

The English Language Needs of Different Stakeholders at Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang Indonesia: The Ethnographic Study

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Abstract

The Language Centre at Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (LC UMM) provides all new enrolled students' admission into the English Program and is conducted under the auspices of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). This program is for all the freshmen enrolled at UMM during the first year (two semesters) of their study. Students of all departments take different ESP courses depending on their majors. The research objective of this study is to examine the English learning needs of different stakeholders at UMM. These stakeholders include learners, teachers, and employers. It compares the results from classroom observations, faculty interviews, and student interviews in order to gain an overall understanding. As it is crucial to identify the English learning goals of different stakeholders at UMM, a critical exploration of the shared culture of the stakeholders is more crucial to identify since these current shared cultures potentially inhibit or support the development of English programs at UMM and possibly make it difficult to achieve the English learning goals set within the university. For that purposes, an ethnographic approach was employed. In this approach the socio-cultural context remained integral to the study. Given that the focus included organizational cultural groups, it was critical to capture their understandings, beliefs and practices with regard to English language needs. The findings of the present study suggest that at the level of the university, the faculty, and at the classroom level, shared cultures of the stakeholders need improving.

Keywords: Stakeholder Shared Culture.

Introduction

Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM) is the biggest private Muslim university in Java. It is located in Malang, the second largest city after Surabaya in the East Java province of Indonesia. As part of their commitment to improvement, this university currently undertakes international collaboration with a range of organizations inside and outside of Indonesia. This includes collaboration with Erasmus Mundus, the Australian Consortium for 'in Country' Indonesian Studies (ACICIS), Peace Corps America, BGP Engineering Netherland, and the American Indonesian Exchange Foundation (AMINEF).

One of the important UMM a commitment is to prepare students for employment. Graduates are expected to be able to function in workplaces immediately upon graduation and to be ready to accept the challenges that exist within these. In a study conducted by the English Department (ED) at UMM, it was reported that on completion of their first degree the majority of graduates intended to seek a job. More than 80% indicated their intention to go into jobs as teachers of English in a range of settings (primary school to university level). A large number of these were, and continue to be, accepted into English language teaching positions at the Language Centre (LC UMM). Less than 20% of graduates indicated that they would go into other professions.

The LC UMM provides all new enrolled students' admission into the English Program which is conducted under the auspices of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). ESP is for all the freshmen enrolled at UMM in their first year and take different ESP courses depending on their majors. For example, students from the Mathematics Department study English for mathematics purposes. Thus, the ESP program provides English skill development so that students can read and comprehend English text books, journals, and articles in their disciplines. In addition, by undertaking this course, students build their spoken and written English communication skills.

However, senior management of the LC UMM have expressed dissatisfaction with the ED graduates' English Language proficiency and consequently their capacity to carry out their duties as teaching staff of the university (Bestari, 2010). This concern centres on their ability to perform the required tasks. It is vital that future English teachers develop the competencies needed for the task of teaching, so that they can adapt to the kinds of challenges that will occur in their careers.

To address this concern, several steps have been taken to improve ED UMM students' level of English competence including redesigning the English curriculum. However, there has been no systematic analysis of students' needs or efforts to tailor the curriculum or the classroom instruction to address the particular needs of UMM teaching graduates. This indicates that a systematic and rigorous evaluation, a needs analysis, should be conducted. An NA needs to be administered in order to improve the English curriculum and raise the level of graduate English language proficiency. The use of such an evaluation is supported in the literature. Long (2005), for instance, claims that:

In this era of globalization, there are growing demands for accountability in public life, including in education. In foreign and second language teaching, one of several consequences is the increasing importance attached to careful studies of learner needs as a prerequisite for effective course design (p.1).

As demonstrated from the range of studies outlined above, NA procedures involve gathering data from a variety of sources in order to develop an appropriate curriculum, for example, the type and content of lectures, the types of reading and writing assignments, and the study skills needed in order to be successful. NA procedures may also involve administering questionnaires and interviews with students, teachers and employers to determine their perceptions, observation of students in classes to observe how well they are

able to carry out their assignments, examination of their lecture notes, essays, and so on, to determine their difficulties, as well as tests of different kinds to determine the students' level of proficiency in reading, writing, and note taking (Mackay and Palmer, 1981).

