 claims that a fundamental change is the material that is taught emphasizing on language skill competencies as communication tools to convey ideas and knowledge in learners' daily lives.

Competencies in K '13 are set forth in KI 1 (Spiritual Competencies), KI 2 (Social Competencies), KI 3 (Knowledge Competencies), and KI 4 (Skills Competencies). Language skill competencies cover the skill competencies to listen, speak, read, and write. Competencies 1 and 2 are applied to all subjects at the same level of education, while competencies 3 and 4 are different for each subject and each level.

In language learning, KI 3 only covers grammar and vocabulary, while KI 4 includes skill competencies, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The separation of KI 3 and 4 looks very unnatural in language learning. Teachers may combine KD 3 and KD 4 in learning process, but when they come to the assessment, teachers have difficulty choosing the indicators to be tested. If we are going to evaluate the competencies of learners' knowledge, then we will only involve grammar and vocabulary in isolation. More fatal, in the midterm and end of the semester, or end of the year assessment, skill competencies (KI 4) are not tested. Is it possible only testing grammar and vocabulary in such assessment? Some teachers, including the writer, break the rule in this case. Skill competencies, especially reading skill competency is also tested here. Let's have a look at the following example problems taken from the test item in The First Mid Term Test for grade VII:

*Read the text and answer the questions below it.*



*Dear friends, I just want to say ....*

*Believe me; I love you now and forever, not only on February 14.*

*Olivia.*

1. *This is a kind of ... card.*

- A. *season greeting*
- B. *birthday greeting*
- C. *graduation greeting*
- D. *achievement greeting*

2. *Olivia ... her friends.*

- A. *hates*
- B. *loves*
- C. *dislikes*
- D. *doesn't love*

Question 1 asks about the general description of a short functional text which includes reading comprehension skills, while question 2 tests vocabulary which belongs to knowledge competencies. Note the opinion of a friend as posted on Facebook below:



(<http://gg.gg/3rynv>)

She shared her opinion to test the skill competencies in end year assessment by redesigning the test guideline although she knows it breaks the rule.

Regardless of the separation between KD 3 and 4, KD 4 is not explicitly included when students learn to listen, speak, read, and write. Notice one example of skill competencies as outlined in KD 4.3 English for Junior High School grade VII as follows:

*Menyusun teks lisan dan tulis untuk menyatakan dan menanyakan nama hari, bulan, nama waktu dalam hari, waktu dalam bentuk angka, tanggal, dan tahun, dengan unsur kebahasaan yang benar dan sesuai konteks.*

English translation:

Developing oral and written texts to express and ask for the name of the day, the month, the name of the time of day, time in the form of numbers, date, and year, with the correct linguistic elements and in context.



Where can we find a section which explicitly asks the teacher to teach language skill competencies/skills of listening, speaking, and reading to students except writing? If we look at the KD formulation above, students are only required to be able to compose (write) oral and written texts to express and ask for the name of the day, the month, the name of time of the day, time in the form of numbers, date, and year, with linguistic elements correctly in context. There is no demand on the learners to have a conversation, listening, and reading. Again a friend of mine posted on Facebook as follows:

(<http://gg.gg/3rynv>)

She complained for being unsuccessful to find speaking and writing skills when discussing narrative texts either in grade 8 or 9 in K '13.

Compare these KDs found in Curriculum 2016 (as translated below).

8.2 (Listening)

Responding to the meaning in the very simple monologue accurately, fluently, and acceptably to interact with the immediate environment in the form of descriptive and procedure texts.

#### 10.2 (Speaking)

Expressing the meaning in a very simple short monologue to use spoken language variety accurately, fluently, and acceptably to interact with the immediate environment in the form of descriptive and procedure texts.

#### 11. (Reading)

Reading aloud meaningfully very simple and short functional text and short essay in the form of descriptive and procedure texts with acceptable pronunciation, stressing and intonation.

#### 12. (Writing)

Expressing the meaning and rhetorical stages of a very simple, short essay by using a variety of written language accurately, fluently and acceptably to interact with the immediate environment in the form of descriptive and procedure texts.

From the above data, it is clear that in the 2006 Curriculum, students learn certain material formulated comprehensively so that they can get an idea how to use it directly in everyday life. KIs/KDs formulator seem to assume that teachers have to be smart in interpreting the formulation of KDs on their own.

Agustien (2014) put forward that the main purpose of language learning is to develop the ability to communicate (Communicative Competencies/CC) and the core of the ability to communicate is a discourse competency. Communicating requires oral and written skills. If the KD formula is confusing teachers, then there is a possibility teacher only deliver one cycle only, namely oral or written.

