ENGLISH 'IMMERSION' PROGRAMMES IN ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS AS EXPANDING CIRCLES: SOME LESSONS FROM *PESANTREN*

Diding Fahrudin
Linguistics Department
FIB – UI Depok

ABSTRACT

Immersion is usually related to learning a foreign language in its site. Learning English in an immersion programme means to learn the language in the place in which English is spoken by its native speakers for their daily communication in the inner circles. Many *pesantren* institutions in Indonesia as a part of the extending circles have practiced some kind of immersion programmes with the consideration of intercultural flows which oblige their *santris* to use English in their daily life by practising several language activities in their daily life in the two-week period each month. Using the Contextualized Language Instructions Appoach, this paper qualitatively disusses such activities with some carroct-and-stick policies and has found that these activities have made their *santris* significantly improve their English performance and self-confidence despite some typical non-native English inapproproiateness. In addition, this paper present some proposed activities for further improvements.

Key words: immerson, daily communication, inner-circles, extending circles, *santris*, intercultural flows, Contextualized Language Instruction, carroct-and-stick polices, performance, inappropriateness.

1. INTRODUCTION

The roles of English in Indonesia as a part of the Extending Circles of English learning (Kachru, 1988) have been felt stronger in most sectors. When you want to register to get a schoarship to study abroad, one of the requirements you are obiged to fulfill is having certain scores of TOEFL, IELTS, or TOEIC.   When you want to apply for a new job, the last test is usually related to the interview in English. According to the interviews to those who wanted to apply for this reason, they found this interview a difficult thing to do due to the fact that they are not that much exposed to English learning. Another sector that requires TOEFL scores for those who want to get promoted to be in a higher job position is the job promotion in most governmental departments in this country although it is actually a miseading one. To my suprise, some Islamic schools have a yeraly program to conduct TOEFL tests for the students who are in the early month of the third year of Madrasah Aliyah, (equal to Senior High School), officialy financed by the department managing this school. This shows that Eglish is becoming an important international language.

Pesantren instututions, Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, have implemented their policy in regard with the importance of English for their students', commonly called *santri*,

future, initiated by K.H. Abdoel Halim who established *Pesantren Persatoen Ummat Islam* (commonly shortened as PUI) in Majalengka, West Java, in 1911 when English teaching policy was still conducted in imperialistic ways (Phillipson, 1992). Such policy has been consistently implemented by Pesantren Modern Gontor since the early 1920s and those *pesantrens* whose *kiyais* have once studied in this institution usually follow Gontor policy to oblige their *santri* to study English. These institutions, since then, have managed their policy to teaching English according to *Pesantren* contexts with their local identity.

This paper discusses how English has been treated as the santris' day-to-day languae instructions in Pesantren like an 'English immerson programme' in the Extending Circles; meanwhile, immerson is commonly held in the Inner Circle countries. The discussion covers the English learning implementations in the Extending Circles as a part of the sacred cows of English (Kachru, 1988) critically analysed according to the Contextualized Language Instructions approach (Shrum and Glisan, 2010) and intercultural flow (Pennycook, 2007) with typical Pesantren identity. For some reasons, certain integrated learning activities are proposed for future language learning betterment and pedagogical implementations.

2. LITERARY RESEARCH

All literary research on immerson which have been found so far deal with the related activities conducted in the Inner Circle countries. Tong (2008) examined the effectiveness of a 2-year (kindergarten and first grade) oral English intervention provided to 534 Hispanic English-language learners in transitional bilingual education (TBE) and structured English immersion (SEI) programs. Blanton (1992) Blanton states although several curricular models have emerged at the post-secondary level to integrate language and content and, thereby, facilitate students' transition from ESL to mainstream college courses, some programmes still rely on a skills model to develop students' proficiencies. Lasagabaster and often find the terms Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and immersion used interchangeably, even though there are important differences between them. Ruecker explores the potential of dual-language cross-cultural peer review and how it improves on traditional monolingual and monocultural peer review. Drawing on scholarship related to international exchange programmes, peer review, and two-way immersion programmes in the United States as well as datcollected while facilitating the proposed model of peer review in Chile, the author explains how the type of peer review discussed here may help students develop writing abilities in their second language while promoting greater cross-cultural

