

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

In this part of research report, a problem is raised along with a number of theories and previous research findings. Then, the purposes of the study, supported with its justification are also presented to make a clear understanding of this research focus. Other parts such as research question, hypothesis, and definition of key terms are presented in discrete headings.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Teaching English as foreign language in expanding circle countries seems to be in a dilemma. While the outer circle countries may have their own variety of English (Kachru & Smith, 2008), expanding circle countries are demanded to refer to Inner Circle countries' English variety in order to be considered as proficient. However, as the issue of World Englishes (WEs) (Kachru & Smith, 2008) is raised, the chance of expanding circle countries to have their own English variety is growing. This chance allows any country to have their own parameter of good English and its teaching.

As the term of globalization comes to the discussion, everything seems necessary to be readjusted. It has levelled the playing field into another whole new level. For some, it is an opportunity. Meanwhile, others see this phenomenon as a catastrophic event which may lead to a loss of cultural and linguistic diversity (McKay, 2011). For the researcher, it seems that it is an opportunity for us to have our own English teaching activity. It is not by tearing it apart and reassembling it as we want, but by using our culture as the culture content to balance the global concern. Taking this issue of local culture presence, we must not see it as adding a new alien part as a sub-notion in language teaching. It is an act of reexamining our discipline to orientate to language, identity and knowledge into a whole new perspective. Canagarajah (2009) states that "local grounding should be the primary and critical force in the construction of contextually relevant knowledge if we are to develop a more plural discourse" (p. xiv), or a relevant culture content, in specific (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). It means that we must not see the relation of English and local culture as the English knowledge which is then transferred or translated into the local, but we have to see it as a filter to comprehend the foreign one.

The relation between language and culture is also affected by this issue. The nature of language as culture bound (Spolsky, 1989) leads to the fix package of EFL teaching to always teach English according to the inner circle countries' culture. This practice gives more demand on customized EFL teaching (Burns and Joyce in Nunan, 1999). At this point, we might quote Canagarajah (2009) who states that "the science of modernism is not a value-free, culture-neutral, pure rationality that is of universal relevance" (p. xv). Hence, the existence of local culture should be considered wisely. As many studies revealed the negative effect of teaching English with its culture and the positive effect of teaching English with local culture in EFL context (Abdollahi-Guilani, Yasin, Hua, & Aghaei, 2012; Davoudi, 2014; Erten & Razi, 2009; Fatemi, Montazerinia, Shirazian, & Atarodi, 2014; Ho, 2009; Turvey, Yandell, & Ali, 2012), the movements of customizing EFL teaching materials by considering the local culture come to the age.

This study is emerged with an issue of teaching policy misconduct of an Islamic education institution. Islam is the nature of interaction in the institution since it is an Islamic university under the governance of Religion ministry of Indonesia. The mission, as gathered from one document, of the institution is "*2020 Menjadi Universitas Islam Negeri Terdepan, Unggul, Terpercaya dan Berkarakter*" (Being a foremost, excellent, trustworthy, and characterized state Islamic university in 2020). One of the highlighted term from the institution mission is the character building. As an Islamic institution, the character must be the Islamic character. In order to have a good character building, the cultural content of the material should be the intended culture in which the student have to acquire. In this case, the culture content of the material should be the Islamic culture. However, as the result of preliminary study, the teaching practice in the English Education Department did not integrate any Islamic culture in the teaching activity. This gap motivates the researcher to conduct a study in order to come with a solution.

As intended to provide a well-founded syllabus, a course is selected i.e. reading comprehension course. By reviewing some research in the field of reading comprehension, it was found that university students tend to have no interest in reading (Cahyono & Widiati, 2006; Kweldju, 1996, 2000; Masduqi, 2014). Kweldju (1996) found that the problem lies in the students limited background information about the texts' content which makes them hard to understand the meaning. Furthermore, cultural difference also can be another reason behind the lack of reading interest (Masduqi, 2014).

This lack of interest problem infers that the students are not yet adequate to undergo most of reading (Cahyono & Widiati, 2006).

Basically, every linguistic teaching of a language can be done along with a culture content since language is culture bound. Tomali (2008 in Cakir, 2015) and Krasner (1999) even state that culture is the fifth skill in addition to the four macro skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, to be considered as proficient to use a language, one have to master both linguistic and cultural contents. However, the challenge may vary among level and macro skills. Reading is assumed as the easiest macro skill to be infused with culture content in the teaching. Teachers and or book writers just need to provide a text with the intended culture content which is required to be read by the students.

It needs to be stated that teaching English as foreign language by considering local culture means that teachers are required to negotiate the target language culture and local culture in classroom activity. This concept is known as intercultural concept (Sybing, 2011). Advantages of applying this concept are reported by many studies. It is reported that intercultural application can raise the students' tolerance (Abdollahi-Guilani et al., 2012; Turvey et al., 2012), while others reported the effect on enhancing students' comprehension (Davoudi, 2014; Erten & Razi, 2009; Fatemi et al., 2014; Hayati, 2009; Lin, 2004; Royani, 2013; Yousef, Karimi, & Janfeshan, 2014; Lipka, Sharp, Adams, & Sharp, 2007). Some studies also reported intercultural advantages as in developing students' positive motivation and attitude toward the language teaching activity, target language culture, and their own culture (Fatemi et al., 2014; Liton, 2012; Nemati, Marzban, & Maleki, 2014; Rowsell, Sztainbok, & Blaney, 2007). The unexpected positive effect of intercultural application was that the students become aware of their own culture and also know the target language culture, and then capable to define the difference in order to preserve their own belief (Janssen, 1999 in Breidbach, 2003).

