

## ISML 2018 Abstract for a paper on Indonesian Teaching

### Laying Down Fundamental Listening and Speaking Skills: Delayed Reading and Writing Strategies Combined with Nature-based Knowledge

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In the mid-nineties, when the communicative teaching approach was embraced as the principal compass in delivering Indonesian learning materials, the developed materials have suffered from a lack of two crucial components: rudimentary listening and speaking exercises and a basic knowledge about Indonesia's extensive biodiversity.

Indonesian is deemed to be an easy language to learn by language learners whose first language is English. The sounds are very phonetic, akin to Spanish, a very familiar foreign language for many American English speakers. The first lessons at the elementary level introduce integrated materials of speaking, listening, reading and often writing skill training immediately. Without enough exposure to and exercise of the basic sounds of Indonesian, the students seemed to use the framework of sounds that they are familiar with to produce Indonesian. As a result, the students produce utterances that sound foreign as they progress and develop little awareness of distinctive aspects of Indonesian sounds and rhythm.

Another drawback of available teaching materials is that they are biased towards topics that are human-centric and urban community-centric. These materials fail to incorporate in their language learning aspects of nature that contribute to the Indonesian people's way of thinking and speech. Students are thus trained to be passionate about urban-based, inter-human interactions and oblivious to the communities and how their livelihoods have been shaped by their interactions with the nature that surrounds them--the nature of the second largest biodiversity in the world.

This paper addresses both issues by suggesting that during the initial stage of learning, (a) basic listening and speaking skills need to be emphasized, with little or no exposure to reading and writing exercises and (b) materials should be infused with elements of nature. Extended class observations support the solution of the first issue. However, though some literature supports the second part of the suggestion concerning nature, incorporation into teaching materials appears to be a novel recommendation.

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