

Enhancing the students' English skills through English Islamic tagged-media

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Abstract. This paper aimed to explain a practical programme utilised to enhance the students' English skills by designing English Islamic-tagged-media. It was relatively considerable due to low proficiency, low exposures, and psychological problems the students have, which undermine the ability. Therefore, the programme was concerned with the more straightforward and uncomplicated direction the students may perform for better English proficiency. The programme involved 23 students of high schools who reside in the two Muhammadiyah orphanages of Purwokerto residence. It principally conceptualised and integrated the English skills and the religious mission of Islamic values to produce the disciples of Islam and Muhammadiyah. Furthermore, the programme used a workshop method to intensively train and guide the students to design the English tag-lines that express the Islamic values on T-shirts' media. As a result, despite the difficulties in creating the expressions and printing the T-shirts, the programme has successfully run with the excellent performance the students made. They have shown their ideas and creativities in doing some exposures to their English skills and their Islamic knowledgeable.

I. INTRODUCTION

The success criteria of English language teaching (later shortened into ELT) do not merely rely on teachers and learners' exemplary performance in the classrooms, but on how both can mutually and dynamically cooperate to bring the success into real contexts. It informs that English learners will succeed in ELT for real contexts in which varied groups of communicators and situations are there, communicating in more complex languages, media, and cultures. Richards (2006) vehemently claimed that the more growing the world is, the more they need good communication skills, which also

apparently contributes to the worldwide need for English language skills as the most-spoken language people use (Richards, 2009: 1). Therefore, ELT should adjust to the dynamic and changeable real contexts, particularly with social demands. This last might refer to the researchers, teachers, practitioners and or professionals may use to conceptualise, formulate, and design the best standards of ELT.

Further, the real contexts are unique, and so are the individuals within. Consequently, the standards should be exceptional too, adjustable to the uniqueness of the contexts and individuals. Mahboob and Tilakaratna (2012) stated that

it is impossible to apply a set of standards in one context to another due to unique and multifaceted aspects each subject or country has. It importantly suggests that the means of ELT should meet the best design using indigenous perspectives (Mahboob and Tilakaratna, 2012: 2). Following this notion, the standards of ELT should also consider the psychological problems English learners usually have. Such issues might considerably relate to the motivation of learning. A common assumption may appear from the fact that English is only a foreign language in Indonesia. It then situates the students to mostly use the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, in their daily experiences to lack real experiences of using English (Astuti, 2013: 15 & 16). Another argument says that high schools' learners mostly have high expectations to master the language, yet the schools cannot entirely meet it (Lamb, 2007 as cited by Astuti, 2013: 16 & 17). These conditions more or less contribute to the students' motivation to live the English way.

In line with Astuti and Lamb, Harmer (1991) claims that the more motivated the students are to learn the language, the more successes they will obtain, despite any circumstances they meet (Harmer, 1991, as cited in Xiao, 2013:257). Xiao exemplifies China's universities' real condition, where learning English is viewed as a trivial phenomenon. It means that learning English is only for those who want to study the language and pass the various examinations (such as school final examination, IELTS, TOEFL, etc.), and this number of this group is few. On the other hand, many students are less motivated to continue learning the language when passing the universities is more satisfactory (Xiao, 2013: 257).

Indeed, motivation is key to the success of language teaching. As defined by DİŞLEN (2013), motivation always stays in

the process of learning. It sets the interests, the goals, and the actions along the process of learning. Accordingly, it should be sustained and used to achieve the goals (DİŞLEN, 2013: 36).

This paper does not mainly discuss the motivational aspects of learning English, yet, this has a critical role in affecting the success of ELT, and the motivation may come from both teachers and students. Phyllis Wachob even claims (2006) that there are differences in the acquisitions of the first language (L1) and the second language (L2), relating to the motivational aspects. If the first L1 acquisition seems effortless, the L2 addition feels much burdening, more complicated, especially for those who have different learning goals, such as growing business in the L2 (Wachob, 2006: 93). Following this notion, it may considerably occur on the English language acquisition as the foreign language. The success of ELT relies on many factors which both teachers and students are in them.

