

EFL OR ESL IN PAPUA: A NOT CLEAR-CUT ISSUE

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***Abstract:** The paper aims at analyzing situation in Papua in which English is taught as a Foreign Language and is about to be exercised as a Second Language in all schools. Papua is surrounded by 250 local languages and cultures in which Bahasa Indonesia is functioned as National Language. School students throughout Papua come from different socio-cultural background, the use of English as a Second Language will probably add another controversial issue in planning for education program in Papua. Education in Papua under Special Autonomy recommends English should be exercised as a Second Language in all forms of formal education. How could English is taught as a Second Language in such a multi-lingual/cultural situation where Indonesian is still being a barrier. The paper discusses critically issues regarding some conceptual frameworks of EFL and ongoing controversial issues as whether or not Papua is ready to exercise English as a Second Language in all schools throughout the province.*

***Key words:** L1 (Mother Tongue), BI (Bahasa Indonesia), FL (Foreign Language), SL (Second Language), CA (Communicative Approach).*

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INTRODUCTION

The Papuan Government nowadays realizes the importance of English as an International Language as to prepare the Papuans to be well educated for the sake of developing their abilities and skills to make a better educational plan for future global education. The Special Autonomy for Papua puts ESL, stated in the Republic of Indonesia Constitution, No 21/2001 on Special Autonomy Regulation for Papua Province, Chapter XVI, Education and Culture, Article 58, Point 2. In fact, the Mimika District's Major, in his declaration in celebrating 97th Indonesia Education Day in May 2003 in Timika, highlights that English is nowadays being the SL after BI in Papua. It shows an overwhelming reaction of Papuans towards the importance of learning English. In contrast, the idea is fairly doubtful, "how could English be the second language where students are still struggling using Bahasa Indonesia". However, if we look back at students' linguistic background, it would not be appropriate to have English as a SL in Papua situation. It depends very much upon every individual in Papua; a student could speak more than one local language since their parents come from two or more different linguistic backgrounds. With regard to that regulation, there are some educational issues that need to be taken into consideration particularly on cultural and linguistic aspects. How could English be taught as a SL in Papua in which students are from multi-lingual background, who are fluent speakers of L1? Papua New Guinea (PNG), for example, has hundreds of languages and cultures but it exercises ESL because it was used to be under the British colony. Mostly countries under Commonwealth (including PNG) employ English as First or SL, while Papua was under Dutch colony; the languages at that time were Dutch, Malay and local languages.

The complex situation of local languages still exists in today EFL classroom. For example, an Amungme student, in the highland of Mimika, learns English as a compulsory subject using Bahasa

Indonesia as the medium of instruction. The teacher is not from the same cultural and linguistic background, and the student might find it difficult to follow the lesson effectively because neither of them shares the similar cultural-linguistic background. While teachers are still having problem using Bahasa Indonesia as a medium of instruction to communicate effectively with their students, they are also facing problems with how to use communicative approach or any other methods or techniques in teaching students who are still struggling using Bahasa Indonesia. I had an experience visited a school in Mimika district in which all students are from 8 ethnic highlander groups. When I conversed in BI, they were not able to get clear understanding of my message, in contrast, when they responded back to me in their BI highland version I hardly grasped the meaning. How could we communicate effectively in BI or in English if language barrier is still being a critical issue? Hence, the aim of the paper is to introduce the complexity of Papuan languages and discuss critically some ELT, EFL educational concepts in relation to local issues regarding the establishment of ESL in all schools throughout Papua.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PAPUAN LANGUAGES

There are 250 languages throughout Papua. One-fifth of the world's languages are spoken on the island of New Guinea (Ajamiseba, et al. 2001) which is over one third of all the languages of Indonesia. Each language has its own complexity on grammatical structures that differ from one another which are obstructions to learn other languages. The Papuan languages are divided into two major classifications: Non Austronesian and Austronesian (Purba 1994:21). It is estimated that those who speak Non Austronesian exceed those of Austronesian in number (Purba 1994). Non Austronesian falls into Trans New Guinea phylum, Sko phylum, Kwontari phylum, East Bird's Head phylum, Geevink Bay phylum. Both Non-Austronesian

