

Designing Materials on English for an Islamic School in Indonesia

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Abstract The partnership program has been running as one of the Community Service programs of the UPPM of the Bandung State Polytechnic. In this partnership program, a newly established Islamic school which is often called '*pesantren*' in Bandung regency has become the partner. The main objective of the program is to give a consultation to the school in the English language teaching (ELT) program as an extra curriculum activity. As the ELT program is new and has not been established, a new syllabus with the materials should be formed. To design a syllabus, needs analysis was performed. It was then conducted through observation, interview, and survey. The management of the school and students has become the respondents. They all contributed data that are useful for syllabus designing. With additional information regarding the school and life of the students in the boarding school, a book for teaching materials has now been written. The present paper describes all the steps taken to collect data and to design a syllabus with the corresponding materials.

Keywords Partnership Program, Pesantren, ELT, Syllabus, Needs Analysis

1. Introduction

The most common Islamic school which runs in Indonesia and other neighbouring countries is called pesantren. The word *pesantren* according to an Indonesian dictionary KBBI is a boarding house where *santri* or students learn to read the *Qur'an* and other Islamic books; or it is also called *pondok* [1]. The word *santri* is

associated with Islam so that a pesantren is always a special place of education for Muslims. This is consistent with Soebahar's findings [2] which states that pesantren is Islamic educational institutions. In this modern era, pesantren not only teaches religious matters for the afterlife, such as Qur'an recitation but also teaches things for their lives in the world.

Pesantren has a basis on the Islamic religious spirit of both the educational providers and participants of their education. For this reason, pesantren education is often found in areas where the Islamic religion is strong. Most parents and education providers initially hoped to instill Islamic religious values in their students because pesantren education emphasized religious education. But along with the changing times, many pesantren have included 'world' education, which means education that is intended to provide the students with life skills to be able to survive in this world, so that the religious aspect and world content is proportional.

In Indonesia, there are quite a lot of schools that can be categorized as elite schools even though they regard themselves as common schools. Characteristics of such schools are exorbitant school fees, luxurious buildings, rigorous selection, and application of different disciplines and some of them provide facilities for campus dormitory. Such schools can be found in Jakarta, Magelang, Gontor, and Jombang. But now with the National Education System Law, number 20 of 2003, pesantren or other types of Islamic schools called *madrassa* to become institutions for learning and teaching as well as places for receiving and giving lessons. In such schools, English is not just a subject the students have to learn but also as the language of instruction, the language that the students use alongside

with Indonesian and Arabic.

Pesantren has undergone changes and transformation in the implementation of education [3 - 4]. In terms of the curriculum applied, Arifin [5] classified pesantren into three categories, namely modern pesantren, that is, pesantren which teaches most of the world's sciences as well as other public schools plus religious knowledge; *tahassus*, pesantren which emphasizes more on its education in the science of religion as a provision of life in the afterlife which sees science as a tool (*tahassus*) in which the science of *fiqh* (*ushul fiqh*), interpretation, the science of *hadith* and the science of *Sufism* and *qira'at*; and finally the mixture that teaches students both the world science and the afterlife. Meanwhile, there are other types of pesantren which are categorized as *salafi* pesantren which only teach classic Islamic books, and *khalafi* pesantren which incorporates general lessons into their pesantren education [6]. The pesantren that became the program which my institution has the partnership with is newly established in Bandung Regency - West Java. In terms of the education system and the application of the curriculum, the partnered program cannot be identified or categorized as an independent pesantren or Islamic school in general, but this school is in need of help in the form of material and non-material so that the school can develop.

At the time of the initial visit, the pesantren had about 30 junior high school students and around 6 English teachers who had Diploma 3 graduate qualifications. After the registration of new students, the pesantren now has around 60 students. There was an increase of 100% in 1 year with the new students. This is found out through survey which was conducted after the new school registration.

All pesantren students are also junior high school students. They practically study in two schools: a general school known as SMP – Junior High School and pesantren or an Islamic school. Accordingly, the students are in the program of the Integrated Education Boarding School, during which the students studying will be presented with three basic education, namely local curriculum education (*kepesantrenan*), National Curriculum Education, and Life Skill Education. However, the school is better known as a pesantren than a general SMP.