There are real conditions where the Indonesian students need more guidance and media exposures to help them improve their English proficiency and expectedly promote learner autonomy, particularly in their real-life experiences. The use of media is unavoidable and will benefit the process of learning and teaching. It will be useful for the betterment and the effectiveness of English language teaching and will encourage the students to gain better knowledge and proficiency with the language (Rao, 2014: 142). Teachers and media play the important roles as the human and non-human resources in the process (Asemota, 2015: 311), to make the process more guided (Naz and Akbar, 2008: 35). Besides, using media is a popular way to make the classroom process more contextual (Alaga and Palencia, 2015: 72) because it is the basic need for ELT (Bewava, 2015: 2). Even, involving students

in making learning media will strengthen their English proficiency (Bergeron, 2015: 19).

Regarding these, the project was conducted by involving 23 high school students residing in the Muhammadiyah orphanage, Purwokerto residence, Central Java, Indonesia. It aimed to respond to their demand on media exposures of English. Despite a set of activities the orphanage has done to equip them with English and other soft skills, they still lack exposures to perform their talents better. On the other hand, they are taken care of by the most prominent Islamic organisation that serves them with Islamic knowledgeability and experiences. Indeed, the students meet a real problem regarding the performances in both skills:

1) How did the orphanages' students enhance their English skills to promote learner autonomy further?

Hence, this paper aims to explain in details about the strategy applied to help them enhance their English proficiency much better to promote learner autonomy for further benefits. By integrating the English skills to the religious mission of the Islamic values to the public, the project used a workshop format. The students could learn about the easy way to use English more lively to create learner autonomy and promote the Islamic values to the broader public.

II. METHOD

This study applied a qualitative method utilizing the data were collected in forms of the implementation of English language to the real context, that was the internalization of the language into the religious mission of the Islamic values. For such a purpose, qualitative research is appropriate to yield descriptive and expository analyses (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006 as cited in Astuti, 2013: 18). The project

also used the purposive sampling to specify the participants, that were 23 students from the two male and female Muhammadiyah orphanages in Purwokerto. The number consisted of 10 male students and 13 female students. The project mainly applied the workshop technique of writing English tag-lines promoting the Islamic values on the media of T-shirts.

The workshop guided the participants to express their ideas and creativities to design the English Islamic tag-lines onto the T-shirts. Besides, the exemplification, assessment, monitoring, evaluation and feedback expectedly aimed to obtain the programme's goal, whether the students have really improved and enlivened their English skills well.

III. RESULTS

This section explicitly presents the data from the two orphanages participating in the programme and how the programme was running. As stated above, there were ten male and 13 female students in each orphanage. They were all the students of the vocational high schools in Purwokerto. In the pre-activity or opener stage, they were enthusiastic about the programme, yet showed confidence when they had to respond to some English questions. Most of them responded to the questions given with shame, lack of vocabularies, wrong grammar, and meaningless expressions. Few of them did it with enthusiasm and quite well. Most of them also said that learning English is so tricky that it finally demotivates them to make more effort to master it. This condition considerably shows that, for Indonesian students, motivation is still dominating that withstands them from improving. Therefore, appropriate strategies are necessarily needed to overcome the problem.

Firstly, the students learned about the learning English model with fun and practice to contextualise the English language into real activity by producing English Islamic tagged-T-shirts. There were four stages the students had to follow: 1) Material presentation, 2) Designing the tag-lines, 3) Printing the design, 4) Screen-printing the design on the T-shirts

The material presentation covered the overview of the programme and some procedures for writing the English Islamic tag-lines. The methods unfolded that the taglines produced had to meet the Syariah rules by avoiding writing or inserting Allah's mighty names and other elements attached to it. Here, the workshop exemplified the participants with more straightforward and more understandable English Islamic taglines.

Table 1. The Example of English-Islamic taglines created by the students

Indonesian Expressions	English Expressions
Berpikirlah dahulu sebelum bertindak.	Think first before you act.
Katakan kebenaran itu walaupun pahit.	Say the truth though it is bitter.
Persatuan adalah kunci kesuksesan.	Unity is the key of success.
Waktu lebih berharga daripada uang.	Time is worthier than gold.
Masa lalu tidak akan pernah kembali.	The past will never come back.

