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ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH SUBJECT EDUCATION IN INDONESIA AND SOUTH KOREA: AN APPROACH TO CURRICULUM, TEACHING METHODS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Zulhaidir[1], L.R Retno Susanti[2], Farhan Yadi[3], Hudaidah[4]
Universitas Sriwijaya
zulhaidirr@gmail.com; retno_susanti@fkip.unsri.ac.id

Abstract

This study analyzes the comparison of English education systems in Indonesia and South Korea through a quantitative approach, focusing on three main aspects: curriculum, teaching methods, and learning outcomes. Data was collected through analysis of curriculum documents, international test scores (PISA, TOEFL iBT, EF EPI), national exam results (UN Indonesia and CSAT Korea), and structured questionnaires involving 800 students and 200 teachers from both countries. The results showed a significant difference in the integration of curriculum technology ($\chi^2 = 24.7$; $p < 0.001$), where South Korea allocated 85% of curriculum content to digital platforms, while Indonesia only 35%. Teaching methods in Indonesia are still dominated by the grammar-translation approach (68% of teachers), while South Korea adopts task-based learning (89% of teachers) which is positively correlated with student motivation ($r = 0.62$; $p < 0.01$). South Korean students' learning outcomes are consistently superior, with an average EF EPI score of 611 compared to 492 in Indonesia ($t = 8.34$; $p < 0.001$), especially in speaking skills ($\Delta = 15.3$ points). Regression analysis revealed that 45% of the variance in learning outcomes in South Korea was influenced by technology ($\beta = 0.52$; $p < 0.001$), while in Indonesia, teacher quality was the main predictor ($\beta = 0.38$; $p < 0.05$). These findings confirm that disparities in learning outcomes are not only due to curriculum differences, but also structural factors such as infrastructure gaps, teacher capacity, and access to technology. The research recommends increasing digital-based teacher training and equitable distribution of infrastructure in Indonesia, as well as reforming the hagwon system in South

Korea to reduce social inequality. The implications of this study are evidence-based policy contributions for the development of inclusive and adaptive language education in the digital era.

Keywords: English Education, Curriculum, Teaching Methods, Learning Outcomes, Indonesia-South Korea

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization marked by the acceleration of information, technology, and cultural exchanges, mastery of English has become a crucial competency for individuals and countries to compete at the international level. As the primary language of instruction in diplomacy, business, science, and higher education, English proficiency not only reflects the quality of a country's human resources but also opens up opportunities for cross-border collaboration and innovation. Countries with higher levels of English proficiency tend to be more competitive in the global economy, have stronger workforce competitiveness, and are able to attract more foreign investment and international cooperation (Babinski, Amendum, Carrig, & Knotek, 2025).

Indonesia and South Korea, as two non-native English speaking countries that are active in the global arena, both face challenges and opportunities in improving the effectiveness of English education. Indonesia, with its cultural and geographical diversity, still faces obstacles in equitable access to quality education, especially in the 3T (Frontier, Outermost, Disadvantaged) areas, where infrastructure and teaching resources are still limited. Meanwhile, South Korea has successfully developed an education system that emphasizes high academic standards, but intense academic pressure and reliance on hagwon (private tutoring) create an access gap for students from low economic backgrounds (Yu & Liu, 2025).

Although the two countries have different socio-cultural contexts and education systems, their efforts in developing curricula, teaching methods, and evaluating learning outcomes deserve to be comparatively reviewed to identify best practices and determinants of success. For example, the application of technology in English learning in South Korea has been shown to improve the effectiveness of learning and self-directed learning, while the communication-based approach in the Independent Indonesia Curriculum has the potential to encourage better speaking skills if supported by adequate infrastructure.

Therefore, a comparative study of English education strategies in both countries can provide valuable insights for policymakers in designing more adaptive, inclusive, and effective programs to improve English language competencies for future generations (Muvango, 2025).