Grouping the subject matter in English for grade VII written in KDs is less logical. Note KD 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 English grade VII in sequence below:

Understanding the social function, the structure of the text, and linguistic elements in the expression of greeting, leave taking, acknowledgments, and apology, and the response, in accordance with the context of its use.

Understanding the social function, the structure of the text, and linguistic elements on the introduction of self-expression, as well as the response, greeting, leave taking, acknowledgments, and apology, and the response, in accordance with the context of its use.

Understanding the social function, the structure of the text, and linguistic elements of text for stating and asking the name of the day, the month, the name of the time of day, time in the form of numbers, date, and year.

In KD 3.1, one of the subject matters is greeting. This KD is given at the beginning of the meeting between the teachers and learners, and among learners. Logically, in the first meeting, other than saying hello, someone will introduce themselves before speaking at length. K '13 recommends that teachers provide authentic assessment (Assessment Standard, Krikulum 2013). Authentic assessment would be perfect if it begins with authentic learning. However, based on the above basic competencies, 'introduction' will be discussed in week 4, after the students know each other.

Other than saying 'Hi, Hello', people greet others in English saying 'Good morning, Good noon, Good afternoon, and Good evening'. It is a material 'names of time in the day and time in the form of number' support greeting. However, these materials belong to KD 3.3 which is taught in about the 6<sup>th</sup> week ahead. It's too far and illogical. To say 'Good morning' for example, students should know when the time limit for morning, noon, afternoon, or evening, so that the material 'names of time in the day and time in the form of number' support greeting. Helena (2014) rewrites that teaching to communicate is teaching how to connect ideas logically. Illogical subject matters positioning will make students think a bit harder.

Another problem is English KDs for grade VII is not sequential. Note KD 3.7 to KD 3:10 sequentially as follows:

Understanding the social function, the structure of the text, and linguistic elements in the text and ask to declare **the nature** of people, animals, objects according to the context of its use.

Understanding the social function, the structure of the text, and linguistic elements in texts to express and ask **behavior/action/ function** of people, animals, objects, according to the context of its use.

Understanding the social function, the structure of the text, and linguistic elements of text instruction, the sign or signs (short notice), warning signs (warning/caution), according to the context of its use.

Understanding the social function, the structure of the text, and linguistic elements of descriptive text stating and asking about descriptions of people, animals, and objects, very short and simple, according to the context of its use.

The subject matter at KD 3.7, 3.8, and 3:10 are people, animals, and objects, but the subject matter at KD 3.9 is about instruction, notice or signs and warnings that do not support the

discussion of KD 3.7, 3.8, and 3.10. It is confusing and messed up learner's maps of thinking (mind mapping). Buzan (2010) wrote "Let the mind map that clearly, using a cascading hierarchy, a clear sequence to reach up to the very tip of the branches." Students should be given opportunities to think coherently and clearly. If KDs are interrupted by another material and the material that is in need of understanding the material have been learned four weeks earlier, we can be sure the learners had forgotten and have to start over from the beginning what it takes to learn KD 3.10. In addition to a waste of time, learners will find it hard to readjust.

Celce-Murcia, et al. (1995) in Agustien (2014) explains that the ability of discourse is "choice, sequence, word order, structure, and text of speech to achieve coherent oral and written texts". So besides a language KD should formulate clear language skills, students are expected to choose a similar word, as well as use and arrange them coherently.

In addition, most of the KDs are drafted too narrowly. A KD only contains a grammar, not a text. Consider the example of KD 3.2 English for grade VIII as follows:

Applying text structures and linguistic elements to carry out a social function for declaring and asking about the ability and willingness to perform an action, according to the context of its use.

If we simplify this KD, roughly the intention is to ask the students to learn one of the 32 helping verbs, that is CAN separately, not in the context. The time available in a semester is too valuable just to learn one helping verb in one KD. In addition to spending time, a helping verb can be addressed in the discussion of certain texts, such as a descriptive text, a recount text, a narrative text, and others to be more contextual and easier to remember and understand by learners. When we describe certain people, we can mention that the person could be/do something. For example, if we describe Raditya Dika, we can describe that he can do the standup comedy, write a book, play movies, and others. Suppose we describe certain animals, such as someone's parrots, we can say that the bird could say hello, Aassalamu'alaikum, etc. So it does not have to put one of the 32 helping verbs to be understood by learners in a KD.

Grammar learned separately will not be easy to memorize. Nunan (1998) writes:

"Grammar which is taught separately through exercise repeatedly without giving an opportunity to students to try it in context will make it difficult for learners to use because learners are not introduced in the relationship between form, meaning, and use."

Similarly, by studying grammar separately, learners will probably get a perfect score in the written assessment, but will have difficulty in using it outside the classroom.

Another problem in K '13 is, KD formulation in English is confusing. Note KD 3.3 English for grade VIII as follows:

Applying text structures and linguistic elements to carry out the social function of expression to give instruction, encourage, prohibit, ask for permission, as well as the way to respond, in accordance with the context of its use.