(NAN) and Austronesian (AN) have their own characteristics. Firstly, the characteristics of Non-Austronesian, for example, according to Capel (1965) and Foley (1986) in Purba (1994) are: 1) They do not have articles; 2) Numbers and case may be marked in nouns; 3) Some languages have gender and noun-class systems; 4) Singular, dual and plural forms of pronouns may be found; 5) Subject, direct and indirect objects are often incorporated into the verb, which is extremely complex; 6) Number systems vary, often based on 2,3,4, or parts of the body; 7) The word order is usually subject, object, verb; 8) They use postpositions instead of prepositions; 9) Their verbal systems may be extremely elaborated; 10) They have great variation in structure and vocabulary 11). Some of them are tonal languages; 12) Nasalized vowels occur in some languages; 13) Some of them have complex clusters.

Secondly, Purba (1993) states from the Capel's Survey of New Guinea Languages indicates the characteristics of Austronesian (AN) languages as : (1) Compared with those of NAN languages, phonemic patterns of AN languages are not complicated; (2) Most have a five-vowel system, except some languages in Papua New Guinea, which have even vowels; (3) Generally, they have few or no clusters, except in Numfor-Biak and neighbouring areas in Geelvink Bay; (4) Voiceless fricative consonant is usually labiodental /f/, but the voiced fricative is bilabial /v/; (5) Prenasalisation in some areas is normal; (6) Stress is usually predictable; (7) They have a simple consonantal system; (8) Glottal stops and velar nasals are rare, and velar fricative /g/ is common in a large number of islands Melanesians languages; (9) Noun phrases with an adjective modifier are constructed by placing the modifier after the head. Noun phrases with a numeral are also constructed likewise. Numeration is usually quinary, based on five; (10) Verbal phrase is fairly simple. Verbal is usually preceded by a subject marker (person and number), even if the sentence has noun subject. It can also have an object and/or a tense marker; (11) Passive form is rare; (12) Some have tenses, but they are not emphasised; (13)

Word order is SVO and they have prepositions instead of postpositions. Thus, the above description describes the complexity of Austronesian or Non-Austronesian in Papuan languages. A Papuan student, either Austronesian or Non Austronesian background, when transfers to L2 or learns other languages, including English must be absolutely an impediment.

ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

English plays a very important role in the globalization era. In Asia, speaking of language users in Asia, Mandarin takes first position; the second is Malay which has been used as lingua franca in some parts of Southeast Asia. Even though these languages are very important in Asia, for globalizing Asia, still English is used as a tool for communication within Asia and the rest of the world. Thus, the role of ELT becomes significant in all types of educational institutions. Global education is a process of developing learner's ability to comprehend the global communities' culture, social, politic, and economy. They are also aware of relying on each other, learn various subjects of science and technology, and develop different kinds of competency and skills to make a better world community using English. Eventhough English is taught in all school as an International Language yet there is an interesting political motto presented by Kramsch and Sullivan (1996 in McKay 2005) who summarizes that the above ideas as “think globally, act locally” which interpreted in pedagogical context as “global thinking, local teaching”. The shift of perception of the relationship of language and culture with the status of English as an International Language affects language teaching pedagogy.

The world's fourth most populous country, Indonesia, is a multi-lingual nation comprising over 600 languages and dialects (Rath 1997). English is another important language which plays a

significant role in Indonesian society. Hoed (1990) states that English as an international language, functioning as a means of communication in international business circles, as a medium through which the transfer of scientific knowledge and technology can occur, and as a support for the development of national language. In other words, English language has a prominent role in advanced technology, scientific development, and global interaction. Crystal (1997 in McKay 2000) claims English is nowadays being a global language. English is exercised as first language or mother tongue in inner-circle countries such as in North America, UK, Australia and New Zealand, the native speakers are nearly 320-380 million. In outer-circle countries about 150-300 million using English as a second language or an official language such as in India and Singapore. In fact, it is estimated approximately 100-1,000 million people, in expanding-circle countries such as in Indonesia, use English as a Foreign Language. Thus, amazingly, there has been an estimation of approximately about 570 million people in the world today who have native or native like command of English. Indonesia, as one of the South East Asian countries, is aware of the role of English as an international language, for it is formally taught as primary FL starting from the Junior Secondary school onwards throughout the country, it is not functioning as a SL.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