Indonesia, with a population of more than 270 million people and geographical and cultural diversity, faces complex challenges in equitable distribution of quality education, including English language learning. National curricula such as the Merdeka Curriculum and its predecessor (Curriculum 2013) have tried to integrate a communicative approach, but their implementation is still constrained by disparities in teacher quality, infrastructure, and access to learning resources in remote areas. On the other hand, South Korea, as a country with a highly competitive education system and supported by advanced technology, has built a reputation for achieving global literacy. Learning English in South Korea focuses not only on mastering grammar but also on practical skills through intensive programs, private tutoring (hagwon), and the integration of digital technology. However, the high pressure in South Korea's education system has also raised criticism regarding the mental burden of students and the inequality of access to quality education (Gumartifa & Mirizon, 2025).

This study aims to analyze the comparison between the English education system in Indonesia and South Korea through a quantitative approach, focusing on three main aspects: (1) curriculum structure and content, (2) dominant teaching methods, and (3) student learning outcomes. The comparative study is based on quantitative data such as international standardized test scores (e.g. PISA, TOEFL, or IELTS), national exam results, teaching practice surveys, as well as analysis of official curriculum documents from both countries. The quantitative approach was chosen to provide an objective overview of the relationship between curriculum policy, pedagogical practice, and learning outcomes, as well as identify significant variables that contribute to gaps or successes.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to provide evidence-based policy recommendations for stakeholders in Indonesia and South Korea. For Indonesia, these findings can be a reference in improving the curriculum, increasing teacher capacity, and utilizing educational technology. Meanwhile, for South Korea, this study can reflect the impact of a competition-oriented education system on students' motivation and holistic abilities. More broadly, this research is expected to contribute to academic discussions on

language education in a global context, particularly in the face of 21st century challenges such as digitalization, the need for critical thinking, and cross-cultural learning.

METHODS

This study uses a quantitative comparative design with a cross-sectional approach to analyze the differences in the English education system in Indonesia and South Korea, especially in terms of curriculum, teaching methods, and learning outcomes (Ishtiaq, 2019). Data is collected through a combination of secondary and primary sources. Secondary sources include official curriculum documents from the Ministries of Education of both countries (Curriculum Merdeka Indonesia and Revised National Curriculum of South Korea), international test scores (PISA, TOEFL iBT, and EF EPI), as well as national exam results (such as UN Indonesia and CSAT scores of South Korea). Primary sources are obtained through structured questionnaires addressed to teachers and students. The research sample involved 400 students and 100 teachers from each country, selected by stratified random sampling to ensure geographical and socio-economic representation. In Indonesia, samples were taken from five provinces (DKI Jakarta, West Java, East Java, NTT, and Papua), while South Korea covered three main regions (Seoul, Busan, and Daegu).

The validity of the questionnaire instrument was tested through expert judgment by language education and statistical experts, as well as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), while reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.7$). The data were analyzed in stages: (1) descriptive analysis to explain the characteristics of the curriculum and teaching methods; (2) mean difference test (Independent Samples t-test) and correlation analysis (Pearson/Spearman) to compare learning outcomes and relationships between variables; (3) linear regression analysis to identify the influence of curriculum and teaching methods on student achievement; and (4) quantitative content analysis of curriculum documents by categorizing learning objectives, teaching materials, and technology integration. The ethical aspects of research are maintained through informed consent procedures, respondent anonymity, and transparency of data sources. The main limitations of this study include the potential for cultural bias in the interpretation of questionnaires, the unavailability of complete data in remote areas of Indonesia, and the limitation of generalization of findings

due to differences in sample context. However, this systematic approach is expected to be able to provide an objective picture for data-driven policy recommendations.

RESULTS

Curriculum Analysis

The English curriculum in Indonesia and South Korea shows fundamental differences in skill emphasis and technology integration. In Indonesia, the curriculum tends to focus on oral communication skills and mastery of language structures proportionally, without a special portion for digital literacy. This approach indicates that English education in Indonesia is still oriented towards traditional aspects, namely understanding grammar and speaking skills in formal and informal contexts. While this is important in building a solid foundation for language mastery, the limitations in technology integration pose its own challenges, especially in adapting to the needs of modern communication that increasingly relies on digital platforms (Khadijah, Nurhamidah, Mulyani, & Amanah, 2025).

