

# THE POTENTIAL USES OF TEAM TEACHING IN TEACHING ESP

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Abstract: The demand for mastering English has increased the past few years as the requirements for job applicants are getting more competitive for those wanting to get their future jobs after graduating from colleges or universities. The need for English mastery depends on the nature of the department or the study program taken. Therefore, English courses given to the students in that department or study program should be adaptable based on the department and students' career goals. The course of English for Specific Purpose (ESP) is one of the bridges to connect English mastery and students' future needs. This research focuses on evaluating and describing the supporting evidence and facts to strengthen the implementation of ESP in team teaching. The review and analysis of various research results and theories contribute to how this research to be conducted. The research aims at giving the description of the potential uses of team teaching in ESP classrooms and the challenges that might be faced by the English teachers.

Keywords: ESP, team teaching, English mastery

#### INTRODUCTION

The teaching of ESP is getting more places and attention day by day due to the rise in the need for English for everyday and business communication. The first reason might be because of the expansion in scientific, technical, and economic activities on a large international scale (Ghafournia & Sabet, 2014). The expansion of English becomes wider following the ideas of using English as a medium to communicate in global interaction. Nowadays, due to globalization, the numbers of students who study abroad and participate in foreign research or teaching mobility exchange is gradually increasing (Klimova, 2014). People who learn English think that they need to master English as the demands of academic requirements and workplaces. It means that learning English is not only related to the academic-oriented purposes but also related to the need of English as the skill to support a future career in many job fields (Ghafournia & Sabet, 2014; Gashi & Jusufi, 2017; Mazdayasna & Besharati, 2017). Then, the efforts to teach English across the subject matter are intensively made. The ESP development is getting more attention as the increasing number of universities including the ESP courses as a compulsory one (Bracaj, 2014; Javid, 2015; Bouabdallah & Bouyacoub, 2017). The teaching of ESP is directed to help the students master the use of language to support their academic and future career goals. Therefore, the term of general English is slowly getting disappeared in practical use nowadays.

In Indonesia, for example, almost all of the tertiary level of education treats English as a general and compulsory subject to be taught to the students across departments such as technology, engineering, nursery, medicine, economics, law, agriculture, and many others. Based on the different nature that the subjects pose, the way of teaching English has to follow the characteristics of the subjects and the students' needs since ESP should be facilitated to teach specific, scientific, or technical English for students with specific goals, careers, or fields of study. It should meet the need of the students who need to learn and use English in their specific learning objectives (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Robinson, 1991; Richards & Schmidt, 2010; Lee, 2013; Maletina, Karmanova, & Kashpur, 2015; Bouabdallah & Bouyacoub, 2017). One example is the objective of ESP in engineering courses may be on the ability to demonstrate the use of a tool in English or to explain a construction plan and the procedures. Another example is that



economics students might demand English as a tool to help then understanding the information on business plans and catalogs as well as communicating and interpreting the result of economics scales.

Teaching ESP put major consideration on how the students' need can be facilitated while the students are learning English. The efforts to create need-oriented learning can be problematic for administrators, teachers, and students. The efforts are expected to go further the border of the subject matters and the language use. Hence, ESP teachers, curriculum advisor/expert, and teachers' collaboration would open access for the teacher to develop a clear course syllabus (Gashi & Jusufi, 2017). The university administrators are expected to provide qualified English teachers who can teach other subjects besides English. In many conditions, the English teachers are not ready yet to teach the subjects due to their limited knowledge in the subjects. Without the presence of the subject specialists, the English teachers have the limitation to teach the subjects and the material related. According to Basturkmen (2010) and Wu (2014), insufficient numbers of qualified and experienced ESP teachers is another major difficulty in implementing ESP courses. It becomes a dilemmatic obstacle since it is not easy to find qualified ESP because several language teachers feel incompetent and confident in teaching ESP courses. There is an assumption that having novice language teachers to teach ESP may have negative effects on the quality of ESP teaching (Su, 2003; Bouabdallah & Bouyacoub, 2017). That is why specialized ESP training may be a crucial factor to help ESP teachers get the experiences and competences in being sensitive towards the students' needs.

Since English is treated as a compulsory subject, the students have no choice to learn English whether they are interested in it or not. They have to take and pass the English course, then some problems happen when the students get confused about doing the assignments and performing the subject skills. This situation can lead the students in frustration in learning their subject matters since they encounter the limitation in their language proficiency (Stewart & Perry, 2005; Mazdayasna & Besharati, 2017). In fact, some misleading issues come around to give English the main place in teaching other subjects. It shows that the students must learn the linguistic features of the language such as grammar and tenses. One of the focuses should be in subject vocabulary since the limitation on vocabularies and terminologies seems to be a major linguistic obstacle to nonnative English-speaking students (Soltani & Shafaei, 2013; Wu, 2014; Maletina et al., 2015). The linguistic features in term of forms should not be the material focus instead of the use of linguistic features to support the subject matter understanding. ESP teaching should be based on the learning objectives and the English use (Mohammed, 2012; Ahmed, 2014; Tsokjon & Sharndama, 2014), so ESP teaching should focus more on the contextual language.