NA may be large-scale, quantitative studies providing descriptive information of the stakeholder needs or small-scale, qualitative studies with more interpretive information, or a combination of both. An example of the former is the NA undertaken by Evan and Green (2007). This was a large-scale, multifaceted investigation into the language problems experienced by Cantonese-speaking students at Hong Kong's largest English-medium university. Baseline data for the study were derived from a survey of almost 5000 undergraduates from all 26 departments in the university. The findings from the student survey were illuminated by data from interviews with students and discussions with and surveys of departmental program leaders. The benefit of using a multi-method approach informs the current study.

In contrast to this large scale and largely quantitative study, Jaso-Aguilar (1999) utilised small scale qualitative research methods providing interpretive results when undertaking her needs analysis. Jaso-Aguilar (1999) highlights that the use of qualitative research methods take into account the social context of people's lives by allowing them to express their own voice and needs, as opposed to the researcher's or the institution's. The use of several qualitative research methods, multiple sources, and triangulation in her study allowed for the inclusion of learners' voices. These voices clearly disagreed with institutional needs and interpretations. Jaso-Anguliar's study suggests that it is useful to identify the language needs of the learners outside the workplace and to create a curriculum that will truly engage them in language learning. In this way they can be supported to become active and functional members of an English-speaking society. The value of using multiple sources and methods under an overarching qualitative approach are suggestions have also been used to inform the current study.

In addition, the approach used in the current study is based on the work of Holliday (1995) who employed ethnography in his study. Unlike surveys, ethnography has the potential to yield rich data and it also allows for deep exploration of the context. Contextual factors are keys because similar solutions might work in one context but might not be applicable in another.

The Research Methods

Ethnographic Approach

Ethnography is primarily concerned with writing about people (Burns, 1997). In a broad sense, ethnography encompasses any study of a group of people for the purpose of describing their socio-cultural activities and patterns. Based on this definition, several important features of ethnography were adopted in the present study.

First and most importantly, by following an ethnographical approach, the socio-cultural context remained integral to the study. Wolcott (1997) reflects, "The culture of any society [which] is made up of the concepts, beliefs, and principles of action and organization of the society in the context" (p. 238). In this study, the socio-cultural context was UMM and the focus was how it operates as an organization and how the members function and relate to one another. Therefore, as an ethnographic study, relevant phenomena were observed and described within the context of UMM. This also involved interviewing the various stakeholders, employers, teachers and students, to explore their ways of thinking, their habits and beliefs about the target phenomena, namely the English learning needs of students as they pertain to the English curriculum. Given that the focus included organizational cultural groups - students, administrators, and lecturers - it was critical to capture their understandings, beliefs and practices with regard to English language needs.

Another important aspect of ethnographic research is the contextualization of the data. Thus, the data for the current study was interpreted only in the context of the UMM where it was collected. As an ethnographic study, the concern is not about the generalizability.

Research Participants

The first group from UMM consisted of the key policy makers from the various faculties. There were six who were willing to take part in an individual interview. The group varied in their teaching experience, academic qualifications, their English backgrounds, and overseas experience. However, most had been faculty members for more than twenty years.

Secondly, at the time of this study, there were 74 teachers involved in ESP teaching at LC UMM. 22 were full-time teachers and 52 were part-time teachers. For this study, 15 were willing to be observed while teaching (twice) and then to be individually interviewed post observation. Eight of these were part-time and seven were full-time teachers. Nine had three and more years teaching experience. Six had master's qualifications either from Indonesia or from overseas and eleven had a bachelor's qualification.

The third group of participants were students, specifically those drawn from that group enrolled in the ESP program in the academic year 2012/2013 including those in different majors. They participated in focus group discussions. The potential group from which this sample was drawn consisted of more than five thousand students enrolled in Bachelor Degree programs. The sample was taken from all faculties. At the time of the study, the majority were of the age range 18-22 years.