Talking about language from the perspective of systemic functional linguistic, in this case are genre of text, and culture, we may also talk about the purpose of serving the cultural demand. When we have an intention of providing Islamic material to maintain the students' ideology, it will have a set of genre identity which is appropriate for teaching English as foreign language (which is stated as TEFL in the next appearances) materials. It is all because genre is not about determination but expectation of the reader. As the

genre coherence fits the culture, the reader will easily get the meaning unproblematically (Eggins, 2005). In brief, students' cultural aspect has an important effect which should be considered in selecting materials for TEFL. It can help the students to understand the text and learn the meta-language rather than try so hard to only understand the text.

This study is aimed to reveal the intention of infusing Islamic culture into EFL teaching materials in the context of Islamic university. It also focuses on revealing the current practice of implementing the cultural aspect in developing English teaching material. Referring to a concept of Islamic education institution, *pesantren*, Rohmah (2012) and Tantri (2013) state that there are three dilemmatic conditions of TEFL in *pesantren* which make it barely received. First, English teaching ideology is assumed as inner circle perspective. Second, the ideology of foreign culture teaching in *pesantren* and the transcultural flow, as the third condition, are against the *pesantren*'s value. These dilemmas are actually not only faced by Indonesian Islamic education institution, but also by other countries where Islam is the nature of the society (Charise, 2007). The demands of Islamic culture to dominate the ideological content in the EFL teaching materials are considered to be crucial in facilitating learners in mastering English while preserving their culture in Islamic institution.

Based on the observation previously conducted in the English education department of the research site, most of the TEFL activities are not infused with any Islamic culture. Meanwhile, the TEFL activities in Islamic studies education department mostly are infused the Islamic culture. By giving the context of EGP and ESP into the discussion, it can be understood that the TEFL in the English education department is EGP while Islamic studies education department is in ESP. However, given the situation that the English language teaching happens in Islamic institution, the TEFL in the English department must also have its portion of Islamic culture material which places it between EGP and ESP.

The study in this issue is worth doing since the teaching context in the institution seems to require a different treatment in the materials development, which in this case is stated in the syllabus. There is a space to enhance the existing teaching activity. If we act right to fill the gap, the students will learn English in ease as the topics do not hold them back to learn about the language. This advantages also can be used as engraving the Islamic principles in the students' ideology. In this age of World Englishes, we need to

give a color to our own English language teaching. The appearance of Islamic principles in the teaching material also can be used as a mental filter for the students in understanding the variety of world culture. To come to the informed decision, analysis of needs and situation are necessary to be done to gather information from the institution, academician, and students.

Arriving at the appropriate approach in developing the syllabus, a well-founded teaching activity is expected as reflecting the institution background and vision. The Islamic atmosphere of the institution might have its own portion in every teaching activity. Additional logico-reason about the necessity of English language teaching in Islamic institution to have Islamic content in its material is related to the expectation of the students. The students might have their own expectation of enlisting in an Islamic university rather than other non-Islamic based university. This aspect has been studied furthermore in this research as the factor students' background which is stated by McGrath (2002) as one of the focus in needs analysis. Getting into an Islamic institution, students' might have a prior expectation related to the atmosphere and teaching activity. As fulfilling or not fulfilling their expectation, it might impact their attitude toward the teaching learning activity or the institution for then alter their learning process as the consequences. This is another explanation for the worthiness of this research.

A number of research have been done in this field of study. Kirkpatrick (2015) studied about providing students who are required to communicate in the ASEAN community with their native culture content in teaching English. The purpose was to prepare students with cultural insight, so they existence could reflect and represent the identity of their country. Meanwhile, Cakir (2015) and Doganay (2013) explored about potential strategies to teach target language culture in which they came with the concept of comparing and contrasting cultural materials across macro skills. Aside from all those studies, none of them highlighted the potential cultural friction in the teaching of English which might carry unsuitable culture content into a certain community as done by Charise (2007) Fahrudin (2012), Rohmah (2012), and Tantri (2013). However, the last four cited researchers seem to only describe the phenomena without any attempt to formulate materials as a potential solution. All of them also did not focus on a teaching of a specific skill. This study, on the other hand, studies about compensating inner circle countries culture potential negative effect (see section 2.2) in the teaching of English by developing

a syllabus which accommodates the Islamic culture. It also has a specific focused skill which is reading. Hence, this study has its position as filling the current gap.

## 1.2 Research Questions

Based on the raised issue, review of related theories and related research findings above, three research questions are formulated to guide this study which took place in an Islamic State University in Palangka Raya.

