

# THE ENHANCEMENT OF ENGLISH TRAININGS FOR LECTURERS IN ENGLISH PRACTICUM CLASS

Sri Wahyuningsih

STAIN Kudus

wahyuningsih@stainkudus.ac.id

## Abstract

*This paper attempts at exploring some strategies used to improve the lecturers' competence and facilities supporting the process of teaching English as well as the better outputs from English Practicum Class. The research belongs to a descriptive qualitative research. The interview and observation were done to gather data. The result showed that there are a number of programs designed and conducted by the chief and team of the language development unit (UPB) to enhance the competence of lecturers in English Practicum Class. These programs cover compiling a workbook of English Intensive Program "Have Fun with English", conducting the International Conference and Call for Papers, providing Academic Writing Course for lecturers, training of TOEFL Test, training of English item test methodology, etc. In fact, some lecturers in English practicum class enthusiastically participate in such programs.*

**Keyword:** *English Trainings, Lecturers, English Practicum Class*

## Introduction

In the rapidly changing world, the competence of professional lecturers has now been demanded in each institution. In order to achieve the qualified educators, a number of strategies such as trainings become requirements for incorporating both personal and pedagogical competences. These include information and communications technology (ICT). As has been highlighted by Barnes & Murray (1999: 167) that the ICT requirements comprise two main sections, concentrating first on the pedagogical ICT competence of trainees (its official title is 'effective teaching and assessment method') and secondly on their personal competence. In accordance with the personal competences, lecturers should demonstrate and emphasize their possessed capabilities. Therefore, the training provider should make sure the necessary knowledge gained.

In line with Barnes and Murray, Chapelle and Hegelheimer (2004) emphasized that the need to clarify the key competences of language teachers in the twenty-first century to 'effectively and critically engage in technology-related teaching issues . . . within a world that is decisively supported and interconnected by technology'. Considering this, it could be believed that technology has become a noteworthy key for successful language teaching. Hence, Hampel and Stickler (2005) have highlighted the key competences of language tu-

tors. Those encompass a pyramid of skills with seven key competences ranging from lower level skills (e.g. basic ICT competence, specific technical and software competence and awareness of constraints and possibilities) to higher level skills (e.g. online socialization, facilitation of communicative competence as well as creativity, choice and selection).

Apart from that, skills for language teaching need to be taken into account. It had already been known that before teaching, teachers should acquire the language skills such as speaking skills particularly the fluency and accuracy in the target language that apparently prerequisites for language teaching. Shulman (1987) emphasizes that transformation of the subject knowledge, in this case, a foreign language or languages, is necessary to attain what he frequently calls 'pedagogical content knowledge'. Besides, reading skills are becoming the prerequisite for language competence. By acquiring this skill, English lecturers are hopefully able to direct and improve students reading skills. Indeed, there are essentially links between reading success and another factor such as mental health. Consequently, teachers have paramount roles to guide and empower their students in achieving reading success. This is in line with Snowling & Hulme cited in Snow (2016):

"The converging evidence about links

between reading success and mental health on the one hand, and oral language competence and mental health on the other, raises the issue of homotypic co morbidity between language and reading difficulties and the likelihood that there is a shared etiological contribution of poor oral language skills to both poor reading and psychosocial difficulties in the primary school years". (Snowling & Hulme, cited in Snow, 2016).

Considering the above statement, it could be assumed that better reading habits should be reinforced on students since at early age inasmuch as there is a shared relationship among mental health, oral language competence and reading success. Another language skill that should be taken into consideration is a writing skill. An activity of writing belongs to productive skills which require a lot of processes. Jones (2006) states that the focus of writing was on two major views: An expressive view which was free and creative and a heavy influence of a cognitive view of writing. Later, a third view was recognized as part of the process, a social view. Meanwhile, Heald-Taylor (1986, cited in Jarvis, 2002) describes that:

"Process of writing is an approach which encourages ESL youngsters to communicate their own written messages while simultaneously developing their literacy skills in speaking and reading rather than delaying involvement in the writing process, as advocated in the past, until students have perfected their abilities in handwriting, reading, phonetics, spelling, grammar and punctuation. In Process Writing, the communication of the message is paramount and therefore the developing, but inaccurate, attempts at handwriting, spelling, and grammar are accepted, know that within the process of regular writing opportunities students will gain control of these sub-skills".