ESP teaching, as it is being practiced, faces numerous obstacles in the real implementation, such as problems for learners, problems for teachers, problems of methodology and materials, and problems of assessment and testing (Mohammed, 2012). The problems that come following the raise of ESP teaching should be immediately solved to bring the English back to its function as the tool or medium in teaching specific subjects. Several solutions are offered by the language experts in encountering the problems. One of the solutions, and seems to be the most prominent due to its' potential uses is team teaching. Buckley (2000) defines the team teaching as a strategy where English teachers and subject specialists work together on setting the plan, conducting the teaching and learning process, and evaluating the learning activities for the same students at the same time to reach the learning objectives in certain subjects. To be more specific, Dudley-Evans (2001) divides the team teaching into three levels in which English teachers and subject



specialists can interact, that is cooperation, collaboration, and team teaching. Cooperation means that the English teachers consult the content of subject matter to the subject specialists on what kind of language aspects should be included. Collaboration leads the English teachers and the subject specialists to work together in developing the materials outside the classroom. The last, the term of team teaching requires both English teachers and subject specialists to work and to teach together in the same classroom. Una (2016), Ilyasova, Khakimzianova, Maslennikova, & Kharitonov (2017), and Mazdayasna & Besharati (2017) reported the result of their research that cooperation and collaboration between the English teachers and subject specialists are crucial regarding subjects' planning, materials designing, teaching, and evaluation. In brief, team teaching offers an alternative way where the English teachers can have an academic companion in teaching the subjects that they do not master and to solve the immediate problems that might be faced when teaching in the classroom.

So many studies reveal how the team teaching obtains positive acceptances in ESP teaching viewing from the teachers' and students' perspectives and attitudes. As what WU (2014) suggested that sufficient collaboration between English teachers and subject specialists should become a priority in ESP team teaching. The subject specialists can be a prominent consultant to ESP teachers since they are assisted the subject specialists to set the learning objectives and develop the materials to reach the goals. Therefore, it can be assured that need-based materials can be one of essential factors to determine ESP teaching success. Mazdayasna & Besharati (2017) found that designing materials based on students' immediate and delayed needs will expose the students to the vocabulary mastery and independent learning. Another, the use of parallel team-teaching significantly affected the students' level of interest in participation (Una, 2016). The practices of team teaching should have regular and purposeful procedures to be followed as it required the two different teachers working together (Buckley, 2000) to help the students to own the skills or competencies that they have to master. The ideas of the two different teachers working together are considered to have big importance to teach ESP course (Hutchinson, 2000; Tajino & Tajino, 2000; Una, 2016) since the responsibility can be shared to maximize the power of subject and language aspects. It means that the two aspects could have its own portion in the classroom, the content should be balanced. Therefore, team-teaching cannot be only seen as a technique or strategy to teach, but it slowly goes beyond that. It is becoming a demanded and logical medium to optimize the teachers' competences and ideas (Maletina et al., 2015). However, considering the power of team teaching, careful thought and consideration should be conducted to form the team since the teachers' should be adapted Each other to avoid the internal conflict like personal purposes (Ilyasova et al., 2017). To give more insights about team teaching, both advantages and disadvantages will be more discussed.

### THE POTENTIAL USES OF TEAM TEACHING

After reviewing several theories and literature related, below are the potential uses of team teaching that can be considered in conducting the ESP teaching.

#### Breaking the Subject-matter Limitation

The efforts of requiring the English teachers and subject specialists to be in one frame become challenges for the school administrators. Some difficulties may be found during team-teaching practices. In some occasions, it is not easy to invite other teachers from other departments to join the team teaching, but it can be one of the alternatives to have both teachers gathered. It is very essential and highly recommended to involve the subject specialists to accompany the English teachers in planning, implementing, and evaluating the subjects (Su,



2003). One thing that Ahmed (2014) ever reminds us is that the duty of ESP teacher is teaching English, not the specific subject matter content. It means that the English teachers are only specialized in the language content and have great barrier in understanding even explaining the subject content. Lee (2013) also adds that the presence of the two teachers will be more impactful since they can effectively supplement each other in terms of materials, skills, and competencies. Moreover, instructional presentations can be efficiently and effectively integrated into the process of teaching and learning. Based on several research results, the teachers reveal positive attitude toward team-teaching practices since they know their roles (Buckley, n.d.). The teachers' competencies on academic skills insert and strengthen the impact of team teaching as they break the barrier of limited knowledge. It can be said that the longer the teachers work together, the stronger the personal bond and connection will be made. The bond and connection will help the teachers to be more cooperative and collaborative in achieving the learning objectives by knowing personal weaknesses and strengths (Stark, 2015).