1. What is the condition in the research site in terms of the currently used syllabus, students' opinion about the syllabus, and the lecturer's belief and opinion about the syllabus regarding infusing Islamic culture in an English reading course?
2. What is the needs of the students, lecturer, and institution related to Islamic culture inducement in the English reading course?
3. What syllabus can be provided in order to fulfill the need of the students, lecturer, and institution policy related to Islamic culture inducement in the English reading course?

## 1.3 Purposes of the Study

As the issue presented in the background and research questions above, this study is aimed:

1. To investigate the condition in the research site in terms of the currently used syllabus, students' opinion about the syllabus, and the lecturer belief and opinion about the syllabus regarding infusing Islamic culture in an English reading course.
2. To investigate the needs of the students, lecturer, and institution related to Islamic culture inducement in the English reading course.
3. To formulate an Islamic English reading course syllabus in the context of English department teaching activity which consider the result of needs and situational analysis of the students, lecturer, and institution.

## 1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is intended to give both theoretical and practical significances. Theoretically, the findings are intended to contribute on the issue of integrating Islamic culture in TEFL. This issue now comes to the attention of some Islamic institutions since

they started to realize about the possibility of giving a right portion of their own culture as the counter balance of the English inner circle countries' culture.

In practice, the findings are also expected to serve as the basis of the institution research and development project of creating their own customized materials, and also providing an Islamic English course syllabus. Based on recent discussion with the head of English education department and one of the lecturers, the department commits to develop a teaching material for their students to supplement the existing materials. However, the department is still working to form a solid foundation to direct the development process. As this study reveals the existing phenomenon and comes with a model of material selection and development, the findings can serve as the foundation of the English department research and development project.

### **1.5 Definition of Key Terms**

Some key terms related to this study are necessary to be stated clearly in order to avoid misinterpretation. The necessity comes into consideration since different definition of certain terms can lead to a different understanding. Those terms are syllabus, Islamic culture, belief, and opinion.

Richards and Schmidt (2002) define syllabus as a description of the content of a course which is presented along with the instruction and the order of the implementation. On the other hand, Nunan (1988) states that syllabus is a specification of what is to be taught and its order on the presentation. It then can be synthesized that a syllabus is a document that contains list of ordered materials in which is to be taught. The document also contains other related descriptions about how the classroom activity is going to be done. In this study, syllabus refers to the one in which need analysis results are considered as the development foundation. The syllabus then is subject to contain some relevant Islamic culture content material as the teaching materials. For more elaboration, please refer to the section 2.5 about syllabus.

Culture is set of practices, codes, habits, custom, and values that mark a particular nation or group (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). It includes all aspect that member of the group share together (Gurito in Riyanti, 2011). Culture is shaped and projected the future of the community member in which the culture is arisen. In brief, culture is a way of seeing and believing.

In this research, culture refers to Islamic and Inner circle countries culture that are taught along with the EFL material by the teacher in the classroom. It includes any attribute, places, customs, figures, and history related to Islamic civilization. The form is specified to written form as in the material used by the lecturer and the students in the reading course teaching activity. For detailed explanation about Islamic and Inner Circle countries' culture, please refer to section 2.2.

Oskamp and Schultz (2004) state that beliefs are statement which indicates one's subjectivity that object has a particular characteristic. In brief, they explain that beliefs are cognitive, related to thoughts and ideas, while attitude are affective, related to feelings and emotion. We can assess a person's judgment about a topic by referring to their belief or attitude. For example the statement of "My boss is a nice guy" is an evaluative belief, while "I like my boss" is an attitude.

Opinion, on the other hand, is closely related to the concept of attitude. Oskamp and Schultz (2004) state that opinions are equivalent to evaluative belief which is narrower or more focus than attitude, and often primarily cognitive. However, opinion also can be general evaluative which tends to be more to attitude, they explain. It varies among situations. For example the statement of "My cat, Puss, is a faithful companion" is categorized as opinion for its specific evaluative belief, and "I like cute Puss" is an attitude for general evaluation.

## **1.6 Organization of the Study**

This thesis is organized in five different chapters. In chapter one, the background of the study is presented serving as the foundation of this research. The other components i.e. research questions, the purpose of the study, significances of the study, and definition of key terms are also take their parts. In chapter two, the grand theories about the relation of language and culture from books are presented along with ample current studies from journal articles. The review of reading nature, syllabus, and needs and situation analysis also take an important parts in this chapter. Additionally, the position of English language teaching in the context of Islamic institution is also discussed as giving the research a suitable context of discussion in the sense of the relationship of language and culture. Then in chapter three, the research method is discussed which includes the research design and method used, research site and participants, data collection procedures, and



also data analysis procedure. In chapter four, the findings are presented and discussed to give an insightful information in relation to answer the research questions. Lastly in chapter five, the conclusion along with the recommendations are presented.

### **1.7 Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has discussed about the background of the study which presents issue as a foundation for this study. Other components i.e. research questions, purposes of the study, significance of the study, definition of key terms, organization of the study, and concluding remarks are presented in concise yet gives ample understanding. The detail about the theories and recent journal publications are discussed in chapter two.