With regard to this, the writing shift requires greater learner participation and responsibility in the learning process, and with this, the teacher's role has been shifted from an evaluator of the written product to a facilitator and co-contributor in the writing process. In other words, the well efforts between teachers and learners result in discovering what written language is and how a piece of writing is produced. Besides those language skills above, listening is one of the primary skills determining the language success. Weger, etc (2014) conceptualized active listen-

ing as having three parts: 1) demonstrates moderate to high nonverbal involvement, 2) reflects the speaker's message using verbal paraphrasing, and 3) may include asking questions that encourage speakers to elaborate on his or her experiences. In accordance with the language skills mentioned previously, it is possibly deduced that teaching a second language, English, depends deeply on the lecturers' competence in language teaching accomplished by listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

As a matter of fact, the educational background of lecturers in English Practicum Class especially at STAIN Kudus is not totally from English Department. Indeed, some of them are from different majors such as Psychology, Islamic Religion, Economics, etc. Regarding this, their competences in language teaching especially in speaking, listening and writing are highly needed to develop. Consequently, their competences in teaching English at Practicum Class are different from those whose background is English Department. Such differences could be seen from the methodology of teaching, skills of English teaching, and a number of teaching competences such as personal, social, professional and pedagogical competence. Thus, those different competences probably will effect on the ways of how they teach English. Additionally, the output of the students will also be different from those taught by the lecturers whose background is English. In order to overcome such problems, the Language Development Unit of STAIN Kudus had proposed various strategies to develop the quality and competences of lecturers teaching English in English Practicum Class. A number of trainings, seminar, and workshops are some of the strategies to improve and enhance the lecturers' competence.

Having a look at this phenomenon, this paper attempts at exploring the condition of English Practicum Class at STAIN Kudus, some strategies used to improve the lecturers' competence, facilities and activities supporting the process of teaching English as well as the better outputs from English Practicum Class.

## Methods

This research methodology fell in the descriptive qualitative paradigm. In order to

gather data, the writer interviewed the chief of the Language Development Unit at STAIN Kudus and the English lecturers in English Practicum Class. In addition, an observation was also conducted to see and analyze the condition of teaching and learning process in English Practicum Class. Further, these interview and observation were crucial to explore deeply about what trainings implemented by the Language Development Unit to improve the lecturers' competence in language teaching.

### Finding and Discussion

Learning English as a second language needs the roles of competence lecturers. In fact, language problems depend on the learners themselves, their desires, social context and community where they use language. Referring to the learning conditions at STAIN Kudus, the total number of students doesn't balance with the ratio of English Lecturers. Consequently, lecturers whose background is not English Department but they have skills in English, they are highly recommended to teach English in Practicum class. In order to

enhance their professional development, the language development unit carries out a number of activities, trainings and programs related to English development. As stated by the chief of the language development unit, Sa'diyah, advocating that trainings, seminar and programs related to English development are highly needed to support and facilitate the lecturers.

"As we know that the amount of students at STAIN Kudus exceeds the total number of English lecturers that is 12. In order to overcome this, other lecturers having better skills in English were asked to teach in English Practicum class. Additionally, we support and provide them a series of trainings, programs and activities to develop their competence and professionalism. These include the training of teaching methodology in English class, Academic Writing Course, TOEFL test course, etc."