The first basis is Local Curriculum Education which has the purpose to understand, master, and appreciate the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. *Qur'an* is the sacred scripture of Islam and is traditionally believed to be a literal transcript of God's speech and to constitute the earthly reproduction of an uncreated and eternal heavenly original; and *Sunnah* is the body of traditional social and legal custom and practice of the Islamic community. Along with the *Qur'an*, *Hadith* (recorded sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), is a major source of *Sharī'ah*, or Islamic law [7]. These are the basis for excellence for establishing *akhlaqul karimah*, which means good behavior under Islamic teachings, so that when graduating they are ready to take part in the

community to become *Mujadid* – which means the renewal [8].

The second basis is National Curriculum Education which has the aim that students understand and master Science and Technology as a basis for self-excellence to be ready to compete in the World life.

The last basis is Life Skill Education Curriculum (eco-pesantren) which is aimed to develop life skills through mastery of the economy, health, and skills, so that they can make donations such as *zakat* and *shodaqoh* for the advancement of Muslims and the Indonesian Nation

From what has been described, it can be seen that partnerships to help to develop such a pesantren is an adequate thing to do as they have a strong desire to advance but so far is in an inadequate capacity.

The difference between pesantren and other general education is that the pesantren education system has an independent nature. Islamic boarding schools have relative freedom and do not have to follow the standard model set by the government in the field of education. This is due to the main purpose of education in pesantren, which is in line with the functions of Islamic religious education which among others is to foster humans into good people so as to keep the peace, brotherhood, and salvation [9]. Islamic boarding schools are free to develop their educational models without having to follow rigorous standards and curricula [10]. Furthermore, Zamroni [10] argues that pesantren always provides freedom in determining the pattern of educational policy. Every offer of development both from outside and from within itself will of course be through consideration of the prevailing values in the pesantren.

The outputs of Politeknik Negeri Bandung's cooperation with pesantren partners are a syllabus (English) for pesantren and teaching materials. For this reason, the writing of the English course syllabus and materials will be used following the process suggested by Richards [11] which comprises needs analysis, situational analysis, and planning learning outcomes, course organization, followed by selecting and preparing teaching materials, providing for effective teaching, and evaluation.

Mcalister and Nation [12] mentioned the existence of 3 outer circles that need to be considered in curriculum designing, namely principles, environment, needs. While other influential factors include: students' knowledge and shortcomings (learners' present knowledge and lacks), resources possessed including time (the resources available including time), teacher skills (the skills of the teachers), strengths and weaknesses of curriculum designers (the curriculum designer's strengths and limitations), and the principles of teaching and learning (principles of teaching and learning).

As the partnership's objective is to provide assistance to the pesantren on English language course, a needs analysis has to be conducted. Needs analysis which is also

called needs assessment in language teaching context is a systematic investigation of needs for designing a language course which in the beginning was meant for defining characteristics in the field of languages for academic and specific purposes [13]. Designing an English course for pesantren is specific and different from a general English language course in which the content material is added with religious nuances.

In some ways, the needs analysis conducted is similar to the steps carried out by Crowling [14] by using multiple sources (pesantren management, teachers, and students) and multiple methods (in this case observation, interviews, and surveys), the data gathering stage and uses triangulation. While Al-buainain et al [15] focused solidly on perceived needs as part of needs analysis to make an English syllabus that would be used in educational institutions. In another instance, Brown [16] revealed aspects of needs analysis as fundamentals in educational evaluation which was then followed by setting goals, language testing, developing material, and teaching.

The complete overview of the partnership program with this pesantren is to build an educational program that can lift the state of the relatively new school as well as providing students with a beneficial program for their future. As it is outside the main education the students will have, this program is put as an addition known as an extra-curricular activity.

This extra-curricular activity is a terminology to describe a program as additional to the main curriculum. This is to describe the activities and products carried out within this pesantren which may become the strength that the pesantren can be proud of. Hence, a syllabus then is made which contains points about the method of teaching and the time to be taken. The syllabus only concerns one program or subject and is also called a course syllabus [17 - 18]. Although it is an extracurriculum activity, a syllabus is made; and when the program is contious, several syllabi for several English courses should be provided.

The main objective of the partnership program is to design an additional English language course that will be used in the school. This course is different from what has

been available there which follows the national curriculum in the junior high school level.

The main research question formulated to carry out the planned program is what course materials are suitable for the students learning English as an additional program at school. This research question is then elaborated in more detail as in the questions regarding the students' level of English competency; the conditions of the school in terms of the facility they have and the expectations of the school management.