understanding.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS

Prior to the discussion on the term 'immersion', this paper will try to explain the circles of learning English. There are two scholars who proposed this English learning circles, i.e. Kachru (1988) and Phillipson (1992). Kachru (1988) proposes three circes of English: Inner Circle, Outer/Extended Circle, and Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle refers to the traditional bases of English, where the language functions as the primary in the pepople's daily communication. This circle includes the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The Outer/Extended Circle covers the ealier phases of the spread of English in non-native settings, where English has become part of the counties'chief institutions and has a role as the important second language in a multinational settings, including Singapore, India, Malawi, and over fifty other territories. The Expanding/Extending Circle is defined as the circle that covers the countries who consider English as the international language despite the absence of colonial historical petspective, and they have not yet given English any special administrative status. In these areas, English is considered as a foreign language. This circle includes China, Japan, Greece, Poland, etc. For further illustration, see the following:
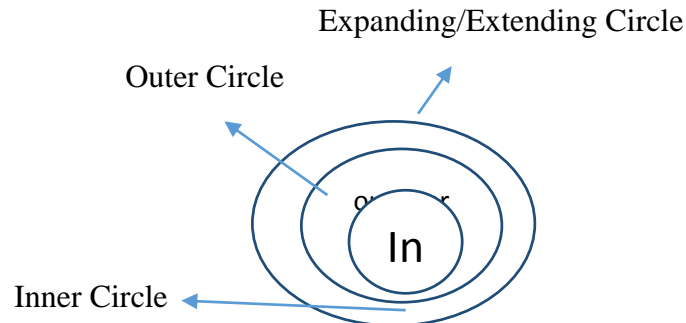
The above circles also describe the wide range of each circle, from the smallest to the widest one. In addition, due to rapid advanced technologies,such circles do not really reflect the use of Engish fully. For example, Malaysia can be considered a member of the Outer Circle, but actually this can be applied to the business areas of the country; the outer areas of Malaysia still considers English as their foreign language. Similarly, Indonesia is actually in the Expanding/ Extending Circle; however, Jakarta, as the capital cty of Indonesia, in my perspective, can be considered as a part of the Outer/Expanded Circle, because English is already considered as the second language for their residents daily communication, in particular in business and education sectors. This paper compares these circles in regard with English immersion programme which is usually placed in for the English immersion programme in the

Inner Circle countries; however, the paper presents Indonesia as one of the Expanding/Extending Circle as a place where the English immersion programme this paper analyses takes place.

When we want to have a look at how English is taught in the world, Philipson (1992) has his own clear circle by using countries, instead. The following is the circle he proposes (the circle is created by this writer but inspired by him):

Peripherial Countries
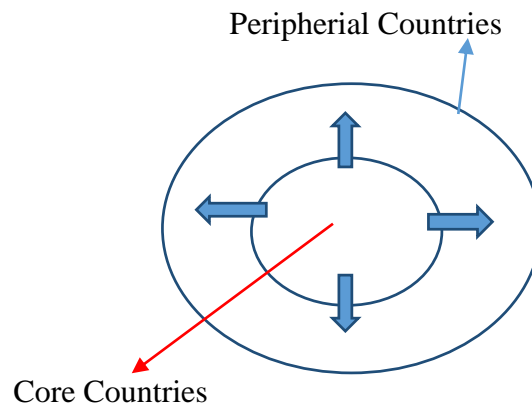
Core Countries

According to Phillipson, Core Countries are those who use English for their day-to-day communication or called native countries, while Periphery Countries refer to those whose soceties use English as their second or foreign language. Phillipson put the second and foreign speakers of English in one circle.

In regard with the arrows from the Core Countries to the Peripherial Countries, these four arrows illustrate that all things related to teaching English in the Peripherial Countries must be dependent on the Core Countries. These things include teaching policies, teaching methods and techniques, teaching materials, and learning perspectives. This reality in most cases make the learning activities unsuccessful because the learners are isolated from their own culture (Riley, 2007). In relation with the immersion programme, it is the site of the native speakers in the Core Countries that can be used the only place for the immerson programme to take place. The immersion in this research is located in one of the Peripherial Countries, Indonesia, to be exact at an Islamic institution.

In general, imersion is defined as a method of teaching a second language in which the target language is used for instruction (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immersion). Orignally, immersion programme was conducted to rovide English for immigrants who came to English speaking countries. This immersion was meant to help the immigrats to be able to speak English in order that they could communicate with others who had different language backgrounds. To get further understanding in regard with the term immersion, the following is

the discussions on immersion compared to CLIL in the Inner Circles and how immersion is held in the Extending Circles.

Immerson is defined as an activity which obliges or the foreigners to learn English in the native setting, or the Inner Circle (Kachru, 1988) or the Core Countries (Phillipson, 1992). English immersion means to have students to be fully immersed in the American culture, starting by learning its language — English. A number of those who register their names into English immersion programs are immigrant children, defined as those who have at least one foreign of parents' languages. Some immigrant students show proficiency in English after being in the program for only 2–3 years while others take longer. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_immersion_resources_for_immigrant_students).

To be specific, there is an abbreviation SEI, standing for Structured English Immersion, coined by as Keith Baker and Adriana de Kanter in a 1983 recommendation to schools to make use of Canada's successful French immersion programs , as a technique for rapidly teaching English to English Language Learners. More recently, SEI has been defined as a methodology in which English language learners (ELLs) learn English through structured and sequential lessons (Haver, 2002). In the SEI model, English is used for all subjects, with very few, if any, L1 clarifications. In this model, ELLs are expected to master grade-level academic English skills within 2 to 3 years (Ramírez et al.,1991).