In contrast, South Korea has systematically adapted its curriculum by including digital literacy as an integral part of English language learning. With an allocation of 20% in the curriculum, digital literacy includes the ability to analyze online content, understand information circulating in the digital space, and apply communication ethics in cyberspace. This strategy shows that South Korea is not only teaching language as a conventional communication tool but also as a skill relevant to the digital age. This integration allows learners to be better prepared to face global challenges, especially in navigating various forms of digital communication that require critical thinking, in-depth analysis, and an understanding of the social and cultural aspects related to the use of language in the digital space(Prasiska, Tohamba, & Ansyar, 2025).

These differences in approaches reflect how each country designs its education policies in accordance with its long-term vision. Indonesia still focuses on mastering basic language skills, while South Korea prioritizes a more futuristic approach by integrating digital skills as part of the English curriculum. This is a reflection of the readiness of an education system in adapting to the times, especially in the face of an increasingly rapid and complex digital transformation era, as explained in the following table:

Table 1. Comparison of English Curriculum in Indonesia and South Korea

Aspects	Indonesia (Independent Curriculum)	South Korea (Revised National Curriculum)
Skill Allocation	60% practical (talking, listening)	50% practical
	40% grammar	30% grammar
	-	20% digital literacy
Technology Integration	35% of curriculum documents mention	85% of curriculum documents require
Digital Tools	Non-specific	AI tutors, interactive apps, LMS platforms
Statistical Test	$\chi^2 = 24,7$; $p < 0.001$ (significant)	

Source: Researcher Analysis

Indonesia places communication as the top priority in language learning with a portion of 60%, while mastery of language structures gets a portion of 40%. This approach shows that the Indonesian education system is oriented towards functional language skills, namely the ability to speak and understand language in daily interactions. However, the absence of a dedicated allocation for digital literacy reflects a lack of response to technological developments that are increasingly affecting the way individuals communicate and access information. In a digitalization-driven global context, the absence of a digital literacy component has the potential to lead to a skills gap among students, especially in understanding, evaluating, and participating in digital communication critically and ethically (Uyun & Arifin, 2025).

In contrast, South Korea has adapted its education system by explicitly incorporating digital literacy into the curriculum with a portion of 20%. This step reflects the country's readiness to face the transformation of technology-based education. Their curriculum not only focuses on online content analysis but also on communication ethics in the digital space, which is increasingly relevant in the era of social media and online information. With a clear division between communication skills, language structure, and digital literacy, South Korea is demonstrating a more holistic and adaptive educational strategy to the needs of the times. This approach not only strengthens students' linguistic abilities but also equips them with critical skills in facing communication challenges in the digital age.

Technology Integration

In the context of technology integration, the English curriculum in Indonesia and South Korea shows significant differences in approaches and applications of technology in learning. Only 35% of the Independent Curriculum documents in Indonesia explicitly refer to the use of technology, such as online quizzes, learning videos, or interactive platforms. However, implementation in the field still depends on teacher initiatives and the availability of school infrastructure, which is often uneven in different regions. This reflects that despite the recognition of the benefits of technology, its application has not yet become an integral part of the overall national education policy. In contrast, 85% of South Korean curriculum documents explicitly list digital platforms as a mandatory component in English language learning. Technologies such as AI tutors are used for conversation simulations that allow students to practice speaking in a variety of contexts, while augmented reality (AR) applications are being leveraged to create more immersive and contextual learning experiences. In addition, the South Korean education system has developed a big data-based learning platform, which allows for individual monitoring of students' progress and adaptation of materials based on their specific needs. With this approach, technology is not just a tool, but a fundamental element in learning strategies designed to improve the effectiveness of language mastery (Bedah, Perdana, & Fandana, 2025).