This set of questions becomes a guideline to conduct the activities of the partnership program.

2. Materials and Methods

The implementation of this partnership program involves various steps to obtain information, analyze, and then conduct a language teaching consultation.

The methodology used in the present research is mixed methods that employ quantitative methodology as in survey and qualitative as in observation and interviews. The data collection process used is observation (site visits), interviews with boarding school leaders, teachers, and students. While the partnership program involves steps such as curriculum development, preparation of teaching materials, and training of teaching methods based on the syllabus used.

This writing is limited to discussing how the partnership program helps in designing the materials to be given to students interested in learning English.

The sources of information to collect data through interviewing consisted of the Pesantren management and teachers. They include the head of the foundation, 2 members of the foundation, the head of the pesantren, and 3 teachers. The pesantren is run under a foundation, so the foundation management is included.

The following is a diagram showing the process and stages that have been carried out in the partnership program.

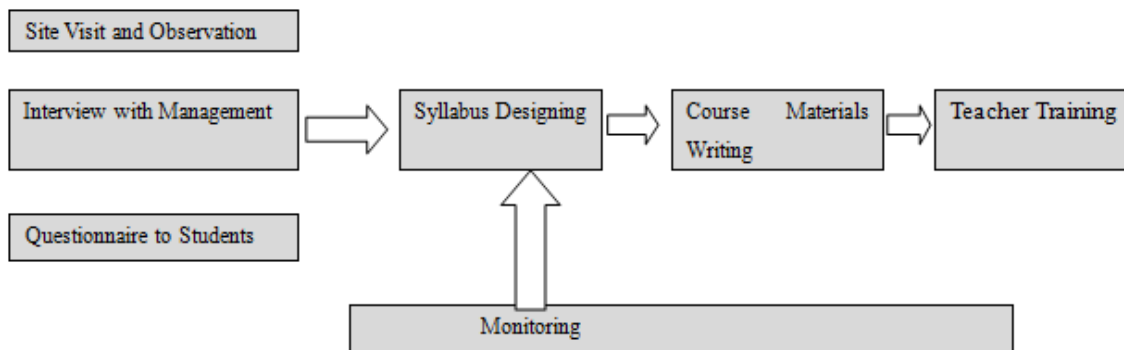


Figure 1. Process of Pesantren Course Program Designing

3. Finding and Discussions

This section discusses the results of a survey of Islamic boarding school students who were present at the time of data collection together with its discussion. The sub-sections represent the research questions formulated above.

3.1 Students' English Competency

The data about the students' English competency derives from the survey. This survey was divided into 2 groups in the form of questions about demographics and questions to find out the students' English proficiency. Therefore, the second is deliberately written in English. The survey was conducted when new students were just accepted, and they have started a new year or semester; so the data about the number of students are different from the results of the interview. The interview was held with the management and teachers during the semester break. We were then informed that there were only 26 students.

The survey was conducted when the new semester began, and 55 students participated. What is discussed in this report is information that is useful and related to teaching English in Islamic boarding schools. The demographic data regarding gender, the family background, and the addresses are not shown here because the information does not give impacts to the result.

When asked if they were interested in learning English as an extracurricular program, most expressed their will. Only 20 % stated that they were not interested in the English Program. However, when asked about the purpose of learning English besides or extracurricular, most students chose 'Inserting English sentences or phrases in *da'wah* (Islamic public lecture) and 'Adding knowledge'. Indeed, this is a reasonable answer because if the answer is the ability to preach in English is too high. Inserting English phrases into Indonesian language known as code switching is a prestige which is often done by high ranking officers in Indonesia when communicating in the public forum [19].

In general, 4 questions were demographic, and 16 questions were about English language use. The demographic questions were open questions while the rest were multiple-choice questions.

The following questions are written in English to find out how far they can answer the questions asked. Therefore, the answer only consists of A, B, C, D, and E where the description of the answers can be seen in the Table 1 below.

Table 1. Notes for the Answers to Questions in English

No	Grade	Notes
1	A	Completed with 100 % correct answer.
2	B	Completed with 75% correct answer
3	C	Completed with 50% correct answer
4	D	Completed but with wrong answer
5	E.	Not completed at all

From the question about 'What is your last name?', we can find that the answers are in the range of C (filled with 50% correct) and D (filled but wrong). From here we can see that even just to be asked regarding the name, not everybody could answer correctly. Similarly, regarding the question 'Where are you from originally?', only less than half an answer with 50% correct. While quite significantly more than one fifth do not answer because they may not know the meaning of the question above.

