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# **PROCEEDINGS**

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> International Language and Language Teaching Conference**

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# **The Impacts of Immersion For Learning English: A Comparative Study of Private Junior-High School Students in Surabaya, Indonesia.**

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## **Abstract**

School students in a non-English-speaking country like Indonesia generally learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL). As a matter of fact, some 'international' schools in Indonesia (currently changed to 'SPK' / '*Satuan Pendidikan Kerjasama*'/Cooperative Educational unit) usually create a conducive learning English as a Second Language (ESL) environment through immersion programs so that English becomes the medium of communication implemented by students and teachers in classrooms/at school. Therefore, English is really applied in their daily and social use in natural ways of interactions. The aim of this study is to share best practice in learning English with immersion strategy in EFL context. In this study, the writer would like to compare the private Junior-high school students in Surabaya that learn English with and without immersion programs. A survey is also conducted to enrich the data of this study.

**Key words:** learning English, immersion, impacts.

## **Introduction**

The notion of world Englishes reflects the use of English as an international language and the expanding circles of English (Kachru in Bhatia, 1997:113). One of the recent educational trends to face Asean Economic Community is the need of learning English and other foreign languages for specific purposes, especially jobs and trade. In this global world, professionals who work in certain positions must meet specific job standard. To face this new challenge in the 21st century, many schools, like in Indonesia (a member of Asean countries), may respond the challenge in using different ways. As a matter of fact, Indonesia belongs to the outer circle of English so Indonesians learn EFL in Indonesia where English is not their dominant language. That's why, many parents would like to send their children to the international/ 'SPK' schools in Indonesia so that their children could similarly learn ESL through immersion programs. The schools expect to create conducive linguistic environment so that English becomes the medium of communication and instruction used by students and teachers in classrooms. English is really applied in their daily and social use in natural ways of interactions. In this paper, the writer would like to share best practice in learning English with immersion strategy in EFL context. There are two kinds of immersion programs- a total immersion program and a partial immersion program. If the learners are taught in English (L2) for the whole day, it is called a total immersion program, but If they are taught in English (L2) for only part of the day it is called a partial immersion program (Richards et al, 1992:174). The international schools in Indonesia may be either a total immersion program or a partial immersion program. They usually use the immersion program as their 'sink or swim approach' to foster the learners' competence in English. Further, he wants to compare the private junior-high school students in Surabaya-Indonesia that learn English with and without immersion programs. In another word, he would like to compare the learning results of the international/ 'SPK' schools that generally provide English with immersion programs (similarly learning to ESL) and the national schools that generally provide English without immersion programs (learning EFL). Some inputs would also be shared for schools in EFL context that want to apply the English immersion program. When

schools want to learn how to apply the English immersion program, everyone in the schools (students, teachers, leaders, and administrators) must be all learners. They learn how to learn together so that everyone wants to learn and find joy and satisfaction in learning (Ng, 2005:1). For that purpose, it is necessary to empower all the learners and their diversity learning (yeap et al, 2005:13-15).

Moreover, besides the differences in curriculum of the English subject, the learning materials, and assessments, both national and international schools have different learners. The learners of national schools are generally local students who may use English in classroom settings, so they may achieve their EFL competence from the language learning. On the other hand, the learners of international schools may also be local ones who use English not only in classroom settings but also at home so they achieve their ESL competence from Second Language Learning (SLL) and Second language Acquisition (SLA). As a matter of facts, there are many factors that contribute in the communicative competence of language learners, such as the frequency of using English, the number of slots, the class size, the competence of teachers, the linguistic environment, the use of English, the aim of learning English (Sadtono, 1995:15-17). Moreover, some learners are easy to succeed at language learning and gain their communicative competence but others are not. There are some other factors that predict success in language learning. Some factors in predicting success in learning English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) are intelligence which accounts for 20% of variance in predicting success in ESOL; whereas language aptitude 33%, perseverance and motivation 33%, and others (such as interest, learning strategies, learning style) 14% (Sadtono, 1995 : 24-26). Basically the success of learning ESOL depend on the learner, the teacher, the learning materials, and the linguistic environment.

#### **International/SPK' Schools in Indonesia**

International schools in Indonesia have currently been changed to '*Satuan Pendidikan Kerjasama (SPK)*'. As a matter of fact, the students of the international schools in Indonesia are not always foreign citizens. Even, there are also many local Indonesian citizens studying at 'SPK' schools. The Ministry of Education and Culture of Republic of Indonesia has regulated the cooperation between foreign educational institution and Indonesia educational institution by setting up the Law No 105/C/Kep/LN/2014. The students of 'SPK' can be Indonesian and foreign citizens. The teachers of 'SPK' schools should be minimum 30% Indonesian citizens and maximum 70% foreign citizens. The foreign teachers are minimum strata 1 graduates and have teacher certificates and working permit, could speak Indonesian, and know Indonesian culture. The management of 'SPK' should have minimum strata 2 graduates with minimally 5 years educational experience. SPK could use curriculum from international recognized education, such as Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), International Baccalaureate (IB), and others.