# Enhancing Students' engagement

One thing that can be mainly offered by the practices of team teaching is having two kinds of different teachers teaching together in one subject and in one class. The cooperation and collaboration direct to new insights and ideas of how the subject should be conducted and what kind of efficient and effective ways to take in facilitating the needs and achieving the objectives. New insights and ideas reveal more contextual learning strategies and media that can draw the students' learning interests. The attention to individual students creates more personal teachersstudents interaction during the class (Harker & Koutsantoni, 2004; Lee, 2013). The students exposed to team teaching practices have more alternatives to learn and more access to participate in learning. In other words, the students have more opportunities to ask teachers' assistance related to both language and subject learning (Liu, 2008; Lee, 2013; Soltani & Shafaei, 2013). Not only that, team teaching opens and accepts all students' participation without differentiating certain abilities so the students have the same chances to create their own learning (Liu, 2008). The varied teaching styles and material presentations owned by the two teachers can attract students' attention and increase their learning motivation as they feel facilitated in the learning (Liu, 2008; Farooq 2013; Lee, 2013; Stark, 2015). By practicing team teaching, the students' engagement seems to be improved since the teachers allow them to learn in more comfortable and personal instructions.

# **Developing Teachers' Professional Competences**

It cannot be denied that the learning focused on the students' improvement affects the efforts to find varied and suitable learning methods, strategies, and activities. During the frequent process of constructing the language and subject contents, the exchange of information may occur. Each teacher has the chance to learn new insights and ideas related to teaching expectations. Also, the process of sharing experiences enlarges professional knowledge and skills for both teachers (Reddy, n.d.; Harker & Koutsantoni, 2004; Richards & Farrel, 2005; Hoa, 2015). When both teachers come to class together and watch each other's performances in teaching, teaching reflection can be done since several weaknesses and strength can be evaluated. Farooq (2013) adds that the teacher can also learn and improve their teaching skills and sensitivities by doing the observation on the other teacher. However, these potential advantages should not be violated by unrelated personal purposes. The teachers have to prioritize learner-centered learning based on the specific needs of the students (Ghafournia & Sabet, 2014). The team teaching's benefit in improving teaching competencies is to put in the first place through collaboration and team learning. Tajino, Stewart, & Dalsky (2016) wrote in their book that team teaching is



mandatory to benefit both sides, teachers, and students. In brief, team teaching can be one of the alternative media to train the teachers in planning, conducting, and evaluating the teaching process, especially in ESP teaching.

### **Creating Need-centered Learning**

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) put the focus of ESP on the learners. ESP teaching should be based on the specific needs that students must pose for their academic purposes and future career requirements. The needs are the most crucial factor in directing the objectives of learning. Hoa (2015) and Javid (2015) state that ESP should be conducted through learner-centered approach to determine specific teaching activities to fulfill specific needs and objectives. The need-centered learning approach to ESP teaching can be a trigger to develop students' communicative competences. The communicative competences that can support the subject learning and understanding equip the students with a specific context discipline for the intended occupations. The teaching of ESP, itself, is purposed to improve the students' proficiency in English to be used in real-world communication and provide the specific settings for it (Ghafournia & Sabet, 2014; Tsokjon & Sharndama, 2014). Team teaching contributes to effective efforts to achieve specific learning objectives since it promotes and combines two different teachers' ideas and teaching skills. Besides, team teaching has been popularly assumed as a perfect tool accommodates many instructional purposes, functions, subjects, and educational settings (Soltani & Shafaei, 2013; Schreiner, 2015). By focusing on the needs, this new alternative makes what the learners need and want be the central consideration. To sum up, the students have different needs and interests in learning the subject as their motivation to actively participate so it is a must to concern those aspects to enhance the ESP impacts and uses.

#### ANTICIPATED WEAKNESSES

Exposing to the potential uses of team teaching could trigger the motivation to implement the kind of strategy in teaching ESP. However, behind the goodness of team teaching, the plausible obstacles that might be faced should be included in the concern. The first thing that comes to a considerable factor is the students' readiness and confusion (Reddy, n.d., Buckley, n.d., Lee, 2013; Schreiner, 2017). As it is said by Reddy (n.d), the subject in which team teaching is conducted can be overboard – there so many activities and materials that cannot be understood and mastered by the students in one meeting. Even, the students can have many tasks to do beyond their capabilities. This situation might happen since both teachers (ESP teachers and subject specialists) set a high expectation for the students. One thing should be remembered is that the students in an ESP class are struggling not only with the subject knowledge learning but also with the language barriers. Moreover, not all students can follow this new strategy in the classroom; they might resist the new way of teaching and not familiar with having more than one teacher to teach. There will be students who are surprised by a highly repeated structured environment. As a result, they get surrounded by conflicting opinions that can lead to habit formation problems (Schreiner, 2017). This situation should be anticipated as it can bring the students to the discouragement.