ESL has its own characteristics. In a situation where the speakers of L1 need to learn L2, because these speakers are the minority surrounded by speakers of an L2, then linguists and educators speak of teaching a SL to the minority group members. So, for instance, members of non- English speaking minority groups (such as Japanese, Chinese, and Taiwanese) in the United States learn ESL in school. Sometimes all of the people in a country learn ESL eventhough they are not surrounded by English speakers. For

example, a country which contains speakers of a multitude of indigenous languages may select English as its national language or as its language of finance, commerce, trade and higher education. So, English maybe taught as a SL from the early education up to university level. An ESL may be required for upward mobility economically and for communication purposes with the larger community outside the local ethnic one.

In the United States, because SL learning necessarily involves relationships between minority and majority cultures, there may be tensions and fears in both kinds of cultures about the process and outcomes of learning English. These tensions and fears affect how well English is learnt as a SL, rather than the actual teaching practices used in schools. In countries such as in Philippine, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Singapore exercise ESL in which the outcomes are considered important in the educational process. It should be well-informed to young citizens who can play active roles in the economic, political and social structures of the community and the nation. To achieve these outcomes curriculum guides for the various subjects taught in schools usually states certain goals regarding the competencies that are aimed for the instructional program. The role of SL instruction should be reflected in all subject areas including ESL classrooms. Is Papua ready with this SL system? In fact, Papua is still exercising EFL not as ESL, with its own EFL characteristics.

EFL IN PAPUA

The description of EFL in Papua can be based on Kho's description (Kho 1991). Yembise (1994) discusses the situation as follows. Firstly, English is taught as a FL with the purpose of developing reading, listening, speaking and writing. Communication is not the first priority, for it is taught in non-acquisition environments in which it is not spoken by all individuals.

The language used as a medium of instruction in teaching English is the national language, "Bahasa Indonesia". Teachers and students come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and do not share similar vernacular/speech patterns. In classroom practice, the national language is exercised by teachers and students, as an interactive language, while outside the classroom, vernacular/mother tongue or dialect is applied. Secondly, students in this situation are instrumental in motivation in which most students do not see any urgent need to learn English. Thus, English is more likely used for special purposes, not as a lingua franca but for deferred needs such as getting job, entering university/college, studying abroad, or international events. While in ESL situation, students need English for lingua franca or language of finance, commerce and trade. Besides, with reference to assimilation with the target culture, it is necessary to consider the cultural aspects of the learners where English is taught. Indonesian cultures and customs need to be preserved. English materials must be designed, based on context, and must consider positive values of the target language. The cultures which are not accepted by the surrounding community must be omitted. EFL teachers are required to be selective in choosing the instructional material suitable for Indonesian recipients. The target culture materials need to be carefully selected in conjunction with the ethical codes of the Indonesian culture.

Furthermore, there are three terms per year, and English is taught for three months of each term for approximately two to four hours per week. The class size is generally large, between 30-50 students. How could learners in such a big classes develop their communicative competence? How could teachers deal with huge classes? In a typical EFL classroom with huge classes, students' oral competence is considered low. The teaching of structure and reading is central to instructional materials, because these elements of language appear in standardised test. There is no oral test, or an interview to assess students' communicative competence, which is

actually the goal of Communicative Approach. Another fact is that teachers have extremely limited contact hours of teaching. In schools, they teach 45-90 minutes per session in school, twice in a week. At the tertiary level, teachers have approximately 2-4 contact hours per week. Some teachers spend extra hours teaching outside for extra income.