International/SPK' schools in Indonesia are generally partial English immersion ones. They still provide other subjects in different languages, such as 'Bahasa Indonesia' or Chinese because the students also have to take national examination taken from national curriculum. Through the English immersion program in classrooms/at schools, the learners are expected to acquire both English acquisition and learning. English immersion (Wikipedia) is a method of teaching English in which the learners' second language (English) is the medium of classroom instruction. The learners also learn school subjects, such as Math, Science, IT in their second language. The main purpose of this method is to develop learners' language proficiency in English. In other word, the aim of English

immersion is to replace the native/ first language of the learners with English as the main medium of instruction at school.

### Language Acquisition vs Language Learning

Language learners are expected to acquire language acquisition and language learning through the immersion schools (like the international schools). Guzman (2002) states that English immersion with special instruction geared toward the acquisition of English-language skills. And achieving functional native-like fluency in a second language (English) at young age yields cognitive benefits. Krashen also states that language acquisition is the process of natural assimilation, involving intuition and subconscious learning focusing on communication requiring meaningful interaction in the target language to achieve native-like fluency. While language learning focuses on the language in the written form and rules of the language tied to a syllabus.

### Survey

In this paper, there were 60 respondents of this survey that consist of 30 respondents from one international school and 30 other respondents from six national schools of private Junior-high level in Surabaya, Indonesia. In this survey, the writer used questionnaires with some interview and observation. The survey was started from January to June 2015. And the respondents' ages were at a range of 14 to 16. They were 28 male students and 32 female students. They were all Indonesian citizens and their mother tongue was 'Bahasa Indonesia'. The respondents from the international school learnt ESL with partial immersion program while the other respondents from national schools learnt EFL. The immersion respondents from the international school thought that English was their second language while the non-immersion respondents from the national schools thought that English was their foreign language.

### Findings and Discussion

As a matter of fact, learning English in Indonesia with immersion program (similarly to ESL) generally conducted by International schools/SPK might be different from that without immersion programs (learning EFL) generally conducted by national schools. Both kinds of schools have different purposes, curriculum, ways of learning, and evaluation/assessments. Here, he would like to show the results of the students assessments of the English subject in the following tables:

Table 1: Comparison the learner competence examination results of English subject of private Junior high-schools between ('SPK')/international schools and national schools in Surabaya, Indonesia (2015):

The average scores (scales 0-10) of the learner competence examination results	
SPK/international schools (consisting of 5 schools)	National schools (consisting of 234 schools)
8,00	4,37

Based on the above comparison of the learner competence examination results of English subject of private Junior high schools in Surabaya Indonesia (2015) between international (SPK) schools and national schools, the average score of the learner competence examination results of English subject the international schools is almost twice than that of the national ones. This means that the English competence of the international school learners who learn English as a second language through immersion

program is significantly higher than that of the national school learners who learn English as a foreign language.

Table 2: the average results of the English national examination of the Junior high-school in

Indonesia (2015).

One international/ 'SPK' school	Other (national+ 'SPK') schools in a district in Surabaya (Indonesia)	Other (national+'SPK') schools in East Java province (in Indonesia)
The average scores (scales 0-100)		
92,93	70,48	64,22

Based on the data of table 2, the average results of the English national examination of the Junior high-schools in Indonesia (2015) show that the average result of its international/ 'SPK' school is significantly higher than other schools of one district in Surabaya and those of East Java province. There are 30 Junior high-school learners of the international school mentioned here taking the national examination 2015. Beside its average result 92,93, the highest score achieved is 100 and the lowest one is 88. It is not really surprising results of the international schools learners that take national examination. The national examination is based on the testing standard of EFL while the international schools generally learn ESL which has its higher standard of ESL evaluation. It is not hard for international school students learning ESL that took a national examination of English subject based on EFL evaluation standard so it is not surprising if the output of ESL is different from that of ESL. Beside the output difference, the international school process of learning ESL through the immersion program is also different. The immersion school tries to create a conducive linguistic environment at least in class/at school and also teach other subjects, such as Mathematics, Science, ICT, and other subjects using English as the medium of instruction. This kind of 'sink or swim approach' is used to ensure that the learners learn English as quickly as possible to foster their English proficiency (Richards et al, 1992:362)