The exemplification purposed to enable the students to do the same thing more easily and on the right track. This procedure is commonly done in ELT to give the students the right and proper understanding and contextualising the materials. Here, the students followed the guidance to design their English Islamic tag-lines screen-printed onto the T-shirts. First of all, they made groups of three students. This step aimed to train them to be accustomed to

teamwork and to share ideas among others. Each group was controlled and supervised to be on track with the programme's objective. Afterwards, they showed the words that would be screen-printed as the T-shirts' taglines. Below are the stories they have collected.

Table 2. The English-Islamic tag-lines the students made.

Indonesian Expressions	English Expressions
Kesuksesan berasal dari kemampuan yang kuat.	Success comes from the strong passion.
Percaya diri adalah kunci meraih kesuksesan.	Confidence is the key of success.
Manusia akan diuji sesuai dengan kemampuannya.	People will not get trials more than their power.
Tetap istiqamah.	Keep <i>istiqamah</i> .
Hijab pilihanku.	<i>Hijab</i> is my choice.
Surga diciptakan untuk muslim yang baik.	Heaven is created for good moslems.
Aku adalah seorang muslim.	I am a Moslem.
Awali semua dengan doa.	Pray first before you act./ Start your day with prayer.
Setiap langkah yang baik akan membuat kebaikan kecil.	Every good step means a good deed.
Diam itu emas, tapi bicara yang baik itu berlian.	Silence is gold, but good speech is diamond.
Aku bangga jadi seorang muslim.	I am proud of being a Moslem.
Muslim bukan teroris.	Moslems are not terrorists.
Berdoalah untuk hidup yang lebih baik.	Pray for the better life.
Berlakulah rendah hati.	Keep humble.
Habis gelap terbitlah terang.	There will be the light after the dark.
Jujurlah dalam berniat dan bertindak.	Be honest in every intention and action you make.

Jadilah yang terbaik dari yang terbaik.	Be the best of the best.
Lebih baik tangan di atas daripada tangan di bawah.	Better giving than taking.
Do'a adalah suara iman.	Prayer is the voice of faith.
Kegagalan harus membuat kita lebih kuat.	Failure makes us stronger.
Kebahagiaan hanya untuk orang yang jujur.	The true happiness is for the honest people.

Indeed, the exemplification has led the students to the success they made, though in the beginning, they still met difficulties in formulating the expressions from the Indonesian into the English. It mostly happened due to standard vocabularies, low grammar skill, and the Syariah rules they had to follow. Through the intensive guidance, they could finally make the tag-lines as the designs of their T-shirts.

After they wrote all of the expressions into their papers, they trained to design and print the words using the transfer papers. The choice of good fonts and layouts was essential to produce the right image of screen-printing. These stages were fun, yet a bit difficult since they had to work with the technology which required them to have literacy on it, too. Fortunately, they could work on the stages well.

The monitoring and evaluation held to get feedback from the participants. Overall, the feedback produced the students' right encouragement and exposures to enhance their English skills much better. The students were more motivated to learn and master English. They also experienced such autonomous learning from the activity—this last was the benefit and experience they obtained from the fun strategy of ELT. Besides, such intensive advisory was also essential to make the mastery of English well-achieved. It meant as a good intention and effort to meet the necessity of

contextualisation of the language skills, particularly the social demands above. As a result, the programme successfully equipped the students with knowledge and creativity to design the English Islamic-tagged-T-shirts.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, English learners found that the foreign language needs more exposures to grow them with real-life experiences using the language, despite the obstacles they meet. It is vital due to the high expectancy put on them amid the increasing demands on the English literacy they should master for future careers and contexts. Therefore, the project followed a more distinct framework that internalised the English skills into the Islamic teachings inherent to the students' uniqueness. Facilitating the students with more exposures will be highly beneficial for the success of ELT, in particular. However, during learning, advisory, monitoring, evaluation, and feedback are all critical for improving and bettering the process.

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