Experienced teachers of English vary considerably. There is a lack of qualified English teachers. Teacher attitude towards innovation and change highlights a willingness to accept new innovative ideas and changes in language teaching. Teachers have found new materials and approaches quite attractive, increasing their interests in employing them in their own classrooms. Teachers need to be selective in obtaining appropriate innovations and changes, to meet educational objectives. The standard approach is said to be communicative by curriculum designers, and language teachers and specialists, however, in practice, it is in fact structural. Foreign language teachers claim to employ communicative approach in their classroom teaching, yet most teachers still depend heavily on traditional ways of teaching, focusing more on teaching reading and developing linguistic competence. Thus, the curriculum, in theory, is designed based on the framework of the communicative functions, yet, in practice, it is structural type of syllabus focusing more on linguistic competence or grammar based. All of these are the feature of EFL in Papua and as serious issues to think of a feasibility of the establishment of ESL in Papua.

EDUCATION AND EFL IN PAPUA: AN ONGOING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

There have been inadequate indications on the positive features of education development in Papua which may affect the implementation of ESL in this province. Respective educational or

cultural, religious specialists, even the government in the region still demonstrate their enormous concerns on the pessimistic image towards education development in Papua which is unsatisfactory. The situation is severely underdeveloped, as the provincial rate of illiteracy is nearly double the national average. It suggests that the illiteracy rate is approximately 30.5 per cent for the province, and regrettably 81.5 per cent are from the highlands (Hewat and Hewat, 2000). Papuan children, particularly those from the highlands, are the victims. In support of that view, the Papuan governor, J.P. Sallosa, is also concerned with the rate of drop-out among students in this region. His concern was stated in one of the local daily newspapers that overall the educational development is facing a crucial issue on drop-out rate. In primary education the drop-out rate is about 15-20 percent per year; in junior and senior high schools the rate is about 10 percent per year. Thus, a suggestion that regional development should be more towards educating natives in the highland of Papua. The governor further mentions in his speech on the university graduation ceremony in 2001/2002 that 98% of Papuan populations are not adequately educated or illiterate (Yembise 2007).

Most of the people in Papua who are not from highland often have a negative attitude towards the highland students who are considered to be not as intelligent as they are (Burung 1990, Yembise 2007). However, linguists and anthropologists argue that the linguistic barrier and the lack of cross-cultural understanding are the primary issues. Language barrier and lack of cross-cultural awareness may bring complications which are encountered by students and teachers. It is rather challenging or demanding for Papuan, as education should be considered as first priority. With the special autonomy granted by the government of Indonesia, fair opportunities are offered to Papuans in planning of their own education system which takes into account the sociocultural aspects of the people. Ayamiseba (1987 in Yembise 2007) argues that the problems in Papua are dealing with curriculum, language barrier, and

shortage of teachers, government regulations. Eventhough these were the issues in the eighties, yet they are still being ongoing educational debates in Papua. All students, regardless of ethnic and regional differences, received the same kind of standardized education in the preparation for national education development (Burung 1990, Mandowen 1990, Tethool 2001, Erari 2003, Yembise 2007).

The researcher observes that most schools in Mimika district, for instance, is getting worse due to shortage of teachers and some related issues (Yembise2007). Some schools hire teachers to teach English without having any teaching certificate. Another important aspect is government regulations do not offer any flexibility within the system. In order to catch up with the fixed schedule in the national curriculum for the final exam, it is difficult for the schools to adapt with the sociocultural aspects and daily lives. Moreover, in some districts, students have problems with schools attendance due to parents' a lack of motivation and economic situation, which is tied up to a sort of semi-nomadic life style. Tethool (2001) suggests that "centralistic" education causes a lack of creativity and innovation; hopeless curriculum; inflexible government policies resulting in encompassing unconstructive or unqualified education outcomes. Tethool (2001) claims that there have been ongoing debates on how to manage an appropriate transparent structured system, free of corruption, for primary and secondary schools to be relevant to the local needs, environments, and reality of daily life. Erari (2003) claims that the national curriculum should pay respect to local culture and environment. On the sociocultural background, education should be adapted to socioeconomic and cultural needs of the local people.