Findings and Discussions

Shared Culture of the Employers

Due to the crucial role of English in this institution, there is a need to improve this group's shared culture which may potentially be inhibiting the development of the ESP program.

Need for Improved Coordination

Coordination is the act of having different groups of people within institutions work together for the desired goals of an organization. From the analysis of the interviews with the employers, it appears that there is a need for improved coordination within the institution in the way that the ESP program is delivered. The Director of LC has the main responsibility for the ESP program at UMM, yet this is done without the continuous support and regular coordination with other employers and people within the organization. As the Director indicates:

So that the teaching and learning of ESP becomes the main job for LC and it is becoming the main responsibility for me as the director of LC to equip the students with the English competencies (M, DLC).

Despite the enormity of the task, the Director often acted independently of the LC staff and of the ED UMM more generally. For example, in the recruitment of LC teaching staff, no meeting was conducted with the Dean of the Faculty before the recruitment process began. Yet such a meeting would enable the Director to receive feedback about what is currently needed from the ESP teachers, criteria that applicants should be expected to meet, and ways that may be employed to meet current needs. This situation is exacerbated in that the only communication about recruitment is conducted through the 'Surat Tugas' a letter which instructs committee members about their responsibilities during each stage of the recruitment process. At the same time, however, the recruitment committee members were usually ESP teachers and ED UMM lecturers and none of the members were the Deans or Faculty staff.

For this and other reasons, the recruitment process came under criticism from the employers. They highlighted the inconsistency inherent in it. For instance, they described how some of the committee members nominated potential candidates and some just gave scores for the candidates to the Director. Once this stage was complete, the decision was made by the Director of LC. The Deans of the Faculties are not notified which candidates are accepted and only the Head of General Administration is informed so that a contract letter can be issued.

This lack of coordination is exacerbated by poor communication. For example, the employers identified a lack of communication about the contract status of ESP teachers. Some of the employers thought that the ESP teachers and the 'come and go' system that underpins the appointment process may affect the students' learning outcomes. They were particularly concerned as they felt that the limited extent of the contracts impacted on the teachers' professional development, and therefore, in turn on the students' progress. They further indicated a need for discussion with the policy makers about this situation. For example one employer described it in the following way:

As far as I'm concerned, the professionalism in teaching will actually be shaped after teaching for several years. One-year contracts do not suffice to train fresh graduates to teach English. The teachers in LC by design should not come and go. It might be possible for the Institution to recruit a number of staff at a time, and then along the way select the most qualified teaching staff for at least a three-year contract or more (LZ, VDFAH).

The need for better coordination was also highlighted in relation to department staff returning from overseas study who are expected to assist with ESP teaching. This occurs across the university.

OK, I agree. The Language Centre is the unit that is formally responsible for the English teaching. But English teaching is not only done and is not only controlled by the Language Centre only but also from the faculties and there should be cooperation, a program from the university that later the LC teaching staff are not only stationed in the centre but they are distributed across departments in this university. So this guides us, the policy guides us I mean that in the future it is not only the Language Centre as such but it is also the responsibility of the department so in this context the main role of the Language Centre is to stimulate teaching and learning English so that it is run very well. This is an attempt to stimulate the departments and also the stakeholders there (M, DLC).

However, not all teachers are given a chance to teach ESP in their department. Only those who were willing to teach and who asked to teach English classes by the LC are allocated ESP schedules. Even then, the LC often fails to allocate such staff ESP classes often because of a lack of systematic coordination between different entities in the university.

Simplification of the Problems

The employers were concerned about the students' English learning outcomes. The students' poor English achievement may be due, at least in part, to the mismatch between the classroom instruction and the assessment. During instruction, students were taught either ESP or General English. At the end of their ESP class semester, they were given a series of tests in speaking, reading, listening and writing. Next, and before they were granted their English

Diploma Certificate, they should undertake a TOEFL. Their TOEFL results were reported to the Faculties. Almost all the Deans of the Faculties viewed the TOEFL scores as the only indicator of students' English proficiencies. The majority of students' TOEFL results after the ESP completion were often below 450. No consideration was given to their class tests.