For the 'Where did you graduate from?' question, half of them did not answer and only 40% were able to answer with 50% correct. While to the question 'Do you like to study here?', one-fifth of the students do not answer the question and only about 66% can answer correctly filled in 75% and filled in correctly 50%. This shows that the question cannot be answered correctly.

From the question 'What will you do after you finish your study here?', almost half did not answer the question, which means they cannot answer. While those who answered were only about a third answered correctly with 75% correct and 50% correct.

Then only a quarter of the students did not fill in the answers and a third could only answer the question 'What is your permanent address?', whereas towards the question 'How long does it take to get here from your house? No one answered correctly. Only half an answer with 50% is correct.

To the question 'How many people are there in your family?' A tenth could not answer the question. While only 67% answered with 50% correct. And the question about 'What is your father's job?', one-fifth of the students did not fill in the answer. And only one third can answer with 50% correct.

On the next question on 'What do you like to do in your spare time?' (What are your hobbies?), 16% could not answer the question and only one fifth could answer the question with 50% correct. Regarding the question 'What do you want to be in the future?', half of the students could not answer that question. Only 23% could answer with 50% correct and 2 students or 3% could answer correctly. From the answers to the questionnaire, it appears that only a few students could answer all the questions correctly. The questions which were intentionally written in English were not meant to make them have difficulty but to see their English language ability at the same time to find out their status.

What has been done was not English students' proficiency, but it is the simplest and efficient way to find out the level of the students' English competency while also finding out the students' interests and other related data.

From the answers above, we can find that the level of students' English is at the basic level. Only questions about 'names' can be answered by all students although their answers are not perfectly correct in which only 7 people or 12% answered correctly.

Thus, topics that can be included in the syllabus are topics that are the most basic (beginning) which can be used as 'survival skills' English. This topic is likened to the level of basic English with the use of very simple language. The following are topics that will be included in the syllabus: Basic level students should study English with topics that are found in daily conversation and or in daily classroom conversations. The topics like Greeting, introducing, self and other identification, making small talk, expressing numbers, and time will be very useful. Additionally, they can also learn topics in describing people, places, and jobs. Asking for permission and direction as well as describing the process will also be of real benefit and can be included for classroom and school communication.

3.2. Conditions and Facility of Pesantren

The data regarding the conditions and facilities are obtained from the observation and interviews with the School teachers and Foundation management. The interview questions consist of 22 open questions requiring explanations which are about the conditions of students, fee, curriculum, and other related aspects of Pesantren education and management there. From the results of interviews with the Boarding School Leaders, Chairpersons and Secretary of Foundation and teachers who teach at the Pesantren, it can be concluded as follows:

The Pesantren is actually an additional program of the school which is in the level of Junior High School (known as SMP – *Sekolah Menengah Pertama*). So, the pesantren students are also Junior High school students. The junior high program is run in the morning until afternoon and is similar to the time of common junior high school in Indonesia. The pesantren program activities happen in the evening and night times. The pesantren programs include the recitation of the Quran which set a target to make the students or santri memorize (*hafidz*) 3 *juzzes* (big parts) of the Qur'san. In addition, there are programs to pray *sholat jammaah* (together praying) as well as *sholat tahajjud* (after midnight praying) - it's a recommended *sholat* which is conducted at after midnight or around 3 AM. The extra curriculum program such as sports is held in the afternoon on certain days.

In the pesantren complex, there is a mosque where the students and teachers can pray and conduct all presented programs as mentioned before. A place where the students sleep called '*kubang*' is available, but, as it is new, this place also functions as a classroom in the morning or day-time. As it is relatively new, no educational facilities such as a library or laboratory are available.

Now, the junior high school is in the 2nd grade, so no students have been graduated. Consequently, no fund is obtainable from the Government. The fund to run the school activities and even to build additional facilities

depends solely on donations from the community and school fees. Some students even do not pay the school fees because they cannot afford to, but the pesantren has the policy to accept them as long as they show their enthusiasm for learning.

3.3. Expectations from the School or Pesantren Management

The data about the students' expectations are also taken from the interview with the school and pesantren management and teachers.

In general, students are expected to become knowledgeable individuals, have good character, and have good behavior. Management from graduates expects to be able to *tahfiz* (memorize Al-Quran) for three *juzzes*, read Arabic writings, become priests and preachers.

