

ANALYZING THE STUDENTS' NEEDS FOR CROSS-INTEREST ENGLISH PROGRAM OF GRADE XI AT SMA N 3 BUKITTINGGI

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ABSTRACT

Cross-interest is a curricular program that is prepared to expand the students' choice of interest, talent, and/or academic skill aside from the interest-based program (Education Ministry Regulation No.64/2014). Based on the researcher's preliminary observation to some students and teachers, it was inferred that the application of the English Cross-Interest in SMAN 3 Bukittinggi had been good. However, there were some problems found. They were assumed as the effect of inexistence or lacks of needs analysis. Thus, the aim of this research was to investigate the target and learning needs of the students in the program. To fulfill such an aim, two instruments were used to collect the data; questionnaire, and interview guide. Descriptive research was applied as the research method where the grade XI students of SMAN 3 Bukittinggi were chosen as respondents of the research. Then, the result showed that the students' target needs were mainly related to their academic and occupational English in the future which focus more on the speaking and reading skills. The students have been proved to be lack in some micro-skills of speaking which will be needed in the target situations. But, speaking is not practiced much during their study in the program. Reading, on the other hand, is also considered as one of the main skills needed but luckily they have got sufficient reading skills in the program. It has also been revealed that the students need more various learning strategies from the teachers.

Keywords: Needs Analysis, Students Needs, Cross-Interest English Program

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the basic needs of people in the world. It changes us by transferring knowledge and skills and eventually shapes our characters and behaviors. One of the important factors in achieving the goal of education is the curriculum. It typically refers to all the knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn

which includes the lessons, the assignments, and evaluations. The latest form of curriculum in Indonesia is the Curriculum 2013. Its goal is to give chances for the students to develop their skills, talents, and interests in a broader and more open way in accordance with the principle of individual differences.

In the Senior High School, the structure of Curriculum 2013 provides *obligatory* and *interest-based academic* subject matters. Obligatory subject matters are the ones that all students must enroll during the study. It consists of subjects such as Religion, Bahasa Indonesia, and Civics. Interest-based academic subjects, on the other hand, consist of *subject groups*, *Cross-Interest*, and *enrichment*. Subject groups must be chosen by the students according to their interest. The classifications are Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Social Studies, and Languages and Culture. Then, Cross-Interest is a curricular program that is prepared to expand the students' choice of interest, talent, and/or academic skill aside from the interest-based program (Education Ministry Regulation No. 64/2014). For example, a student who has chosen Mathematics & Natural Sciences as their subject groups can take one of the subjects from Social Studies or Languages & Culture. Finally, student with outstanding accomplishment in certain subjects can take enrichment subjects.

Due to the fact that English is very important and needed by the students, it was believed that a needs analysis was crucial in helping the students to meet their real needs. The absence of prior needs analysis in the program had led to its inability to fulfill the learners' real needs. Therefore, conducting this research was necessary to provide the teachers with information of what the students really needed. There were two research questions in this research which ask for the target and the learning needs of the students in the program. Hopefully, it will give useful contribution to the improvement of the program, not only specifically in SMAN 3 Bukittinggi but also in other schools that apply Curriculum 2013.

METHOD

This research was classified into descriptive research. Gay and Airasian (2000) mentioned that this kind of research involves collecting the data in order to answer the questions concerning the current status of the object researched. In this research, the

researcher will collect and analyze data about the English Cross-Interest program to find information about the target and learning needs of the students; therefore later it can be seen how well the program can fulfill these needs. In this research, both quantitative and qualitative data gathering had been employed. Questionnaires were computed quantitatively; while information from structured interview had been described qualitatively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analyzing both answers from the questionnaire and the interview, it can be summarized that in general the purpose of taking this program was to improve English skills and fulfill some students' interest who like to study English. But, specifically, the purposes were to master English in order to support their future study and career.

It was found that first, the students agreed that they were going to use speaking and reading dominantly in the future. Secondly, the teachers also agreed with the students, but mentioned writing as addition. Therefore, a conclusion that can be made is that speaking and reading were two skills that confirmed by the respondents to be used in the future.

Generally, all the respondents tend to say that they would use direct communication in the future. However, the second teacher's answer might be also true. The world has changed and it continues to develop. The way people communicate is also changing. If nowadays people tend to study English to use it for face-to-face interaction, people in the future might be different. The advancement of technology would shorten the time, distance, and effort needed to communicate. Therefore, in addition to direct interaction, skills in indirect communication is also needed to be anticipated.

To conclude, the type of texts or discourse that the students would be likely use in their future are business-related (work), informal (daily), and education. All the respondents mentioned the assumptions of finding education and occupation-related content of English in the future.

Comparing all responses from both questionnaire and the interview, it can concluded that in general the students assumed that they would communicate by using

English in the future with the native speakers. On the other hand, the teachers thought the opposite way. The differences in these assumptions are acceptable because the way people see things are different based on their background and predictions. The students' assumption of interacting with native speakers in the future is possibly based on their hope and vision to meet people from abroad in the future, while the teachers seemed to be more realistic and comprehensive based on their knowledge and experience. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are possibilities of interacting with both native and non-native speakers in the future.