In this part, the writer would like to explain some important findings on whether learners from the international schools and learners from national schools learn English differently. Based on the results of the questionnaires the writer got some findings from two different respondents - immersion learners (from international schools) and non-immersion learners (from national schools) as follows:

Immersion learners	Non-immersion learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When asked about what <i>Bahasa Indonesia</i> and English are for them, all the respondents replied that <i>Bahasa Indonesia</i> was their mother tongue and English was their second language.</li> <li>• When asked about how long the respondents had been learning English, they replied that most of them (70%) had been learning English for about twelve years, some others (about 13%) had been learning it for thirteen years, a few</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When asked about what <i>Bahasa Indonesia</i> and English are for them, all the respondents replied that <i>Bahasa Indonesia</i> was their mother tongue and English was their foreign language.</li> <li>• When asked about how long the respondents had been learning English, they replied that most of them (about 70%) had been learning English for nine years, some others (about 23%) had been learning it for six years, and some</li> </ul>

others (10%) had been learning it for eleven years and others (about 7%) had been learning for fourteen years.

- When asked about with whom the respondents usually spoke English, they replied that most of them (83%) spoke English with English teachers and other teachers, many others (about 67%) spoke it with their friends in class/at school, half of them (about 50%) spoke it with their siblings, and many of them (about 40%) spoke it with their parents.
- When asked about what languages the respondents also used, they replied that many of them (about 40%) spoke English with their parents, and siblings, some others (about 20%) spoke Chinese with their parents, many others (about 40%) spoke *Bahasa Indonesia* with their siblings, and with their friends outside the school.
- When asked about how long the respondents used English, more than half of them (about 60%) used 5 hours to 10 hours a day and many others (about 40%) used more than 10 hours a day.
- When asked about how long the respondents used *Bahasa Indonesia*, more than half of them (about 60%) used about 5 hours a day and many others (about 40%) used 3 hours a day.
- When asked about what language their English teachers used in teaching English lesson in class, the respondents replied that all their English teachers (about 100%) always used English as the medium of instruction.
- When asked whether the respondents felt confident to speak English, they replied that most of them (about 83%) felt confident to speak it, but some others (about 17%) didn't feel confident to speak

others (about 17%) had been learning it for three years.

- When asked about with whom the respondents usually spoke English, they replied that most of them (about 73%) spoke English with their English teachers, some others (about 23%) spoke it with their friends in class/at school and another (about 4%) spoke it with foreign friends.
- When asked about what languages the respondents also used, they replied that all of them (about 100%) spoke *Bahasa Indonesia* with their parents, siblings, teachers, and friends at school or outside the school. Some of them sometimes spoke their local language (Javanese) with their friends or family.
- When asked about how long the respondents used English, many of them (about 47%) used less than one hour a day, some others (about 33%) used about two hours a day, and some others (about 20%) used about one hour a day.
- When asked about how long the respondents used *Bahasa Indonesia*, all of them (about 100%) used it more than 10 hours a day.
- When asked about what language their English teachers used in teaching English lesson in class, the respondents replied that all their English teachers (about 100%) used English and *Bahasa Indonesia* as the medium of instruction.
- When asked whether the respondents felt confident to speak English, they replied that many of them (about 67%) did not feel

it for some reasons, such as the respondent was afraid of making mistakes, the respondents realized that his/her friends' English proficiency was better than his/hers.

- When asked whether the respondents felt nervous to speak English in class, they replied that most of them (about 83%) didn't feel nervous to speak it in class
- When asked about their opinion on learning English, the respondents replied that half respondents (about 50%) thought that English was easy to learn and half others (about 50%) thought that English was quite difficult to learn and some difficult skills/components, were grammar and writing. Most respondents (about 83%) said that grammar was the most difficult component and some respondents (about 33%) said that writing was the most difficult skill in learning English.
- When asked whether the respondents enjoyed learning English, they replied that all of them (about 100%) enjoyed learning it.
- When asked about who made the respondents enjoy learning English, they replied that they themselves (about 83%) and their teachers (about 17%) made them enjoy learning it.
- When asked about how many hours the respondents learnt English in class in a week, they replied that they learnt English for 7 lesson-hours in a week and they also learnt other subjects like Mathematics and Science in

confident to speak it for some reasons, such as they couldn't speak it fluently, they were afraid of making mistakes, they realized that their English was not good, and some others (about 20%) felt confident to speak it, and some others (about 13%) felt quite confident to speak it.