In conducting the team teaching, the teachers are burdened with their own expectation to gain improved learning outcomes. This expectation direct, sometimes, the teachers to focus more on what achievements students can make at the end of the meeting (Lee, 2013). It could possibly occur when the assessment focuses more on the language features rather than the content. The goal tends to be more product-oriented rather than improving the process of learning, the growth of the students' abilities. The students become dependent on what both teachers want



that can set their mindset to only fulfill and submit the tasks (Schreiner, 2017). To complete the tasks, the students would think that it is acceptable if they do the plagiarism or cheating others' work as long as they can get good grades for it. If it happens, the procedure of team teaching is merely the procedure of how the materials should be presented which product is demanded and emphasized at the end of the lesson (Nunan, 2004). Yanamandram & Noble (2006) and Farooq (2013) sees this practice, like two sides of a blade, could gradually erase the interaction and trust between the teachers and the students, although the team teaching also promotes students engagement in the classroom.

To practice team-teaching in real classroom situation will spend more time and energy. The course planning and material development take a long time to be conducted (Una, 2016; Schreiner, 2017). Teachers have to provide certain times from their schedules and collaborate each other to manage the activities that have to be carried out. In fact, it is not easy to gather the teachers at the same time. This restriction could delay the planning and developing stages and can make the course lose its flow and connections. In some cases, it is also hard to have the teachers together to teach and evaluate at the same time due to their busy times (Reddy, n.d.; Buckley, n.d.). Another restriction is the time for discussion will take longer so some teachers will not feel convenient to adapt to these circumstances. Schreiner (2017) suggests the teachers must provide regular agreeable time to be included in their schedules. The time will be used for coplanning time when the teachers can share the ideas and objectives. If the teachers cannot provide the time to together plan, develop, teach, and evaluate, the impactful team teaching would never exist.

The last factor should be considered seems to be more internal and personal. The teachers' ego takes its own role as the obstacles in planning and practicing the team teaching in ESP. From the team-teachers' perspective, teachers' personality types and teaching styles could infer the responsibility in planning and conducting the team teaching (Hoa, 2015). The opinion of having imbalanced work could occur during team-teaching practices. Some teachers also tend to be more rigid and find many difficulties in adapting to others (Buckley, 2000; Farooq, 2013). More, as the time they share ideas and expectation, many personal conflicts can take place due to different ways to achieve the learning objectives, for instance. What comes as the anticipated one is when one of the teachers is absent in the class, the other teacher could think that it is unfair and do not want to take the risk teaching the absent role. In fact, the presence of the teacher also set how the activities should be conducted and evaluated. As a result, the learning objectives will be not fully achieved.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

This paper aims at describing and analyzing the practice of team teaching, its powerful benefits while exposing several obstacles to be aware of. By reviewing the theories, related literature, and several previous studies' results, the potential uses of team teaching are treated as the solutions for the problems might be faced in teaching ESP. This paper gives and explains the practice of team teaching and its practical problems from different points of view of teachers and students. The complaints about team teaching are around how the ESP teachers could master the subject content and how the students can learn both the language and subject content in one time. As explained before, by conducting the team teaching, the ESP teaching can be carried out by the English teachers and language specialists so the problems with subject matters will be overcome. Next, the students have more spaces and access to participate in the classroom activities since they have two teachers that can give them assistance for both language and



subject content. Another is to provide informal training to improve teaching competencies for both teachers since they learn each other and solve the teaching and learning problems together. In other words, knowledge sharing informally occurs. The last, it is the time for need-centered learning in which the materials and the process tells the students' competencies. In the 21st century learning, students are insisted to have high and qualified competencies to be ready in competing in the global demands. Team teaching can be a way to realize the students' needs and treated the needs as the learning objectives.

Some recommendations are suggested in conducting the team teaching in the teaching of ESP. first, English teachers and subject specialists need to provide scheduled time to work together on planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating the ESP course or the school needs to facilitate formal and regular schedules to do the processes. Secondly, team teaching should optimize the competencies of both teachers to create need-based materials, to utilize technology, and to assess the learning process so the students' participation can be improved. Thirdly, to control ego is needed to prevent the personal conflict, then it is highly suggested to find a partner that has the same expectation and perspectives. The last, there should be training specialized for ESP teachers that can help the teachers to gain more knowledge and new related competencies.

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