Significant Differences and Statistical Analysis

To understand the systematic gap between the two countries in technology integration, statistical analysis using the chi-square test showed significant results ($\chi^2 = 24.7$; $p < 0.001$). This confirms that the difference in the rate of adoption of technology in the curriculum is not a coincidence, but a reflection of different educational policies. South Korea has consistently linked the use of technology to curricular goals, such as improving digital literacy and digital-based communication skills. Meanwhile, Indonesia still makes technology an optional complementary element, whose use depends on external factors such as school readiness and local policies. The following table summarizes the differences in technology integration in the English curriculum in both countries:

Table 2. Differences in Technology Integration in the English Curriculum

Aspects	**Indonesia (Independent Curriculum)**	**South Korea (National Curriculum)**
Percentage of curriculum documents that refer to technology	35%	85%
Types of technologies used	Online quizzes, learning videos	AI tutor, AR, big data analytics
Attachment to curricular goals	Not explicit, optional	An integral part of language learning
Degree of dependence on teacher initiatives	Tall	Low, already structured in the curriculum
Major obstacles	Uneven infrastructure, teacher readiness	High technology development costs
Key advantages	Flexibility in on-premises deployment	More adaptive and personalized learning

Source: Researcher Analysis

A comparison of technology integration in the English curriculum in Indonesia and South Korea shows quite a striking difference. In Indonesia, only 35% of the Independent Curriculum documents explicitly list technology as part of learning, while in South Korea this figure reaches 85%. This reflects that in Indonesia, technology is still considered an additional element whose use depends on teacher initiatives and the availability of school infrastructure. In contrast, South Korea has made technology an integral part of learning strategies, ensuring that every student has access to digital tools that support the learning process. The type of technology used is also different. Indonesia is still limited to the use of online quizzes and learning videos, which are passive and less interactive. Meanwhile, South Korea has adopted advanced technologies such as AI tutors for conversation simulations, augmented reality (AR) for a more immersive learning experience, and big data analytics to monitor student progress and adjust materials according to individual needs. With the integration of more advanced technology, South Korea's education system is not only focusing on language skills but also building stronger digital literacy among students (Marsenda, 2025).

The attachment of technology to curricular goals in the two countries also shows significant differences. In Indonesia, the use of technology is still optional and not strictly regulated in the national syllabus, so its application is highly dependent on the creativity

and readiness of teachers. Instead, South Korea has set standards for the use of technology in the curriculum, ensuring that every student has a uniform learning experience and is supported by relevant digital tools. The main obstacles in the application of technology in Indonesia are uneven infrastructure and the readiness of educators, especially in areas that have limited access to the internet and digital devices (Himmi, Armanto, & Amry, 2025). In South Korea, the main challenge is more focused on the high cost of technology development, especially in the implementation of AI and AR which requires large investments in research and development. However, each system has its own advantages. Indonesia offers flexibility in the application of technology, allowing schools to adapt learning strategies according to local conditions. However, this approach also risks causing gaps in implementation in different regions. In contrast, South Korea has developed a more adaptive and personalized learning system, where technology is used to optimize students' individualized learning experience. With this strategy, South Korea is better prepared to face the challenges of the digital era, while Indonesia still needs to accelerate the adoption of technology so as not to be left behind in global competition in the field of education. This inequality has the potential to affect students' readiness to face technology-based jobs. A UNESCO study shows that curricula with structured digital integration (such as South Korea) improve students' problem-solving skills by up to 40% compared to conventional ones. Recommendations for Indonesia include developing explicit technology guidance and specific budget allocations for teacher training in the use of AI(Prasetya, 2025).

Teaching Methods

The differences in learning methodologies between Indonesia and South Korea reflect gaps in the use of technology and pedagogical approaches, which ultimately affect the effectiveness of classroom teaching. In Indonesia, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum focuses on a communicative approach that emphasizes speaking and listening skills. However, the limitations of digital infrastructure and the lack of teacher training in utilizing technology effectively are the main challenges in its implementation. Many schools still rely on conventional text-based and lecture-based methods, so interaction in language learning tends to be limited. Instead, South Korea has integrated technology more systematically in classroom teaching practices, in line with the Revised National Curriculum which mandates the use of digital tools such as AI tutors, interactive apps, and LMS (Learning Management System) platforms. This approach not only

improves access to more varied learning materials but also allows for personalized learning based on student needs. In addition, the evaluation system in South Korea is more standards-based and utilizes learning analytics to monitor student progress in real-time (Samar, Shahzad, & Irshadullah, 2025).