The curriculum applied is National Curriculum known as *Kurtilas* (abbreviated from *Kurikulum Tiga Belas* – the curriculum which was first implemented in the year 2013) and the Pesantren curriculum which is based on education regulated in the Ministry of Religion called *Mustha 2*. With regards to the English program, English lessons are not local content but are the main subjects following the national curriculum. As in *Kurtilas*, all skills are taught but more portions are given to speaking and answering tests. English lessons are given three hours per week.

Management expects that students can preach or deliver a speech in English, while the books that are used in SMP/Pesantren are those that are used under the national curriculum. This certainly does not match, so additional English lessons are needed.

Between the expectation and reality, there is a huge gap. This unrealistic expectation, which is to preach in English, from the management should be interpreted as the ability to use some English expressions when the students preach. When a preacher does their job in Indonesia, no English is required. However, occasionally, an Indonesian preacher sometimes speaks or uses English intended as a joke or just to give impressions. This certainly needs more than just the ability deriving from Junior High school curriculum.

3.4. Cultural Aspects of the Lesson Materials

The result of this pesantren partnership with the campus is to design materials for use in the extra curriculum activity in a form of English language learning. The materials for learning English in pesantren are certainly different from those in a common school. It is English for Specific program in a somewhat generic form. Some words or terminologies, especially Islamic ones, are inserted.

Wang [20] states that language as a part of culture and language also plays a very important role in the development of the culture. He also further mentions the

importance of background knowledge of English culture in teaching English. This idea cannot be denied, but there is an immense development of the language which can go across the border of a country or culture.

English is now the only international language spoken for all purposes in all walks of life. It has gone across the countries and culture as well as religions. When an Indonesian meets with an Egyptian or Turkish, the language to be used will probably be English because this is the language that they are very familiar with. They are united by religion and English. The greetings spoken between Moslems are not just 'Good morning or evening', but 'Assalaamualaikum'.

As the number of Moslems in the World has rapidly grown, many words are now adapted from Islam to English. Those words cannot be translated properly or they require some words for clear and further explanation. Those words like *wudlu*, *sunnah*, *thowaf*, *zakat*, and many others are best kept as they are rather than translated.

Those words are found in the lesson materials to keep the nuances of Islam in the lessons. Other activities such as how to take *wudlu* and how to pray are also included.

4. Conclusions

The partnership program between a tertiary institution and a pesantren is intended to assist what a tertiary as big institution has for a smaller institution. Initially, the institution intended to provide consultation, but it seems that the term consultation is not appropriate. Instead, the tertiary institution gives a 'bigger program' as in course provision which includes the design of curriculum, design of teaching materials, and design of teaching programs. Then, a simple needs analysis was performed.

Regarding the students' English competency, through the questionnaire, it was found that the students were at the basic level. This can be seen from the answers given by the students in the questionnaire the contents of which were to ask students simple questions regarding their status and activities.

As it is relatively new, the condition and facilities of the Pesantren need improvement supports from the community and certainly the Government to have adequate classrooms for learning and teaching, a library, and other learning facilities.

The expectations of the Pesantren management to the students especially regarding the ability to speak English are too far beyond the school conditions. These expectations may become a vision for the Pesantren in probably about 20 years to come. Accordingly, these expectations need adjustment in designing the materials for the present condition of both students and pesantren.

The design of the materials for use in the Pesantren as the partner of the Community Service programs of the UPPM of the Bandung State Polytechnic has gone

through the process of curriculum and syllabus development stages which include needs analysis steps such as in-site observation, interviews with management and teaching staff and survey to students.

A further step is to review the syllabus used. For this, a classroom activity, that is teaching and learning, should happen using the syllabus and materials made. That is the reason why this partnership program should be continued.

As students will develop along with their capability, another syllabus as the continuation of the present syllabus should also be prepared. This will be a follow up of the previous step on reviewing the use of the materials in the teaching and learning process. The review of the materials may not be as thorough as before, but this should involve class observation and some tests.

The development or continuation of this program should be made. This is intended to meet the expectation of the management of the Foundation and School or Pesantren, considering that the ability of the students is way too below.

The inclusion of Islamic ideas or terminologies in the syllabus should also be made 'deeper' or more advanced. This can be put in the next materials. Further research on the students' activities is required. This will give ideas on what to be included in the next more advanced materials.

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