However, the employers did not appear to systematically or comprehensively investigate the data to back up their opinions. Despite the low level of student English achievement, employers did not regard this as a major problem and instead, they perceived that no complaint from the students was an indicator that there were no problems with English teaching.

There is no complaint from our students about the performance of ESP teachers from LC. I assume that our students do enjoy ESP classes. I admit that we have never supervised ESP classroom activities. We just observe students' scores and never conduct any written feedback. But I think it is a good idea to do so (MS, VDFK).

In addition, the number of students participating in international study is also seen as an indicator of the success of the ESP teaching program. However, the employers did not seem to consider the ratio of student overseas participation to non-participation.

Whilst the employers held these views, the data showed that students' success was actually influenced by a range of factors. For example, several highly motivated students improved their English competencies by attending private English courses, or from being active in English clubs and programs offered by the university such as the debating forum. Those who chose to take risk in the process of learning English appeared to achieve well. These students were also more ready to participate in overseas competitions and programs.

The employers also tended to draw on the experiences of just a few highly proficient students, such as those described above, without understanding the complexity of the situation. Because of this, employers did not consider factors such as student lack of motivation, poor learning approaches, or uninteresting teaching methods.

The second indicator that ESP is appropriately conducted is the increasing number of students participating in international forums. One of students in Animal Husbandry Department is chosen as a representative of Indonesian university, along with the other three students from other prominent universities, they participated in an international conference. They presented their papers in English. Without English proficiency, I doubt that the students would be granted the opportunity. (LZ, VDFAH).

The Teachers' Shared Culture

Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs

It was clear from the classroom (and outside the classroom) observations and teacher interviews that the teachers' attitudes and beliefs strongly impacted on the way they taught and interacted with their students. It was also clear that their cultural values influenced the decisions they made and the actions they took. In this way, the teachers' beliefs were reflected in their classroom pedagogical practices.

The shared culture of the LC appeared to evolve through the way that the beliefs are being inculcated from the old teachers to the new and inexperienced ones. This is because the new teachers teach and perform roles in the ways they were taught.

For example, some teachers described how they believed that new students are young and naive and, therefore, they need to be told what to learn and that teaching them requires starting at the beginning level. Due to this, what was particularly noticeable in many of the observed lessons is that the teachers took a central role. This is a situation similar to that described by Richard and Bolkhe (2011) - the teacher was the one who dominated the talking

during the lesson, the teacher was the one who did most of the presentation and the explanation of the tasks, and the teacher was the one who was preoccupied with control, order, and class management.

In many ways these actions are a reflection of the type of education they themselves had experienced (Coleman, 1996). In Indonesia generally, and at UMM especially, it is a common expectation that teachers are those who provide knowledge to students. Furthermore, students are seen more as knowledge receivers rather than active participants in knowledge creation.

It is clear from the evidence of the interviews and observations that these perceptions influenced how the teachers and students behaved in the current context. For example, at UMM, teachers explained teaching materials and the students were expected to listen to their teachers. Furthermore, during their explanation teachers took a position in the front of the classroom reflecting the central position that teachers seemed to believe they hold. Even though the teachers employed a variety of teaching techniques, in general this did not change the centrality of the teachers' roles. This is because teacher-centred class instruction is deeply embedded in Indonesian school settings; this type of instruction has become a part in the Indonesian school culture (Bjork, 2005).

Other aspect of learner centre was rarely found in many ESP classrooms at UMM. Carter (1983) and also Hutchinson and Waters (1987) claim that learning centre is an integral part of ESP teaching. For example, it also appeared that the teachers had difficulty dealing with mixed ability classes and with students who had a range of interests. For example, in several of the classrooms observed, the teachers were not seen to provide materials with different levels of difficulty. That is, they continued to give the same materials to students regardless of their levels of English competence. In two different interviews the teachers justified the use of GE materials for all of the students in this way:

GE is the basic competence that students should possess before ESP (AKD).