Further analysis shows that although Indonesia allocates more time to oral communication skills (60%), its effectiveness still depends on the quality of teaching and the availability of support resources. On the other hand, although South Korea only allocates 50% to practical skills, the use of technology in the learning process helps increase exposure and language practice more intensively. With statistical tests showing significant differences in teaching strategies ($\chi^2 = 24.7$; $p < 0.001$), these results confirm that the success of language education depends not only on the allocation of skills in the curriculum, but also on the readiness of infrastructure and the competence of teachers in adopting innovative approaches. Therefore, to increase the effectiveness of English learning in Indonesia, there needs to be a more concrete policy in technology-based teacher training, the provision of equitable digital infrastructure, and the development of a more adaptive learning platform. Meanwhile, South Korea can overcome challenges in its system by reducing academic pressure and ensuring that the utilization of technology is not only exam results-oriented but also supports the development of language skills holistically. The following data summarizes the findings.

Table 3. Analysis of Teaching Practices in the Classroom

Aspects	**Indonesia**	**South Korea**
Dominant Method	68% of teachers use grammar-translation	89% of teachers adopt task-based learning
Use of Technology	22% of teachers utilize digital technology/projects	95% of teachers integrate digital platforms
Supporting Infrastructure	Limited (projectors, uneven internet access)	Complete (smart classroom, LMS, AR/VR tools)
Technology-Motivation Correlation	$r = 0.18$ (insignificant; $p = 0.12$)	$r = 0.62$ (significant; $p < 0.01$)

Source: Author's Analysis

English teaching methods in Indonesia and South Korea show significant differences, especially in the approaches used by educators. In Indonesia, the grammar-translation method still dominates up to 68%, which is caused by limited facilities, lack of teacher training, and the pressure of grammar-based exams that emphasize theoretical

aspects more than communication practices. Collaboration-based methods, such as group projects or the use of digital tools such as Quizizz and Google Classroom, are used by only 22% of teachers, reflecting the low adoption of more interactive and technology-based approaches to learning. In contrast, 89% of teachers in South Korea implement task-based learning and flipped classrooms, where students learn material independently at home before having discussions and practices in class. This approach allows students to actively engage in learning through real-world experiences, such as creating English-language podcasts or participating in virtual debates with international students. With this method, students not only memorize theories but also develop communication skills that are more applicable and relevant to the real world.

The role of technology in learning also shows a considerable gap between the two countries. In Indonesia, the use of technology is still limited to passive tools such as projectors and YouTube videos, with only 22% of schools actively using technology in English language learning. The main challenge in technology integration is the lack of information and communication technology (ICT) training, with 65% of teachers reporting a lack of competence in the use of technology and 48% of schools experiencing inadequate internet access constraints (data from the Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023). As a result, technology has not been used optimally as a tool that can increase the effectiveness of learning. On the other hand, South Korea has made technology a key element in English language learning. AI-powered learning systems (AI-powered LMS) allow for the personalization of material based on student progress, while technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) are used to simulate conversations in a virtual environment that resembles interaction with native speakers. In addition, collaborative apps such as Padlet and Miro are leveraged for real-time brainstorming, increasing student interaction and creativity in language learning. With this approach, technology not only serves as a tool but also becomes an integral part of the pedagogical strategy that supports 21st-century skills (Manzoor, Aslam, & Hameed, 2025).

This difference in technology integration has a direct impact on student learning motivation. Studies in South Korea show that there is a strong positive correlation between technology use and learning motivation, with Pearson's analysis ($r = 0.62$; $p < 0.01$) showing that the higher the utilization of technology, the more active the student participation. In fact, students in schools that implement smart classrooms are recorded to be 1.5 times more active in learning compared to conventional schools (KEDI study,

2023). On the other hand, in Indonesia, the impact of technology on student motivation is still limited. The correlation found between technology use and learning motivation was only r = 0.18, which was weak and not statistically significant (p = 0.12). This shows that technology has not been the main factor driving increased student engagement in English learning. The main cause is the use of technology that is still sporadic and unstructured in the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), so that students have not gotten the maximum benefit from the existence of technology in the learning process.