The students would communicate with people who speak English fluently or less fluently. Both the students and the teachers agreed to say that the students would use English during work and study in the future. Therefore, all expressions that people commonly use during working and studying are needed to be studied. Based on the responses from the students and the teachers from questionnaires and interview, it was found that the students were lacking in reading business documents, reading newspapers, and reading novels in English. Then, based on the investigation through the interview instruments, it was discovered that the root of the problem was lack of vocabulary. That undoubtedly made reading become difficult. A reading text full of strange and unfamiliar words would be hard to be understood because there would be many missing ideas that could not be connected. Therefore, having sufficient vocabulary is a must in order to master the reading skills.

Based on the responses from the students, it was found that they found difficulties in listening to spoken English in formal situation such as speeches, meetings/discussion, and lectures where the speakers usually speak fast and natural. Their difficulties were understandable since in these situations rare and unfamiliar words were usually spoken. If they were not get used to listen to them, it would be very difficult. It is approved by the teachers who mentioned that vocabulary and familiarity in listening were essential. Wide range of vocabulary in many aspects would help in understanding spoken English. In addition, the more and more practices would make it much more easier.

Among all the subskills given to the students, they were lacking in giving speech/presentations in conferences and workplace, and discussing general topics with

foreigners. It can be seen that they still got problem in speaking English even just in informal situations. Based on the interview with the teachers, it was clear that the teachers felt that students' difficulties in speaking were majorly caused by lack of vocabulary, grammar, and lack of self-confidence. The vocabulary and grammar were considered as two main factors that actually can help the students to develop sentences. Then, with a good self-confidence, the students would be able to speak fluently. But, in fact, this was something that is still not achieved yet.

The lacks of the students in writing were related to writing business documents, research findings, and paper assignment. These formal texts were difficult because they had not learned them at that time and the program also did not have them in the syllabus. Then, the students' problems in writing in English were rooted from the insufficient knowledge about vocabulary and grammar. In that situation, writing a good piece of English would be impossible even if they had many ideas to write.

The students agreed to say that they want to study topics which are related to education and occupation. On the other hand, the teachers, based on their knowledge, thought that the students did not really specified the topics that they wanted to study. Both the students and the teachers have agreed that speaking is the skill that the students want to master first due to its importance in real-life whether it is daily, study, or work-life.

It was fine to say that the students in general like study supported with sound and music, for example by using songs or videos. In a way it helped to engage the students in learning and motivate them to study. In addition to that, the students also favored discussion and role-plays where they could do assignments together with their peers, because they did not really like individual works. The researcher thought that it was because for most students, English tasks were commonly difficult, so doing them in groups would make things easier, while also could give them opportunities to practice and enriched their knowledge. Despite of what kind of strategies that the teachers usually applied in the classroom, most students still preferred if the teachers explain the lesson explicitly. They argued that it could make them understand easier. Not so many of them favored students centered or students' interaction. Learning Needs.

The students' reasons in taking the program were because they basically needed and wanted to improve their English skills and knowledge, especially in speaking and listening. Specifically, they had realized the importance of the lesson for their future career and study. Therefore taking the lesson for them was necessary.

Six years was not a short time to study a language. Even after those years the students still found many difficulties in practicing the English skills. Not many of them could show a moderate skill of English in the classroom. Even so, the students fluency were usually supported by other factors such as family or outside learning. Therefore, evaluation was needed to the program of English subject at school in general to improve the output in the future.

As a matter of fact, the students' learning concepts were different one to each other depended on the students' characters. Some of them preferred the teacher to just explain the lesson and gave assignments. The others liked if the teacher varied the teaching strategy and tried out games or any challenging activities. Therefore, the teachers had to actually get to know the students' characteristics. By doing so, the teachers could apply the most suitable learning for the students.

It has been proven that the students' favorite activities in learning were the ones related with listening to song or records and also practicing speaking. It meant that the students loved to do activities which were related to real-life situation. The teachers also agreed to say that the students wanted to study things related with entertainments field, for examples music or movies and then occupation. Possibly based on the teachers' experiences, the students were more enthusiastic to study if they were given topics above. As a matter of fact, even the entertainments topic was not related with the purpose of the program, the teacher could still use it sometimes to attract the students' attention into learning. When the students have become motivated and ready to learn, then the teacher could start giving the actual lesson.

In overall the students did not complain with the quality of the teacher. Most of them also mentioned that the books were fine. But actually, based on the researcher's observation to the school, it was found that there were no textbook for the students for Cross-Interest English program for the grade in that academic year. The students only got book for the regular English class. Because of that, sometimes the teachers found

difficulties to deliver the lesson if they did not actively searched for additional materials from the school's library or the internet.