The word 'apply', if we look at the Bloom's Taxonomy, belongs to skills not knowledge competency. If we understand the KD as it is, teachers will regard 'applying' as language skill other than language knowledge. Note the passage of 'The New Bloom's Taxonomy' which is updated by Anderson, Krathwohl and summarized by Elizabeth Dalton (2003) the following:

Table 1. The learning objectives based on the revised Bloom's Taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl.

	Remembering	Understanding	Applying	Analyzing	Evaluating	Creating
Facts	Remembering facts	Understanding facts	Applying facts	Analyzing using facts, concepts, and procedures	Evaluating using facts, concepts, and procedures	Creating using facts, concepts, and procedures
Concepts	Remembering concepts	Understanding concepts	Applying concepts			
Procedures	Remembering procedures	Understanding procedures	Applying procedures			
Meta cognitive	Remembering the strategy of meta cognitive	The strategy of meta cognitive	Applying the strategy of meta cognitive	Analyzing the strategy of meta cognitive	Evaluating the strategy of meta cognitive	Creating the strategy of meta cognitive
	Knowledge		Skills	Competencies		

From the table above, it is clear that applying is a skill competency. Some teachers are not sure to choose the operational verbs fitting to the KD.

### Assessment Standard

As discussed above, knowledge and skill competencies which are separated makes teachers difficult to carry out the assessment. Attitude competencies assessment burdens teachers a lot. Attitude competencies which are assessed in a very detailed and complicated way by observation, self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher's journal is a bit ridiculous. Teachers should plan the assessment of attitude, knowledge, and skill competencies including any technique that will be used, assessment indicators, assessment instruments, assessment rubrics and assessment guidelines

at the beginning of semester, or minimum before a certain KD is carried out. The problems do not end at the planning step. It's also difficult for teachers to note all students attitude during the learning process. Unlike teaching in Indonesia, teaching in other countries always involves team teaching. When a teacher is facilitating the learners during the learning process, another teacher takes notes on learners' attitude. This way of teaching will lessen the teachers' burden in assessing the learners' attitude. To know more about assessment planning, here is the example of it:

**Attitude Competencies Assessment Planning  
 K.D. 3.1 and 4.1**

- Subject : English  
 Grade/Semester : VII \_\_\_\_\_/1  
 Theme : Various issues related to the interaction between teachers and learners during the learning process, inside and outside of the classroom that involves speech acts greeting, leave taking, gratitude, and apologies  
 Main material : Spoken text of greeting, leave taking, gratitude, and apologies  
 Attitude : 1. Respecting and appreciating the grace of God.  
                   2. Politeness.  
                   3. Caring.  
                   4. Self-confident

Assessment techniques	Meeting			Remark
	1	2	3	
Observation **)	Ö	Ö	Ö	• The observation is not done at every meeting, but any meeting to get the learners attitude as stated in the indicators.
Self-assessment ***)	-	-	Ö	
Peer assessment ****)	-	-	-	
Teacher journal*****)	Ö	Ö	Ö	

**The resume of attitude assessment for K.D. 3.1 dan 4.1**

No.	Attitude	Assessment techniques											
		Observasion			Self-assessment			Peer assessment			Teacher's journal		
		1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3

1.	Respecting and appreciating the grace of God.	Ö	Ö	Ö	-	-	Ö	-	-	-	Ö	Ö	Ö
2.	Polite	Ö	Ö	Ö	-	-	Ö	-	-	-	Ö	Ö	Ö
3.	Caring	Ö	Ö	Ö	-	-	Ö	-	-	-	Ö	Ö	Ö
4.	Self confident	Ö	Ö	Ö	-	-	Ö	-	-	-	Ö	Ö	Ö

All this assessment could have been done by the teachers, despite having to bother. All that work would be in vain when the school has determined that every student should be given score B for the competencies of his attitude, despite the behavior and attitude. This condition is in fact precisely developing dishonest attitude to the teacher. Teachers will write the students' attitude competencies assessment records only for a formality.

## Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the KIs/KDs and English assessment, especially attitude assessment for Junior High School in K '13 is very confusing teachers. For that reason, there needs to be improvement on formulation, content, and the order of KIs/KDs and attitude assessment. Formulate the KDs simply that all teachers interpret similarly with others. Mind the discussion of a helping verb in a KD. A KD should be developed based on a text. The rest (of language competencies) will appear when discussing the text. Arrange the KDs in line with the learners and teachers mind map to ease both in understanding the content, so that teachers can design a text instrument correctly.

Teachers should not be necessary to assess the learner's attitude in detail and very complicated way because the school has set learners attitudes score, i.e. at least B.

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