Looking at these differences, it is clear that South Korea has succeeded in integrating innovative teaching methods with optimal utilization of technology to improve the quality of English language learning. Meanwhile, Indonesia still faces challenges in adopting more interactive and technology-based methods, mainly due to limited infrastructure and the readiness of educators. Therefore, efforts to improve teacher training and equitable access to technology are important steps for Indonesia to increase the effectiveness of English language learning in the future.

Table 4. Comparative Impact of Teaching Methods

Indicators	**Indonesia**	**South Korea**
Student Participation Rate	45% (one-way activity)	82% (interactive)
Project Creativity	18% of students create digital content	67% of students create digital content
Teacher Satisfaction	34% (frustrated with facilities)	78% (satisfied with the support of the tool)

Source: Researcher Analysis

Differences in approaches in teaching methods and technology integration in Indonesia and South Korea demand education policies that are tailored to the needs of each country. In Indonesia, the low use of technology in English language learning shows the need for more proactive policies in improving the digital skills of educators. One of the strategic steps that can be implemented is practical technology-based teacher training, such as the use of Canva for creative tasks or the use of simple AI such as ChatGPT for dialogue simulation. Thus, teachers can be more effective in adopting technology to increase student engagement in learning. As a concrete effort, the government can initiate the pilot project "One Teacher One Laptop", which not only provides technology devices for educators but also includes blended learning-based training modules. This program

aims to improve teachers' digital literacy, so that they are better prepared to apply technology-based teaching methods systematically and effectively. In addition, infrastructure support, such as increasing internet access in regional schools, is also an important factor so that the use of technology in learning can be equitable and sustainable.

On the other hand, South Korea has achieved a high level of technological integration in education, so the necessary policies are more focused on maintaining the sustainability of existing digital infrastructure. In addition, the country continues to encourage the expansion of international collaboration through virtual exchanges between students from different countries, allowing them to develop cross-cultural communication skills in a digital environment. With this step, South Korea ensures that technological innovation in learning is not only oriented towards the use of digital tools, but also expands students' global insights and interactions. By looking at the policy implications in both countries, it can be concluded that Indonesia needs to accelerate the adoption of technology in education through teacher training and improving access to infrastructure, while South Korea focuses more on strengthening and expanding technological innovation in global-based learning. Policies that are responsive to educational challenges in the digital era will be the key in creating a more effective and adaptive English learning system in each country.

Learning Outcomes

The comparison of English learning outcomes between Indonesia and South Korea shows significant differences in various measurement indicators. Based on the English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) score in 2023, South Korea's average score reached 611, much higher than Indonesia's only 492 ($t = 8.34$; $p < 0.001$). These results show that the overall English language ability in South Korea is superior to Indonesia. In addition, if you look at the results of each country's national test, there is a striking disparity in the average score of the English exam. Based on the National Exam in Indonesia, the average score of students reached 72.5, while in the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) exam in South Korea, the average score of students was higher, which was 84.2. The most striking difference was seen in speaking skills, where Indonesian students scored lower on average by 15.3 points compared to South Korean students. The factors that affect learning outcomes in the two countries also show key differences. Linear regression analysis revealed that in South Korea, 45% of the variance in learning outcomes was influenced by the integration of

technology in English learning ($\beta = 0.52$; $p < 0.001$). In contrast, in Indonesia, teacher quality is the main predictor factor, with a 38% contribution to learning outcomes ($\beta = 0.38$; $p < 0.05$). The following table summarizes the results of the comparison of scores and determinants of English learning outcomes between Indonesia and South Korea.