(Sa'diyah, 20 Agustus 2017)

Furthermore, the team of Language Development has designed a series of programs and planning starting from 2016 to 2020 actualized by the chart below:



Source: The language development unit (UPB), STAIN Kudus

From the above chart, it shows that there are continuously a number of programs regarding the language and competence development for lecturers at STAIN Kudus. The starting programs which are outlined in 2016 include compiling a workbook of English Intensive Program "Have Fun with English", conducting the 1st International Conference and Call for Papers and providing Academic Writing Course for lecturers. In 2017, the programs are designed to achieve more development comprising of training of ITP TOEFL Test, training of English item test methodology, the 2nd International conference and call for papers, and the virtual class-based language learning development. Additionally, in 2018, the team of Language development Unit (UPB) will conduct a training and TOAFL test, a training of designing the virtual class-based language learning media, the 3rd International Conference and Call for papers, and the Curricula development for foreign language. The programs which are designed in 2019 are classified into growth program such as a training and IBT Test for lecturers, a grand design of Arabic and English learning development, the 4th International Conference and Call for papers, and Workshop of capacity building for language center institution. Meanwhile, the programs outlined in 2020 cover a training of IELTS for lecturers, preparation for building a TOEFL test Institution, the 5th International Conference and Call for papers, and workshop of language research and scientific publications.

### **International Conference**

According to Ose, etc. (2014: 30), a conference is a formal meeting or gathering where people of like mind converge to share ideas and make policies that will be beneficial to their field of study. They added that a conference can also be a gathering where a group of people from different walks of life with common interest converge to share ideas, present problems in their field, and proffer solutions. Referring to their statement, it could be argued that a conference particularly in international level is a meaningful way to gather with academician, friends, and others as well as share the ideas, knowledge, and information. Additionally, by attending a conference, participants in this case are lecturers professionally have a rewarding experience and enable them to keep in touch with colleagues from

other areas.

In accordance with the professional development for lecturers at STAIN Kudus, the language development unit held an international conference and call for paper "peaceful life in Islam: local and global challenges" on August 8-9, 2016. On that occasion, there were 33 participants coming from STAIN Kudus and other institutions sent articles and presented them enthusiastically. By joining such kind of international conference, the participants especially the lecturers of STAIN Kudus, obtain various advantages including they will get inspired of research ideas and something new related to their competence development. Additionally, they will get exposed of different styles of presentation, enable them to share their valuable experience, discuss various topics in the discipline, get in touch with experts, develop motivation of publishing and presentation opportunities and build up networks. This is in line with statement of Abid as an English Lecturer:

"I do appreciate the language development unit conducting the international conference. Attending this conference, I am being motivated in writing articles, journal articles and books. Besides, I can share ideas, knowledge, anything about research with other participants and experts in the international conference. The important thing is the participant can build networking with other lecturers from other institutions". (Abid, Agustus 2017)

In line with Abid, another lecturer whose background is not from English Department, Amaliyah, highlights that the international conference gives a number of advantages:

"The task of lecturers is not only teaching but also researching and others. That is why the international conference held by the language development unit is so crucial and needed by us to improve the professional development. By joining the international conference, I can gather with friends from other institutions, have research ideas, and share experience and knowledge". (Amaliyah, Agustus 2017).

### **A workbook of English Intensive Program for English Practicum Class Students**

In order to enhance the students' language skill, the team of the Language Development Unit compiled a workbook for English practicum class students entitled "Have Fun with English". This book consists of ten chapters used for a complement material for

the subject of English Practicum at STAIN Kudus. Knowing that most students of STAIN Kudus have limited in using English fluently both inside and outside the classroom. Regarding this, this book focuses more on activities in reading, listening, grammar, writing and speaking. In each chapter, the writers provided conversations and listening in order to make them easy when pronouncing English words. Further, the discussion tasks, role play activities of the conversations, and reading texts are provided to help them develop their vocabulary.

During compiling a workbook, the chief of Language Development Unit made a team consisting of English lecturers by assigning them to design each unit and its practice. In this case, there is an interaction among the English lecturers and the chief in order to get well decision-making processes and results. In other words, building interaction, coordination and cooperation actualized by macro and micro level is quite required to get a right decision. Macro-level area is represented by activities of organizations including language legislation and decision-making processes handled by the chief of the language development unit. While micro-level area is represented by interactions related to language material, problem, and development handled by the team consisting of English lecturers. According to Dovalil (2015), the interconnection represents a specific challenge, because the agents especially those creating the law in books - regulate the behavior of individuals from their top down perspective. Considering this, building well corporations and interconnections both from top down and bottom up is required to get best result indecision making in this case is writing a workbook of English intensive program for English practicum class students.