The terms immersion and Content and Language Integrated Learning (commonly called CLIL) are often used indiscriminately, although in reality there are more differences than similarities between the two. According to Marsh (2002: 15), CLIL/EMILE is an umbrella term which covers CLIL and immersion often used indiscriminately, although in reality they have some more differences than similarities between the two. This terminological confusion is not trivial since the label CLIL, meant as anapproach integrating language and content, coexists with a plethora of terms that range from the bilingual integration of language and curricularn subjects, to content-based language teaching, theme-based language teaching, or content-enhanced teaching. The following is one attempt by Coyle to elucidate CLIL):

"refers to a 'dual-focussed educational context in which an additional language, thus not usually the first foreign language of the learners involved, is used as a medium in the teaching and learning of nonlanguage Content." (Coyle, 2007 dan 2008).

Here are five pinciples encompassing clear psycholingistic and methodologocal elements elements for both immersions programmes and CLIL programme (http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/):

1 The final objective of immersion programmes is to make the students become proficient in both L1 and L2, without any detriment to the acquisition of academic knowledge.

2   The language the students are taught in must be new to them, so that its learning resembles the L1 acquisition process.

3   Immersion programmes are considered the best learning option by the parents of students.

4 Using English bilingually is highly suggested.

5   All immersion programmes use   the communicative approach to obtain effective communication. Consequently, to have a learning environment that motivates students through significant situations and interlocutors who are really interested in their development and linguistic progress is important.

This reseaech uses the term immersion referring to the meaning that all activities in English are conducted in pesantren contexts. Tong, et. al. (2008).

Contextual Language Instruction (Shrum and Glisan, 2010) proposes the teaching of language use to convey meaning in a variety of contexts. The central theme of this theory is the contextualization of language instruction on the basis of the idea that language is introduced and taught in meaningful contexts which enables the learners to acquire competency in using language for the real-world communicative purposes. Integrated language instruction allows learners to approach the learning task by combining their ability to create interpretative, interpersonal, and presentational communication with their knowledge of culture and their background knowledge.

Transcutural Flows is defined to address the ways in which culural forms move, change and are reused to fashionnew identities in diverse contexts. It does not mean a cultural movement but of take-up, appropriation, change and refashioning (Pennycook, 2007 6) and to maintain mutual understanding and coexistence (Hewings and Tagg (editors), 2012).

4. RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question related to the topic is as follows: How are pesantren values as parts of the Expanding/Extending Circles culturally adjusted to the immerson values which are usually used in the Inner Circle?

5. METHOD

This short paper used the qualitative method with the observation and interview techniques. These observation and interview were implemented due to the limited time available.

6. DATA

The data used in this research are those which were taken from the first, second and third classes of one Madrasah Aliyah, equal to Senior High Shool, in one town in Ponorogo, East Java, with 240 female *santris*.

7. ACTIVITIES OBSERVED

There were three activities observed in this female pesantren, i.e. Vocabulary Development, Conversational Practice, and Public Speaking as the final objective of the programme. These three activities which are all extra-curricular ones, are usually conducted in two weeks every month. During these two weeks, all the students are obliged to use English at campus covering their school, hall and dormitory. They are assigned to use Engish in their daily activites, like an English immersion programme in the inner Cirle countries.

When one *santri* is found to speak other languages, instead of English, she will be fined. This fine system has significantly changed from hard ones to very educatational ways, like wearing certain clothes, usually the ones resembling the queens with paper-made crowns, with a shawl and certain expressions on it. This change of fine is intentionally done to give more educational effect to the students. She has to put on such clothes in front of the language offices in the campus.

The fine system can be implemented through the spy model. Each *santri* is an undetactable spy for another. Each santri is guaranteeed not to know that another one is a language spy. For example, two santris are talking each other about a certain topic, then one of them unintentionally uses non-English words in their conversation, due to the fact that this *santri* does not the English words or just for the sake of code-switching, without any doubt that the santri who has spoken non-English words will get a fine in the next day.

To make all these activities run well, the pesantren has got two language offices, one belonging to the teachers and other to the santris. This means that the first language office is managed by the teachers and the other by the santries. When the santri have some problems in regard with the language, they usually discuss this issue with their teachers who always prepare some language activities for the *santris*. The following is the discussion on the three activites which are the cores for this paper.

Vocabulary development activities are conducted after the santri have performed their *maghrib* prayer that they do together in the campus mosque. One coordinator read a new word aloud with how it is correctly spelled. The others note down the word to be momorized and used in the context. This lasts for two- week time; therefore, each santri will get fourteen words per two-week period. The words mentioned by the coordinator must be used in their own sentences which will then be used in their Public Speaking activities.