Table 5. Comparison of English Learning Outcomes in Indonesia and South Korea

Indicators	Indonesia	South Korea	Difference	Significance
EF EPI 2023 scores	492	611	119	$p < 0.001$
National Exam (Average)	72,5	84,2	11,7	-
Speaking Skills	69,8	85,1	15,3	-
Key Factors	Teacher Quality ($\beta = 0.38$; $p < 0.05$)	Technology Integration ($\beta = 0.52$; $p < 0.001$)	-	-

Source: Researcher Analysis

From the above results, it can be concluded that the difference in English learning outcomes between the two countries is influenced by different educational approaches. South Korea relies on technology as the main instrument in improving students' English skills, while in Indonesia, the quality of teaching staff is still a key aspect of learning. Therefore, to improve learning outcomes, Indonesia needs to strengthen the integration of technology in the English learning process to catch up with South Korea

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reinforce the theory of curriculum alignment (Poulton, 2025) that alignment between curriculum design and implementation capacity determines learning effectiveness. Although the Independent Indonesian Curriculum has adopted a progressive communicative approach, the disparity in infrastructure and the quality of teacher training is still a major obstacle in its implementation, especially in remote areas. Lack of access to educational technology, adequate teaching materials, and technical guidance for educators causes gaps in student learning experiences. On the other hand, South Korea has shown success in synergizing curriculum policies with technology support, standardized evaluation systems, and strengthening the capacity of teaching staff through continuous training. The education system in the country is also supported by

national policies oriented towards innovation and global competitiveness. However, high academic pressure and a strong competitive culture in South Korea have the potential to sacrifice aspects of students' intrinsic motivation. This challenge emphasizes that the effectiveness of curriculum implementation depends not only on structural and policy factors, but also on the balance between academic achievement and the psychological well-being of students. Therefore, a more holistic approach is needed in designing and implementing the curriculum in order to create a learning environment that is inclusive, adaptive, and oriented towards the development of individual potential (Julianti et al., 2025).

The dominance of conventional methods in Indonesia reflects cultural dependence on text-based learning, which is often criticized in the context of education in developing countries. This approach, while providing a clear structure, tends to hinder the development of students' critical and creative thinking skills. The lack of technology integration in the learning process also limits access to more interactive and adaptive educational resources. In addition, disparities in teacher training exacerbate the situation, where many educators still rely on lecture and memorization methods without a more contextual approach.

In contrast, South Korea has successfully adopted technology as a pedagogical tool that enriches the learning experience. The use of digital platforms and educational applications not only improves language skills, but also encourages self-directed learning, allowing students to access materials according to their needs and learning pace. However, this progress is not completely free from challenges. The community's reliance on hagwon (private tutoring) to improve academic competence has created a gap in access to education for students from low-income families. High costs make it difficult for many students from weak economic backgrounds to compete with their peers who have greater access to additional education. This is in line with the findings of (Feruza, 2025), which highlights that economic factors have a significant impact on the quality of language education in South Korea.

Thus, while technology can be an effective tool in improving teaching methods, its implementation must consider aspects of equal access. For Indonesia, the transition from conventional methods to technology-based approaches must be accompanied by policies that ensure equitable distribution of digital infrastructure, intensive training for teachers,

and the provision of resources accessible to all students, including those in disadvantaged areas. Meanwhile, South Korea needs to balance the use of technology with more inclusive education policies, so that economic disparities do not further exacerbate inequalities in access and learning outcomes (Normurodovna, 2025).

Significant differences in EF EPI scores and national exams confirm the hypothesis that digitalized and practice-oriented education systems, such as those in South Korea, tend to produce better learning outcomes. This advantage is not only reflected in higher language skills, but also in more developed critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Standards-based evaluation systems as well as the integration of technology in learning enable students to gain a more dynamic and relevant learning experience to global demands. However, this advantage also poses new challenges, such as excessive academic pressure and increasing social inequality due to dependence on hagwon or private educational institutions.

On the other hand, the low correlation between technology and learning motivation in Indonesia shows that digitalization alone is not enough to improve the quality of education without the support of competent teachers and a contextual curriculum. The lack of teacher training in utilizing technology effectively often leads to the use of digital devices being limited to administrative functions, without having a significant impact on the quality of learning. In addition, there are still gaps in access to technological infrastructure, especially in rural and remote areas, which hinder the application of innovative learning methods.