The GE materials were given because students were still in their first semester. I want to push the materials gently and not to shock them with direct introduction of ESP. As I said before, attracting them not frightening them with difficult materials was a very important step (HA).

Treating all students in the same way may result in the more proficient learners becoming bored or the lower level learners not understanding the materials. In both situations, the results can be demotivating for the students.

Activities of the Teachers

The observations made during this ethnographic study were not always conducted in classrooms. The incorporation of observations made outside of the classrooms provided a more comprehensive picture of teachers' attitudes to and understandings about the ESP program and about teaching more generally. Observations were undertaken in the LC office where teachers usually meet informally before and after teaching. The LC office was divided into three large areas. The first area was about 13 by 8 metres. This area was the main or front office where the Director of LC and the consultants spent their office hours.

The middle area was the smallest area which was about 4 metres in length and 8 metres in width. This office was equipped with computers where staff could do both their administrative and academic tasks. The back area was as big as the main office. In this area LC staff, both full-time and part-time teachers got together while waiting for their teaching schedules or when they have finished their teaching.

After lessons, some teachers chatted casually whilst some others appeared to check their students' work. Some accessed the internet either for social networking or as a way to search for teaching materials. Sometimes the teachers also shared and reviewed their

understandings about classroom pedagogy as a small informal group. For example, they were observed to discuss the progress of the teachers' chapters they were writing for the ESP books.

Other administrative tasks that staff were regularly observed to be involved in included TOEFL test administration, designing workshops and organising the ESP graduation. This range of teacher activities was partly due to the expectation of the Director of the LC, but also because in this institution, every activity other than teaching brings further financial rewards. Therefore, doing such tasks enabled teachers to supplement their income which has been reported elsewhere to be low (i.e., teachers are underpaid in Indonesia, Yuwono & Harbon, 2010).

One of the consequences of such a degree of activities is that many staff noted that due to the amount of time they spent on administrative and academic tasks, they had little time for reflecting on their teaching.

I have to do a lot of jobs at the one time which overwhelms me. It makes me feel that I didn't do my best so I need to...yuck, this job is overwhelming (FBS).

The number of administrative tasks teachers had to undertake was further exacerbated by the reporting mechanisms at UMM. Whilst teaching is monitored externally by the Badan Kendali Mutu Akademik (BKMA) or the Quality Assurance Bureau, the teachers' performance of administrative tasks was usually monitored by and reported to the Director of the LC.

Thus it appears that the challenges of ESP teaching are not solely due to teachers and students knowledge and skills. The many other tasks teachers must perform also impact on their teaching.

Other Teaching Behaviours

As noted above, it was found that few ESP teachers provided teaching materials for students of different levels. Only a couple of teachers reported asking their students what sort of materials they needed or wanted to learn about, or, in fact, asked any questions that might help to inform their teaching. Instead intuition based teaching was observed to occur in many of the classes. This is teaching whereby students are provided with teaching materials based on an instinctive feeling of the teacher rather than on an evaluation of students' proficiencies and needs.

The teaching that occurred in the classes was also observed to be fast-paced and reactive to curriculum and assessment requirements, rather than responsive to learner needs. It demonstrated a general lack of reflection about pedagogy. For instance, classroom observations showed the teachers moving quickly from one topic to another, without sufficiently checking what students had grasped or that everyone in the class had the knowledge or skills required for the next topic. One such example of this took place in a speaking class. The teacher asked students to practice a role play between a manager and a job applicant. She then gave ten examples of the English expressions and questions that interviewers commonly asked in a job interview. However, the teacher discussed the topic only quickly and briefly. It seemed that students' lack of understanding was not her concern.

The following transcription was from the observation of this session and shows the rapidity and density of the information that the teacher gave to the class.

Teacher: Question no one: Hello, how can I help you?

Question number two: What kind of job are you applying for?

Do you understand question number two: What kinds of job are you applying for?

Number three: Describe about yourself

Describe about yourself, well my name is Nisa, I'm from Kalimantan,
I love to work hard bla..blah..blah..

What experiences have you got? Means work experience. For example, I'm familiar
to

Operate the computer; I'm skilful to manage the people.

