

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE ON MATRICULATION COURSE

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Abstract: This paper takes descriptive qualitative approach as it aims at describing the teachers' perspective on the implementation of a compulsory matriculation course of English Education Department. It covers what the teachers expect the students should do during the course, the challenges of it, and what the possible factors might hinder the teaching process. The data was gathered from the teachers who teach the course using an in-depth interview. The result shows that the teachers expect the students to be active in the class, have minimal Basic English skills, and technology-literate. However, the teachers found that the students' English competence was varied and most of them were not motivated in learning English. The teachers also found that different learning habits influenced by cultures that affect students' attitude towards learning. This study supplies information for syllabus and materials designers for matriculation course.

Keywords: *teachers' perspective, matriculation course, challenges*

INTRODUCTION

Students who enrolled in a certain university might have different purpose and motivation to study. There have been several researchers debating on motivation towards the success towards learning (Rahayu, 2002; Kusmartini, 2012; Souriyawongsa (2012); Subekti (2018)). Moreover, they might also have various low proficiencies in English (Liskinasih & Lutviana (2016); Poedjiastutie & Rhonda (2017)) and learning ability. These factors should be carefully addressed by the curriculum designer in order to facilitate teaching and learning situation in the following years of study.

Integrated Course is a compulsory matriculation course provided by English Education Department in Universitas Kanjuruhan Malang. This course takes 12 credits and served as a pre-requisite course for the following semesters. The course aims at equipping the students with the abilities to function minimally in daily conversation for the sake of study. Also, it aims at shaping students' autonomous learning behavior. The course was initiated in 2014 and now it is being reviewed.

This course appears as the result of the changes of curriculum in 2013. Several factors triggered this new course. Based on the tracer study conducted by the department, it was revealed that English Education Department was among those who held the highest rank for delayed graduates. Most of the students (almost 52%) took more than eight semesters to finish their study. Among many reasons, it was found out that they faced difficulty in doing their undergraduate thesis due to lack of English proficiency. The second factor was more lecturers who experienced the benefits of Intensive Course came to this university. Many of new lecturers graduated from State University of Malang. Later, they gave a positive influence to the academic atmosphere of the department. State University of Malang initiated this Intensive Course program in 1995 (Djiwandono: 1999).

Integrated Course takes a special attention from the department, such as classroom selection and setting, schedule choice, and lecturer. The department requires the university to support the classroom with a good LCD and set the chairs in U shape as well as equipping it with a set of good audio speaker. The department also sets the schedule into morning classes and the students have no other subjects on that day. Further, the lecturers are especially chosen from

those who are more patient, have more available time, and have a good skill in teaching basic pronunciation, vocabulary building, and sentence writing. The department also facilitates these lecturers to have a monthly forum for discussion.

Before entering the program, the students took a TOEFL (or alike) placement test and later, they were distributed into three parallel classes in which each class consisted of 23 to 25 students. Each class had only one lecturer for 12 credits. This was done in the consideration of knowing and understanding each student well.

Several studies have been conducted to better understand the course. Liskinasih and Lutviana (2016) studies about students' initial proficiency before attending the course, suggesting that 89.22% students had low proficiency in English. Another study conducted by Weganofa and Hariyanto (2015) asking students' and teachers' perspectives on the course. They summarized that both the students and teachers had positive attitude towards the course. However, several problems arise, such as the students' posttest did not meet the target score, lecturers complaining on the various proficiencies to be addressed in the class, the teaching materials were not systematically organized and the multi-interpretation of learning outcomes. These indicate that the curriculum designer should re-think and review the course. Thus, this study aims at describing the lecturers', who teach the course, perspective covering what they expect the students should do during attending the course, the challenges of teaching the course, and what the possible factors might hinder the teaching process. The results of the study serve as beneficial information for curriculum improvement.

METHOD

As the aim of this study is to shed the light on the teachers' perspective on the matriculation course, it is descriptive qualitative in nature (Borg, W. R. and Gall, M.D. 1983: 402). The participants of the study were three lecturers who teach the course in three different classes. There was an Integrated Course lecturer forum every month, in which they discussed the problems and the students' progress of learning. Mostly, these lecturers have five years' experience in teaching the course. The researchers used in-depth interview to collect the data. After transcribing the dialog, the researcher coded the data and reduced the incomplete and unnecessary information. The interviewed was conducted in-person after the course has been implemented.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Integrated Course aims at equipping students with basic communication skills. The course has been run for four years, and becomes a compulsory subject for all freshmen students. All language skills are taught integrated with language components. There were around 25 students in a class in which the students were seated in a half circle. This seated system eased the lecturers to reach each student and the students have a free access to move. Scrivener (in Ragawanti: 2015) warns teachers that grouping and seating students becomes the first factor in classroom management area that might disrupt learning. By setting the class into half-circle or U-shape, lecturers can easily vary students' activities, and move smoothly from pair activity into grouping and back into whole class activity. Moreover, a half-circle seated benefits the students to be treated equally where no one will hide behind others' backs. Astuti (2013) reported that teachers' classroom management decision, including teaching style and teacher's classroom manners affects students' motivation.