### Academic Writing Course

Writing is one of the crucial aspects in English skill. The process of writing is a cognitive activity, meaning that writing is a way to express thoughts. According to Vygotsky in Confrey (1995), thoughts and language are derived from the different

way. Speech is the basic of the development of language ability growing from cues and responses in communication context and social interaction; while thoughts grow from activities of experiences. The different ways between thoughts and language finally are fused to facilitate the concepts developments. Meanwhile, Jones (2006) advocates that the focus of writing was on two major views: An expressive view which was free and creative and a heavy influence of a cognitive view of writing. Regarding this, the writing activities are not something for granted. It needs a transaction between the writer and meaning potential in writing to get creative process in writing. Such creativity includes proposing topics, ways of developing plot of writing, dictions and sentence structures showing style of the writer. Besides, writing is deliberately a creative thinking required organization of ideas, sentence structures use, mechanism, vocabulary and style.

In fact, lecturers of English practicum class have lack competence in writing skill considering their background is not English Department. Referring to this reason, the team of language development unit (UPB) initiated to hold an academic writing course for lecturers in order to enhance their competence. Further, a native speaker was regularly invited to join the academic course and support the participants' motivation. It can be shown through the picture.



Source: The language development unit (Ubinsa), STAIN Kudus

## TOEFL Test and Teaching Methodology Course in English Practicum Class

In order to enhance the lecturers' competence in teaching methodology, the team of language development unit holds a training of methodology teaching in English practicum class on October 28, 2017. This training aimed at increasing the learning quality in English practicum class so that students will be interested in learning English. Joining the training of teaching methodology, the participants felt enthusiastic because innovations and strategies of learning that can actively applied in English practicum class. This kind of activity benefits the lecturers particularly for those whose background is not English department. As has been stated by Amaliyah (2017):

"I feel interested in joining this activity of teaching methodology. Realizing that I am not from English department, I pursue myself to join this. In my opinion, it gives many benefits for me including how to teach English using innovative and creative ways. Additionally, some strategies to teach English are highlighted so that the students will be interested in joining my class."

(Amaliyah, August 2017).

Besides, the team of language development unit provides a free TOEFL test training and test for lecturers considering that the test is highly crucial for both improving and upgrading their competence. This TOEFL training considerably gives a large amount of benefits covering spoken and written test. Further, the result of the test can be used as a requirement to get a scholarship and other courses outside. As stated by the lecturer from English Department, Erzad (2017):

"I proudly joined the TOEFL training and test held by the language and development unit of STAIN Kudus since long time no join such training. I realized that my skill in English particularly in listening needs to be increased. A number of years ago, my score in listening was not satisfied. Therefore, I enthusiastically joined the TOEFL training and test to measure my competence in English whether there is a significant increase or not." (Erzad, September 5, 2017)

Similar to Erzad, Fa'atin (2017) also advocates that the training and test of TOEFL conducted by the team of the language development unit of STAIN Kudus benefit for the lecturers especially for those whose background is not English like herself. Joining such training and test, she strengthened herself to keep

learning English and TOEFL materials more and more, enriched English vocabularies, listening English songs and speaking to English lecturers using English.

## Conclusion

To sum up, enhancing the lecturers' competence in English is something crucial in some ways. Regarding it, there are various efforts initiated by the chief and team of the language development unit (UPB) to provide some programs and activities supporting the competence of lecturers in English Practicum Class. These include compiling a workbook of English Intensive Program "Have Fun with English", conducting the International Conference and Call for Papers, providing Academic Writing Course for lecturers, training of TOEFL Test, training of English item test methodology, etc. By actualizing these programs, some lecturers in English practicum class admitted that the programs significantly benefit for them particularly to increase their English competence and better outcome for their students in English practicum class.

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