The issues suggest that the centralised curriculum is designed primarily for the people in Jakarta and it should be implemented to the people in Papua. Consequently, Papua is lacking educational development compared to other provinces in the country. It means

that Papuans lag behind in educational development due to the irrelevance of the national curriculum. Actually, there is a close connection between contextual factors, culture, environment and education. However, the contextual background of the Papuan students is not considered appropriately in the preparation of teaching plans. It is, therefore, not yet capable of improving the knowledge and skills of the local students. What students learn at school does not give the impression of having anything familiar with their daily living reality. The characteristics of the colonial education politics, “centralistic approach” as mentioned by Tilaar (1998) is reflected in the implementation of regional education system in Papua. The system in all level of education is centralistic indicating that any policy or decision making should come from the top down to the bottom level. As Tilaar (1998) states, a consequence is that there is a tendency to implement education based on the centralised approach. This is evident in the planning, arranging of the national curriculum, and supervision system. This system has existed for such a long time that the possibility of making innovations faces obstacles.

As mentioned earlier Papuan has a very unique situation compare to other provinces in Indonesia. The Indonesia education system that used to be colonial based oriented does still exists in today's situation not only in Papua but also other provinces in Indonesia. The latest curriculum “KTSP curriculum” is considered to be valid enough to deal with students' needs and the daily life of students. Yet, the question is whether or not the new system could answer the crucial educational issues in Papua. Constitutionally, special autonomy has been granted by the government of Indonesia to Papua (UU No.22/1999, and UU No.25/1999); suggesting Papua has a full potential or freedom to make changes for future educational development.

With regard to the teaching of English, as a primary foreign language in Papua, the teaching is for the purpose of the development

of science and technology or worldwide knowledge, therefore reading might be considered the first priority. Unfortunately, all the instructional materials which have been published are based mostly on contents which reflect the dominance of certain cultures in the country (Marcellino 2008, Pattiwael 2005, Yembise 2005). These materials reflect no special attention to the huge variety of different existing cultures in Papua. The consequences lead to a negative image from outsiders that Papuans are intellectually weak. An illustration provided by Burung (1990) who questioned, “how could a teacher with Austronesian background teach students from Parim who speak their language with more than seven tenses and very much a tonal language”. How could s/he build communication with students from Balim Valey who tend to use the types of sentences or phrases that are changeable according to contexts and pressures. No wonder, one of the school principal of junior secondary schools in the highland said, “we usually ask helps from gardeners as interpreters whenever there is communication breakdown.”

The communicative approach is employed with communication as the main target, which is another issue to be considered. While teachers are still having problem using Bahasa Indonesia as a medium of instruction to communicate effectively with their students, they are facing problems with how to use communicative approach in teaching students who are still struggling using Bahasa Indonesia. Thus, the situation becomes more complicated. The materials are written by outsiders who do not know the sociocultural and linguistic background of the students. Thus, Bahasa Indonesia should be the second, after first language (students' local language); the teaching of Bahasa Indonesia should be the first priority in educating Papuan people. Besides learning how to be fluent speaker in Bahasa Indonesia, the Malay dialect or version of Papuan (highland or coastal dialects) must not be overlooked. It is, in fact, considered to be useful as a strategy to improve students' understanding of their own cultures as a bridge to learn other cultures,

and in learning Bahasa Indonesia. The teaching of English, as stated in government policy, should be as a Primary Foreign Language.

IS PAPUA READY TO EXERCISE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN ALL SCHOOLS?

Could English be taught as a SL in a complex situation as mentioned above? Is Papua ready for the establishment of a new system where English is used as a SL language in all school? This system should be well-informed to young Papuans who take part in dynamic roles in the economic, political and social structures of the community and the nation. As mentioned above, to accomplish these outcomes, school curriculum should cover the various subjects which states certain goals regarding the competencies or skills that are aimed for the instructional program. Does the existing school curriculum/syllabus cover the above goals? The role of SL instruction should be reflected in all subject areas including ESL classrooms.

There have been some other ongoing issues besides the above ones that have to be considered in establishing the system. One of the foremost difficulties in understanding Papuans is, as mentioned above, the fact that there are so many distinct languages and ethnic groups (Burung 1990). Regarding the language barrier, the study (Yembise 1994, 2007) indicated that a large number of teachers continued exercising Bahasa Indonesia in teaching, while only a small number of teachers utilized English in their classrooms. Moreover, the finding from Yembise revealed through classroom observations indicated that the majority of teachers need Bahasa Indonesia as the language of instruction. Only a small number of teachers modelled that learning a language is learning to communicate. The national language is utilized as a language of instruction because it is assumed all citizens speak and understand it.