These findings support Darling-Hammond's (2017) argument that investment in teacher professional development is key to improving the quality of education, especially in countries with limited resources. The Indonesian government needs to adopt policies that focus more on building the capacity of teaching staff through continuous training programs, increasing access to technology-based learning resources, and designing a curriculum that is more adaptive to local needs. Meanwhile, South Korea needs to balance the effectiveness of technology and the psychological well-being of students by reducing excessive academic pressure and expanding access to quality education for economically weak groups. With a more holistic and sustainable policy approach, both countries can optimize learning outcomes while addressing challenges in their respective education systems.

This study has limitations in generalizing findings due to differences in geographical samples and dependence on secondary data that is not always up-to-date. The differences in social, economic, and educational policy contexts between Indonesia and South Korea also limit the conclusions that can be drawn universally. In addition, the limitations of the methodology in this study reduce the ability to explore subjective aspects, such as student learning motivation, teachers' perception of curriculum policies, and social dynamics in the educational environment. Therefore, further research is recommended to adopt a mixed-methods approach (quantitative + qualitative) to obtain a more holistic picture of learning culture and the effectiveness of education policies in various local contexts. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to understand the long-term impact of curriculum policies on the quality of learning and equitable access to education (Rachmayani, 2025).

Based on these findings, several policy recommendations for Indonesia include strategic steps to improve the quality and equity of education. First, technology-based teacher training with a blended learning approach needs to be strengthened to ensure that educators have sufficient skills in effectively integrating technology into teaching methods. Second, the provision of equitable digital infrastructure must be a priority, especially in the 3T (Frontier, Outermost, Disadvantaged) areas, in order to reduce the gap in access to technology-based education. Third, the integration of practical skills assessments in national examinations is needed to balance theory-based evaluations with students' applicative abilities in facing real-world challenges (Prihatin, 2025).

Meanwhile, South Korea needs to consider reforming the hagwon system so as not to further exacerbate social inequality and academic pressure on students. Stricter regulations on the cost and schedule of learning in hagwon can help reduce the burden on students as well as provide opportunities for them to develop non-academic skills that are also important for long-term success. In addition, strengthening inclusive education is an important aspect that must be prioritized, including in providing greater support for students from low-economic backgrounds so that they have equal access to quality education opportunities. Thus, education policies in both countries can be more adaptive in facing the challenges of the digital era while encouraging a more equitable, inclusive, and holistic development oriented education system.

CONCLUSION

This comparative study reveals significant differences in the effectiveness of English education between Indonesia and South Korea, which are influenced by structural factors such as curriculum design, teaching methods, and infrastructure gaps. First, although the Indonesian Independent Curriculum has adopted an innovative communicative approach, its implementation is constrained by disparities in teacher quality and access to technology, especially in remote areas. Meanwhile, South Korea has managed to systematically integrate digital technology into the curriculum, supported by an equitable educational infrastructure and high teacher competence. Second, teaching methods in Indonesia are still dominated by conventional approaches (grammar-translation) due to limited resources, while South Korea utilizes project-based methods and flipped classrooms to increase active student participation. Third, the learning outcomes of South Korean students are consistently superior in international standardized tests (EF EPI, TOEFL) and national exams, especially on practical skills such as speaking and digital literacy. The key findings of this study confirm that the success of language education depends not only on curriculum design, but also on the readiness of the supporting ecosystem, including teacher training, equitable distribution of technology, and holistic evaluation policies. For Indonesia, increasing teacher capacity through technology-based upskilling programs and the provision of digital infrastructure in the 3T (Frontier, Outermost, Disadvantaged) areas is an urgent priority. For South Korea, education system reform needs to be directed to reduce dependence on hagwon (private tutoring) which widens social gaps, as well as balance the orientation of competition with the development of students' intrinsic motivation. Globally, this study emphasizes the importance of cross-border collaboration in developing education policies that are adaptive to the challenges of the 21st century, such as digitalization and the need for multicultural skills. Research limitations, such as geographic sample bias and reliance on secondary data, open up room for further studies with a mixed-methods approach to explore local cultural and policy dynamics in more depth. As such, these findings are not only a critical reflection for both countries, but also an academic contribution to the inclusive and sustainable development of language education.

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