- When asked whether the respondents felt nervous to speak English in class, they replied that most of them (about 93%) felt nervous to speak it in class
- When asked about their opinion on learning English, the respondents replied that many of them (about 47%) thought that English was hard/difficult to learn, many others (about 43%) thought that English was quite hard/difficult to learn and some others (about 10%) thought that English was very hard to learn. The respondents thought that the most difficult components/skills in English were grammar (about 70%), speaking (about 43%), vocabulary (about 40%), and listening (about 17%).
- When asked whether the respondents enjoyed learning English, they replied that many of them (about 47%) did not enjoy learning English because of some reasons, such as English was very difficult for them, it was difficult for them to talk in English.
- When asked about who made the respondents enjoy learning English, they replied that their teachers (about 50%), their classmates (about 27%), and they themselves (about 23%) made them enjoy learning it.
- When asked about how many hours the respondents learnt English in class in a week, they replied that most of them (about 57%) learnt English for 4 lesson-hours in a week, and many others

<p>English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When asked about their proficiency in English and <i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>, they replied that their proficiency in English (about 67%) was better than that in <i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>, and some others (about 33%) thought that their proficiency in English was equal to that in <i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>.</li> </ul>	<p>(about 43%) learnt English for 5 lesson-hours in a week but they didn't learn other subjects in English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When asked about their proficiency in English and <i>Bahasa Indonesia</i>, they replied that their proficiency in <i>Bahasa Indonesia</i> (about 100%) was better than that in English.</li> </ul>
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When asked to explain about the benefits of learning English in English and in *Bahasa Indonesia*, one respondent (an immersion learner) from the international school wrote as follows:

"I think that the main benefit to learning English is that it allows me to communicate with so many people who otherwise I would not be able to talk to. Not only that, most of the content on the Internet is in English, so I am able to read and get more information than I would if I did not know English."

*"Menurut saya keuntungan terbesar yang saya dapat dari mempelajari bahasa Inggris adalah bahwa saya berkomunikasi dengan lebih banyak orang. Selain itu, sebagian besar data di Internet tertulis dalam bahasa Inggris, sehingga saya bisa mendapatkan lebih banyak informasi dibandingkan dengan orang yang tidak mengerti Inggris ."*

When asked to explain about the benefits of learning English in English and in *Bahasa Indonesia*, one respondent from the national school wrote as follow:

"I'm can know foreign language  
Play game, can make know the vocabulary"

*"Saya dapat mengetahui bahasa asing  
Bermain game, dapat membuatku mengerti kosakata"*

From the above response, the immersion learner from the international school could elaborate ideas in longer complete sentences with better unity and coherence, and with less grammatical errors. On the other hands, the non-immersion learner from the national school could not elaborate ideas in longer complete sentences with more spelling and grammatical errors. It seems that the non-immersion learner translated the English statements from the Indonesian ones.

## Conclusion

One of the recent educational trends to face Asean Economic Community is the need of learning English. Indonesia as one of 11 Asean members has to respond the need of learning English. Indonesia belongs to the outer circle of English (Kachru in Bhatia, 1997:113) so Indonesians generally learn EFL in Indonesia where English is not their dominant language. Recently, many Indonesian parents have sent their children to the international/ 'SPK' schools in Indonesia expecting their children to learn English at the international schools in Indonesia that generally use an English immersion approach to

achieve the standard of ESL. The schools expect to create conducive linguistic environment so that English becomes the medium of communication and instruction used by learners and teachers in classrooms.

Based on the results of the private Junior high schools learner competence examination of English subject in Surabaya in 2015, the international schools (having average score 8,00 from 5 'SPK' schools with a partial immersion program) had much better average scores than the national schools (having average score 4,37 from 234 schools) which didn't apply the immersion program.

Moreover, another partial immersion school also showed better results in the English national examination of the Junior high school in Indonesia (2015). Its average score of this partial immersion school was 92,93 (with scales 0-100) comparing to that of the schools in one district of Surabaya whose average score was 70,48, and that of the schools in East-Java province whose average score was 64,22.

As a matter of fact, learning English in Indonesia is actually learning EFL: English is not the dominant language in Indonesia. The learning results of English would be different when the learners have the immersion program by creating conducive linguistic environment in classrooms/at school. The immersion program would make it different because it is similar to learn ESL. The learning results/output of the immersion schools are better than that of non-immersion schools.

Further, the immersion learners have been using English more time and places. They generally have been learning English since they were young (at the age of 2 or 3). The earlier age they learn English, the better language acquisition they would gain. The more frequent time they use it, the better language acquisition they would gain. The immersion learners generally use English in their most daily communication. How frequent they keep using English in their daily life would determine the success of their English proficiency.

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