Conversational practices are usually done after Ashar prayer. Two students are in a certain room equipped with a cd/cassette player, two microphones, and some loud speakers installed around the campus. These two *santris* play the cd (mostly)/cassette from the cd/cassette player connected to the loud speakers in order that the other santri who are standing around the campus with the paper and pens on their hands to note down the dialogues played. When all the santris have correctly jotted down the dialogues, the dialogues are played several times while the santri are repeating what they have listened. When they are considered to have been ready to practice the dialogues, they practice them in pair or in group depending on how many persons there are in the dialogus. To make sure that everything runs well, the santris in the third class of *Madrasah Aliyah* are walking around to monitor to give some help to those who need. When a senior santri cannot sove the problem rising, she usually comes to one or two English teachers for some help.

Public Speaking is actually the ending objective of these activities which take place after school hours. This one takes the longest time because they have to prepare the topic, outline and writing the speeches. The santris are groupped into ten or twelve with some senior santris, some of whom become time keepers and others as judges. Each santri will have her own topic which is then written in her speech book for being corrected as feedbacks by senior santris. Writing a speech takes a bit longer time due to the fact that corrections take two or three times. When a speech is considered ready to be presented, this speech is signed and stamped. Then the speech is delivered.

These three activities ae done according to the schedule prepared by the English teachers of the teacher language office. As long as my observation took place, all these three activities ran well.

8. DISCUSSIONS

These three activities are actually more demanding than the ones done in the real immersion programme in the Inner Circle countries which requires their students to do their intra-curricular activities in their school times. These all three activities are done in order that the santris are much exposed to the English learning activities. On the basis of the observation and interviews done, the following are some feedbacks for future pedagogical betterment.

In regard with Vocabulary development, the words used in the activities are not selected in such a way that can help the santri to develop them for Public Speaking activities. The words are not used in the context so that the santris are not well exposed to the derivatinal or inflactional systems of the words. It is believed that knowing such systems the santri can develop the vocabulary use in more contextual realities.

Dialogue practices should be well appreciated because the santris listen to dialogue with the native speakers. They are exposed to the models of pronunciation with strong nativeness. In reality, in term of pronunciation, the influences of their mother tongues ae still strongly felt. In the **global English** perspectives (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Crystal, 2003; Pennycook, 2007; Alsagoff, et. al., (ed.), 2012; Hewing and Tagg, 20012) , this type of pronunciation of the local language infuences can be accepted as far as the meaning of the word pronounced does not create different meanings. The criticism I can share is that these dialogue activites are not well prepared according to functional perspectives which then can develop their communcative skills which are required by Public Speaking activities as the real goal of their activties.

Public Speaking, which is actually a really difficult one even for the native speakers of English, obliges them to make a good preparation and strong self-confidence when the santri are practising it. All stages, especially preparation, are well done. However, the speeches will be much better if the feedback covers not only grammatical inputs, but also other factors, like lexical choices, collocation and other related ones. The crucial thing is that most santris deliver their speeches like reading manuscripts. It seems that note taking for prepraing note cards for delivering speeches should be more exposed.

It is a high time that these three activities discussed above be integrated, meaning that vocabulary development, dialogue practices and public speaking are tight to underpin public

speaking activities. This integration takes time and efforts from *santris*, *ustadzah*s (women teachers), and other parties supporting these all activities.

From the interviews and observation I did, many santries tried to do trans-culural flows (Pennycook, 2007) in term of using Islamic terminologies in their language exercises for the sake of co-existence (Hewing, Ann and Tagg, Caroline. (editors). 2012) and Pesantren identity (Riley, 2007). They, for example, used the expression 'insya Alloh' when they made promises (Fahrudin, 2013 in Kirkpatrick, 2014). In addtion, they never used simple past tense verbs when they talked about their teachers. They still use Simple Present Tense or Present Perfect Tense when they described their teachers although these theachers taught them a long time ago, for example, 'Mr Ahmad Fauzi is my English teacher and he taught me a year ago.' In most cases, the santris used code-switching when they quoted *Al-Qur'an* (the holly book from the Almighty) and *Hadits* (the traditions from Prophet Muhammad Rosululloh, p.b.u.h.).

9. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the above activities can be implemented like an immersion programme in the Expanding Circle countries, like what we know in the Inner Circle countries. These activities can be better developed if the teachers endlessly do some professionsl and personal development to culturally adjust the activites in the Inner Circle to be implemented in the Extending Circle partcularly pesantren institutions strongly filled with Islamic values. In addition, these extra-curricular can be pedagogically implemented (Kirkpatrick, 2007) in connection with intra-curricular activities at school which are formally conducted.

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