Teaching-Learning Activity

Integrated Course is offered three times in a week for three and a half hours in each meeting. All lecturers expect the students to have minimal basic English proficiency, such as are able to greet, introduce oneself, spell daily vocabulary and understand classroom instructions, actively engage in the discussion, initiate learning, mingle with classmates, accept differences, technology-user students, and self-motivated. As the objectives of this course is building students basic ability to communicate using the target language, the lecturers expect the students to build their self-confidence to practice, build self-awareness of their own lacks in learning, and respect each other weakness.

Lecturer C: "I expect my students could recognize their own weakness. By doing so, it is hoped that they could push themselves to do better and find some ways to deal with it. Also they will respect their friends who are struggling with their own weakness"

Lecturer C believes that every student has their own pace in learning. However, she argues that knowing one own weakness is not enough. Students should be able to find ways to break their barrier. Thus, the lecturers expect the students to be aware of their own learning responsibility, such as practice pronunciation with friends outside class, read simplified novels and short stories in mini library, memorize and note taking of vocabulary, do the workbook provided, and initiate using English in daily conversation outside class.

Classroom Challenges

During the interviews, all lecturers agreed that the biggest challenge that they had is the various language proficiency. The lecturers admit that they cannot follow every student pace in learning. Some low students need more practice and repetition in a certain topics, meanwhile the higher students might think that they need to move to the next topics.

Here, the use of rubric for self-assessment might help students to better understand their lack and progress. Once assessment criteria with established indicators were selected for first- and second-year students, bearing in mind their lack of experience in such tasks, using the rubric resulted in qualitative improvement in their self-assessment; students were provided arguments they needed to attribute their learning to the classroom environment (Alvarez & Olmos: 2017).

Students' learning habit also becomes challenge for the lecturer. Most of the students do not have self-awareness of the important of learning. Lecturer A says that several times the students came to the class without doing their homework, and sometimes forget to bring their modules. This might indicate that the students do not have self-motivation to learn English.

Lecture A: "Most of my students never skip my classes, however several times I caught them doing homework before I entered the class. It upset me a lot."

The third challenge that the lecturers encounter in the classroom was technology barrier. Most of the students are coming from eastern Indonesia, and from middle to low income family. Some students do not have internet in their phone, cannot operate WhatsApp application, and some do not have email account. Somehow, the lecturers want to share some reading-listening books through these media. The problem occurs that some students feel minority in the class and a little bit alienate themselves. The lecturers often asked the students to switch their seats to minimize this gap. The lecturers also demonstrate how to use search engine in the browser, how to upload a video through YouTube, and how to download some articles.

Gap in technology and internet availability happen in several parts of Indonesia; where my students are from challenge the lecturers to provide extra learning hour for this technical challenge. This should be addressed properly as it might create difficulties in learning both for teachers and students (Mirani, et.al: 2019).

Factors Causing the Challenges

There are several factors that might cause the challenges. The first is students' family environment. Most of the students are coming from middle to low income family, possibly these families have different access to education facilities compared to those from middle to high income family. Parents and family support towards education facility might affect to students motivation to study in the higher education. Moreover, as English is not compulsory subject anymore in recent years, some students might have more limited exposure towards the target language. Some students might relied solely on the teacher at school without further encouragement activities provided by the family, such as joining English courses, attending to English club in the leisure time, going to the cinemas, or simply download songs and movies. Imbalance distribution towards access to tertiary level of education has been a big concern in Kenya recently. Boit (2015) reveals that higher education is selective, not only in terms of type of secondary school students attended but across parental traits such as father's education and occupation. Although the number of students go to university is not decreasing every year, the correlation between socio-economic family status and the choice of tertiary education provided should be address carefully.

The second factor is the enrolling system for higher education. As most of students who enroll in a private university are those who academically not accepted in the state university, this factor sometimes becomes the reason to be blamed by the students themselves and some lecturers. This is the responsibility and task for lecturers to educate all students equally. Moreover, the government demands all universities, regardless state or private to reach the same vision in education.

The last factor is different learning habits. As the students are coming across the nation, each student brings their own learning habits that might be affected by their culture and their view about language and themselves. For example, students who see themselves as someone who is superior than others, they tend to be more open to others, feel more secure in meeting new friends, and thus they will dominate classroom activities. However, students who see themselves to be less superior will be afraid and hesitate to meet new friends. Also, students' culture background, such as prioritizing learning compared to doing housework, might affect students' involvement in English speaking club outside classroom.

CONCLUSIONS

This study is initiated by the questions of how the lecturers' point of view of the matriculation course given to all English Education department students. It is revealed through in-depth interview that the lecturers expect the students to be actively engage during classroom activities and become autonomous learners who at least have minimal basic ability to speak English. However, three challenges found during the activities, such as the various low proficiencies in English, low self-awareness of the importance of learning, and technology-illiterate students. These challenges might be caused by different family support given, enrolling higher education system, and learning habits. This study centers on teachers' perspective towards the course, it is essential for further researchers to view the course from other angle. Also, some issues should be address regarding to socio-economy factor and enrolling system.

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