

AERP STRATEGY AS THE SPIRIT OF CLIL APPROACH: ONE WAY SOLUTION TO TEACH CONTENT SUBJECTS DELIVERED IN ENGLISH IN SBI PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Realizing the importance of English acquisition nowadays, various efforts have been conducted in any aspects of life such as in education field. As stated in the Decree of Minister of Education no 20/30, by applying Internationally Standard Schools program starting from elementary to senior high school levels, it is expected that students who take a part in this program are able to use English as their means of communication both inside and outside the classroom that later, they can compete globally in either national or international level. However, although this program has been conducted for more than five years in Indonesia, it does not show satisfying progress. The evidence shows that the ability of the SBI teachers in English is still below the standard which automatically affects the students' achievement on the subjects delivered in English such as on Math and Science. This paper covers the information on a particular teaching strategy, called as AERP (Activation, Exposure, Repetition, and Production) under the spirit of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach, as the alternative way to teach content subjects delivered in English in SBI program. Expectedly, this paper will provide solutions to solve teaching problems in SBI program.

Keywords: SBI program, teaching strategy, CLIL approach, and AERP strategy

Introduction

In this global era, acquiring English is very crucial since it is considered as an international language that most people among countries in the world build their communication by using it. Crystal (1997) states that English nowadays has achieved global status. Block and Cameron (2002) also say that English as one of the global languages becomes an essential commodity in the globalized world. Besides, according to Naisbitt and Aburdene (1990) as cited in Ibrahim (2001), it is found that more than 80% of information in the world is delivered in English. Therefore, when a country cannot acquire a global language, it will face many problems on its existence among countries in the world.

Realizing the importance of English acquisition nowadays, various efforts have been conducted in any aspects of life such as in education field. Concerning with this aspect, the government of Indonesia as the stakeholder has been trying to make a policy which aims at enabling Indonesian students at any education levels to acquire English. To implement the policy, the government has issued the Decree of Minister of Education no 20/2003 about the establishment and development of at least one school at every education level into a national school which has an international standard or it is well known as National School with International Standard or *Sekolah Berstandar Internasional (SBI)*. As stated in Depdiknas (2007:4), this kind of

school places English not only as a subject but also as a medium of instruction for other subjects such as Math, Science, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the aim of conducting this program is to produce graduates who are ready to compete globally in both national and international levels. In conducting SBI program, the schools should meet some criteria required by the government. Based on the criteria issued in Depdiknas (2007:20), first, the schools must use national and international curricula and syllabi for the teaching and learning process. Second, the schools must provide qualified and certified English teachers. Third, the students must be proficient in English. Fourth, the schools have enough facilities to support the program.

Some consequences follow the criteria above. English teachers and non English teachers, who get involved in the program are demanded to master English for instruction and for delivering the lessons. Besides, the students who belong to this program are required to be able to understand the lessons by using English. In short, both teachers and students have to use English as an instructional and interactional media in the classroom.

Although SBI program has been carried out for more than five years in Indonesia, it seems that the program has not worked effectively and maximally since the school has not met the criteria yet. Based on the writer's observation on SBI schools in Malang conducted in 2010, it is found that most of SBI teachers, particularly non English teachers or content teachers find more difficulties in transferring their knowledge to their students using English as a medium of instruction because they have no adequate background knowledge of English education or teaching English

experiences. This gives impact on the teachers' teaching's performance that they neither use an interesting strategy nor motivate the students to get actively involved in the teaching learning process. They usually give the students explanation and direct translation of technical terms from Indonesian into English or in the reverse without giving brainstorming or activating the students' prior knowledge at the beginning of the lesson. This is not profitable for the students because activating schemata is actually important to assist them to make progress (Chinnappan, 2003). Haynes (2010) states that if the teacher does not activate students' prior knowledge or their background information, knowing the vocabulary instantly will not solve the problem. Furthermore, such a method lets the students easily forget new vocabulary items since they are not given in contexts and they are only required to memorize new terms forcibly. The writer also noted that non English teachers often complain that they are not used to delivering their lessons in English and the students are not accustomed to getting non English subjects in English as well. As the result, the teaching and learning process may not be carried out effectively and efficiently and the teaching and learning's goal cannot be achieved as well. This problem may occur since a teaching strategy which has been applied does not run in an appropriate way.