What are your good points and what are your bad points?

Good points, you can say your strengths, positive points...

And then your bad points (RR).

From the observations and information provided in the interviews by the teachers, it does seem that professional development is needed by staff to understand the process and time required for English language development. There also appears to be a need for the goals of ESP teaching program to be redefined into more operational and achievable outcomes, taking into account student expectations and desires for the future. Teachers will then require appropriate training for these goals to be achieved.

The Students' Shared Culture

Students have multiple and significant reasons for learning English. Further many expressed a high level of motivation and interest in learning English. They were also able to articulate their needs and made suggestions of how the ESP program could be enhanced. Despite these positive outcomes, observations made in the ESP classrooms suggested a contradiction between the students' expressed desires and beliefs and their behaviour.

Initially the classroom observations were made to obtain data to support the teachers' perceptions about needs. However, in the process of doing so observations were made about the way students' responded to teachers' questions and tasks, their interactions both with their classroom teachers and their classmates, and other actions that highlighted behaviours that provide important background information about the students as stakeholders.

From the observations conducted in the classes, socialising was found to be a significant part of almost all the ESP classes. The students were seen talking to friends, either those who sat next to them or even farther away. They were heard talking about matters which were often not related to the topics discussed in the class. Peers were also observed talking in Bahasa Indonesia whilst waiting for the teacher to call their names and check their attendance. They also talked in the middle of the lesson such as when a teacher assigned one of the students to read a paragraph projected onto the white board from her laptop. In fact, all the informal talking that was observed was in Bahasa Indonesia.

From the interviews with the teachers about the class situation, the reason the teachers did not seem to take any steps to prevent this behaviour was because some teachers were new and inexperienced and while others considered that reprimanding the students' unruly behaviours would result in lower attendance rates in their classes.

It was observed that students frequently came late to class. The degree of lateness varied from 5 minutes to almost an hour. When they did arrive, some students went directly to find seats and others greeted their teachers. If students were more than 15 minutes late, they would use the Muslim greeting '*Assalamualaikum*'. The custom is those who hear the greeting have to respond in the same way and if many students came late, there were continual stops. In addition to this disruption, late-coming students who did not know the topics being discussed in class often asked questions of their peers who sat next to them and this resulted in additional classroom noise.

Despite some of the problems that were observed to occur, the students were noted to participate actively in their classes. This was demonstrated in the way the students asked questions of the teachers or of their friends, in the way they engaged during group discussion

tasks, in group presentations, and also how they responded to teachers' questions. Overall, they appeared enthusiastic to engage in class discussions. They also appeared willing to participate in instructed tasks. In addition, it was also apparent that a number of students prepared for the lesson tasks before class. However, when teachers pointed it to a particular student to answer a specific question, others who did not get a turn appeared to hide themselves from the teacher's sight. Thus it appears that group work might be one way to further encourage participation, if only that it enable a classroom atmosphere to be less threatening.

Conclusion

The shared cultures of each stakeholder should be considered improving to help better administration of ESP programs at UMM. For the employers, the suggestion is that there should be a coordinated systematic approach to improving students' ESP learning outcomes. By doing this, it is expected good teaching strategies can be implemented and the development of ESP enhanced.

The teachers shared cultural and pedagogical understandings, incorporating their attitudes and beliefs particularly in relation to the key roles they have as teachers, the tasks they need to perform as teachers, and their teaching behaviours.

It is clear that to further enhance the students' success in English learning, some of the behaviours observed in the classrooms need to change.

The employers can play a crucial role in improving the ESP program at UMM. A powerful person at the top, or a large enough group from anywhere in the organization, decides the old ways are not working, figures out a change vision, starts acting differently, and enlists others to act differently. If the new actions produce better results, if the results are communicated and celebrated, and if they are not killed off by the old culture fighting its rear-guard action, new norms will form and new shared values will grow.

The employers should invest future visions and understand why the change is needed and will be more invested in its success. They will better understand what is required of them and will be more committed to taking action. Instead of being the recipients of change, they will become the drivers of change.

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