In addition, observational data revealed that teachers sometimes have difficulties understanding words and phrases spoken by the students in the students' L1. This seems to support the notion that the multiplicity of languages in the classroom is still an ongoing barrier to the learning of English.

In practice, the majority of teachers studied do not model the value of communication in their classroom practices. One obstacle preventing this from occurring is the language barrier, a common aspect of the society. Students who are not native speakers of BI continue to have problems communicating and understanding some of the words or phrases in that language. The classroom observations (Yembise 1994) revealed that, in teaching English, students had difficulties comprehending simple sentences due to their constraints understanding certain words and phrases which the teachers interpret using BI. The use of BI is assumed to be a constraint to the educational development in Papuan.

Another big issue is that all school-age children go to school and that not all schools are in position to function as they should, due to a shortage of teachers. Mostly English teachers' preferences are staying in cities instead of spending most of their time living in isolated remote areas. Segregation, lack of services and lack of familiarity with the local languages and customs are obstructions to employing teachers. EFL teacher's educational background is another issue to be taken into account in planning for ESL program. In some places in Papua varied ranging from high school to a two or three years diploma course. Their teaching experience, linguistic background, and cultural backgrounds show a discrepancy as well. There are three types of English teachers (Yembise 1994): (1) teachers who teach English because they studied English as their major subject in Teacher Training College or In-service Teacher Training; (2) teachers who do not have English subject background, but are from disciplines other than English such as history, geography, etc., but are

nevertheless interested in English; (3) teachers who had much personal experience with English, and who, therefore, exercise their teaching based on that experience having lived with foreigners, or having worked as guides or interpreters since these areas are considered to be tourist sites. These types of teachers must deal with students who have weak schooling background due to the language barrier and sociolinguistic constraints.

CONCLUSION

English is important language to learn as an international or global language. With regard to English teaching, as primary foreign language, the teaching is for the purpose of science and technology or worldwide knowledge. It shows an overwhelming reaction of Papuans towards the importance of learning English as a Second Language. In contrast, the idea is fairly doubtful "how could English be the SL where students are still struggling using Bahasa Indonesia" where students are still using their L1. The Communicative Approach was developed in second language, rather than foreign language settings, thus, it depends heavily on the use of the authentic materials. No such materials are available for the rural setting of the highlands. Thus, the best that can be done is to help teachers understand how to create more contextual activities for their classrooms, based on reading and talking about objects and activities that are common to the highlands. For examples, traditional ornaments such as arrows and bows, stone axe, pig tail and other sacral objects can be utilised in the design of the material. Thus, in order to reach an effective result, there is a need to combine teaching strategies supported by effective locally designed materials based the CA tenets to suit particular culture. The use of local languages and dialects can be used as a strategy to support the Communicative Approach. Besides, based on the study conducted by Yembise (1994) which indicates that EFL teachers' theoretical knowledge of this approach is low, thus

complementary teacher training courses need to be offered for better prepared teachers.

With the support of the Special Autonomy provided by the government of Indonesia, Papuans hopefully will or should have sovereignty to make educational changes within the region. The local government is responsible for all the educational planning by providing chances for every Papuan to be educated. The Autonomy is also supported by the establishment of MRP (Papuan People's Assembly) which has also been selected by Papuans for Papuans. This Papuan representative assembly was officially declared recently by the Minister of Internal Affairs on the 31st of October 2005 undertaking the Papuan rights and aspirations. Thus, Papua could plan for an appropriate model or system of education to integrate the sociocultural aspects of the native people into the national curriculum. It implies that EFL specialist and teachers are nowadays being positioned as agents of change for planning EFL program in Papua. Thus, a dream of having an ESL in Papua needs to be built upon the solutions to the ongoing problems mentioned above and the conscientious educational concepts supported by well-built empirical research.

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