Realizing the facts above, there is an urgent need to integrate the teaching and learning process between content subjects such as Science or Math and target language subjects such as English in SBI program. Teaching content and language integratedly, in this case, refer to the English is used as the "vehicle" to teach content subjects. In the practice, there should be collaboration between an English teacher and a content teacher in teaching content subjects

delivered in English to get a maximum result. An English teacher focuses on exploring the English usage within a topic. Thus, the students will be well-equipped with English exposure used in the topic before they are conveyed more deeply in the content. On the other hand, a content teacher has a responsibility to teach content concept in details. He/she will not be bothered to teach content using English since the students have got the language exposure from the English teacher.

As the implementation of the activities above, the writer offers an appropriate teaching strategy as one way solution to teach content subjects written in English. The writer believes that students will be able to acquire content subjects if they have a good proficiency in the language used to deliver the content of the subjects. In this case, the students are expected to master English before they go more deeply on understanding content subjects delivered in English. Thus, the writer selects a teaching strategy under the umbrella of an approach called CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) which has an aim at teaching content through a foreign language. CLIL approach is selected because, as stated by Herrera and Murry (2005), it is truly helpful to teach content area subjects such as Math or Science through the medium of a foreign language such as English and to teach a foreign language by studying a content area subject such as Math. Hence, the students will gain doubled chances to learn not only a foreign language but also content subjects simultaneously. Nixon (1999) and Tidblom (2005) also say that CLIL can provide a more natural and meaningful way of language development integrated in a content-based subject. They believe that learners will be more motivated when studying a natural language combined with content subject since it is more

interesting to study. Nixon (1999) and Tidblom (2005) further say “CLIL can increase students’ command and skills in the target language and make them link to international projects where the language of communication is the target language”.

The application of CLIL has been successful at schools among western countries. This approach has been introduced since 1990. Tidblom (2005) describes that in Canada, there are some research and experiences of teaching content subjects using a foreign language. The Canadian projects have shown positive results. Certain groups of children can acquire Math better after they are treated using CLIL approach. Naves (2002), as quoted by Novotna and Hofmannova (2009), reports that the CLIL program is successfully conducted in teacher trainings for CLIL in the Czech Republic. The author further says that the teachers involved in the training showed their active teaching behaviors such as clearly giving instructions, accurately giving tasks, and maintaining learners’ engagement in learning English as a foreign language and Mathematics.

There are various types of CLIL. Ball (2008:1) and Kelly (2006:3) as cited by Smala (2009) distinguish between *soft* CLIL, also known as *weak* CLIL and *hard* CLIL, also known as *strong* CLIL. The former refers to the teaching and learning process which is more emphasized on the language or it is named as *language-driven*. This CLIL tends to be adopted by target language teachers exploiting the language from the contexts of the content subject. In the latter, the teaching and learning processes is more focused on the content or it is termed as *content-driven*. Here, the content teacher exploits more on the content guided by the content curriculum with no barrier regarding the language and content

loads. However, Ball (2008:1) states that both approaches are valid and often work on collaboration in which in the real field, the target language teacher and content teacher work together to teach the target language and the content.

The CLIL approach introduces four guiding principles, well known as the 4Cs proposed by Coyle (1999): Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture. They are all equally significant in CLIL programs. The first principle is *Content*. It refers to the subject's themes providing the basic learning through acquisition of knowledge, skills, and understanding. The second one is *Communication*. Here, the target language is used to learn as well as to communicate. As applied in the classroom, it is not used merely for discussing a certain subject but for instruction as well which the teachers and the students practice it for building communication among them. The third one is *Cognition*. Learners are challenged to think, review, and engage in higher order thinking skill in which they should construct their own understanding. The last principle is *Culture* which means that studying through a foreign language is essential for understanding of cultural awareness. Culture is considered as one of the necessary principles since it becomes a need for students to be equipped with materials which are closely related with their own culture so that they are familiar with in order to understand materials more easily.

In the practice of CLIL approach, an English teacher works collaboratively with a content teacher to deliver content subject using English as a medium of instruction in the class. The English teacher is the one who is responsible for introducing and exposing terms and expressions within the content in English contextually while the content teacher is responsible for teaching the

content concept bilingually. The content teacher is permitted to do translation, code switching, or repetition in delivering the lesson either in Indonesian or in English. He/she is not insisted to teach using English fully. Technically, both teachers do not teach at the same time. There should be different time allotment for both of them. Hence, the students get two different kinds of exposure in learning the Math subject using English.

As the scenario of the teaching and learning activities using CLIL approach, a particular strategy should be conducted as it consists of teaching tricks that can determine the success of the teaching and learning process and can create it as interesting as possible. It is in line with Brown (2001:14-16) that many schools recently tend to use strategy instead of technique and method. Regarding with this, the writer offers a teaching strategy to teach content subjects written in English, called as AERP strategy standing for *Activation, Exposure, Repetition, and Production*. This strategy refers to a series of instructional activities that assist students to learn content and language simultaneously. It is considered as a suitable teaching strategy since every stage in the strategy fulfills the criteria that the learners have opportunities to learn content subject through English.

The first step of the strategy is *Activation*. To deepen students' understanding on the content subject, building new knowledge actively from their previous knowledge and learning experiences should be considered as one way solution to solve content subject problems. Thus, conceptual understanding is a very crucial component needed to deal with the subject.

Second is *Exposure*. As a medium of instruction, the students will not be only

exposed on English as a subject, but they will be also exposed on how to use it for communication. It is in line with one of the CLIL principles, *Communication*, proposed by De Coyle (2005) which has an aim that the target language is exposed to enable the students to use it communicatively. This situation of course, provides students with more exposure and opportunities to produce technical terms on the content subjects contextually. Then, they are expected to be able to use it for discussing, presenting topics, and interacting among them. Content exposure is also conducted to introduce a basic concept of the material being discussed using English.

Next step is *Repetition*. In accordance with teaching principles proposed by Elizabeth and Rao (2007), a teacher should repeat the material he/she delivered several times so that the students are able to grasp and understand the subject matter well. In this step, the teacher is going to drill the students with technical terms of the subjects in the form of words and expressions by giving them model how to pronounce the words correctly and how to use it in context. This principle is appropriate since the teaching and learning of a language is a matter of practice, meaning that it is a habit formation process. Habits are formed through repetition. By doing repetition, the students will keep the specific important terms in their mind so that they will not get any difficulties in finding the meaning of particular terms. In addition, Lado as cited in Elizabeth and Rao (2007) stated that “the students must be engaged in practice most of the learning time”, which meets a psychological justification that the quantity and permanence of learning are in direct proportion to the amount of practice. To get the result, the teacher must be required to become a good model for the students since they will imitate him/her as an example. In

teaching a language, he/she should have good proficiency in either English components such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary or English skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, the students will gain a good model in producing the target language. In brief, repetition in learning language is considered as a worth way to enhance students’ proficiency.

Production is the fourth step of the strategy. This step refers to ask the students to produce problem solving on content subject problems either in written or oral forms. In written form, they are given problems that are to be solved by using technical terms and expressions appropriately and providing correct problem solving and answers. The purpose of this stage is to check whether they are able to use the terms and expressions in correct word spellings. On the other hand, they are also expected to be able to present their works in front of the class. This stage is conducted to see whether they can pronounce the words correctly and really understand the problems or questions by providing the problem solving.

From the explanation above, expectedly the problems on the teaching and learning process in SBI program can be solved. Therefore, the teaching and learning goals can be achieved maximally.

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