Based on the findings, it was found that the situations in which the students are targeted to function in the future are occupational and educational situations. In fact, these are already in accordance with the purpose of interest-based program in SMA which is to prepare the students to work in certain field or to continue to study in university (Students' Interest-based Guidebook; 2013). The use of English in these situations require the students to be able to use all English skills, especially speaking and reading. The previous research conducted by Genesse (2009) also showed how speaking and reading were needed and considered important by the students. In fact, the students' needs towards speaking skill is probably a product of our culture that usually claim it as a parameter of mastering English language as a whole. Robinson (1991) had mentioned it once that many students thought that oral proficiency is the best indication of a language mastery. It seems to be very valid in this context also.

Referring back to the findings, speaking in direct (face-to-face) interaction would be use more often compared to indirect interaction such as through telephone, email or video. Students admitted that they were lack in speaking micro-skills such as giving speech at conferences or workplace, even just talking to foreigners. On the other hand, the teachers argued that the students problems in speaking were mostly related to vocabulary, grammar, and self-confidence. They said that even if the students had already got good vocabulary and grammar knowledge, but do not have enough self-confidence, they would find problems in speaking in front of public.

Reading is the second medium of language believed to be needed in the future after speaking. Reading is an important language skill for the students to explore information as references and additional materials for their study. One of the most important skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students that need to acquire is the ability to comprehend academic texts (Dreyer & Nel, 2003). In other word, reading is one of important language skills needed by the students not only for studying English itself but also to explore other content of studies. Although the respondents in this study believed in the importance of reading skills, they were still lacking in many reading micro-skills such as reading novel, newspaper, and business documents.

Referring to their needs in the future, they need to improve their skills in reading newspaper and business documents. Unfortunately, these skills are not learned specifically in the program.

Then, in listening skill, it was discovered that the students thought that they had difficulties in listening to formal English, for instance speech at conferences, meetings in workplace, or at lectures to take notes. It is understandable since those kinds of texts must contain rare and difficult vocabulary that they are not familiar with. The teachers also said that familiarity to the vocabulary is important to understand information being given in a text. If they are not orally familiar with some words, it is hard to comprehend the texts that they are listen to. Vocabulary problems were a case that needed the students' personal willingness to solve. They could do many things outside of class-hour to enrich their vocabulary; through readings or watching movies. It is impossible that the hours of studying English at school could cover all vocabularies that they need. Listening was actually a case. There were no listening practice through recorded audio or visual that the students could learned from. The one and the only source of listening they could get was the teacher. Therefore, they could not maximize their listening practice and came to conclude that listening was difficult. Next, they also said that time allocation was not enough to do the tasks. It was agreeable since there were only 3 hours of teaching period in a week available to study the lesson. Even the teachers themselves had also complained about the time limitation.

After that, based on the findings, it was found that the students think they were troubled in writing texts like business documents, paper, and research findings because they were not familiar with them. The teachers, meanwhile, still thought that the students' problems in writing were grammar and vocabulary. They admitted that based on the the students' writing, it could be seen clearly that they students were still lacking on those knowledge which resulted in a very Indonesian-English writing. Meaning, the students only translated Indonesian to English word by word, not considering the grammar aspects of writing.

After investigation, it was found that the roots of all of the problems above were lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge. The students still had very limited vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Because vocabulary was not taught separately in

the syllabus, the teachers have to find strategies of how to make the students master various vocabulary related to the topics. Not only that, it also depends on the students themselves to enrich themselves by English vocabulary not only from learning in the classroom but also from other tools such as books or internet. Then, for the students grammar is still also a difficult aspect of English. It is probably because there are many rules and tenses that they have to remember and practice in various types of sentences. Lack of practice would only cause grammar mistakes in the sentences they are producing. August, Carlo, Dressler, and Snow (2005) express that foreign language learners who have limited vocabulary take more time to learn new vocabulary items and are less able to involve in comprehending text and lack involvement in oral communication with their peers. As a result, such learners are more likely to get lower achievement in language learning assessments.

The next discussion is related with the students' preferred learning strategy. It is found that they like it better if they study by involving music and pictures. They also like it if they learn through discussion and role play. The teachers have also mentioned that the students become more enthusiastic to study whenever they use music or video. The basic competence about song is the students' favorite and they always ask for more songs in the following meetings. This becomes the challenge for the teacher to make the students are not only interested in learning using music but also in any other materials even without music. So, the teachers have to find other strategies in teaching to drag the students interests.

Lastly, based on the findings, it is concluded that the students still want the teachers to be center of the classroom, because they think will more understand if the teachers explain and give assignments. The teachers, on the other hand, want to provide more student-student interaction in the classroom. It is possible that teachers' perception of students' low English language proficiency and low motivation leads to teachers' lower use of student-centered activities. Teachers need to make constant efforts to keep up to date with new teaching methods to be able to facilitate interactive classrooms with students of different English proficiency levels. Appropriate institutional support, such as providing professional development, releasing time, and funds for teachers (Parkhurst & Bodwell, 2005) are needed to help familiarize the teachers with the new

methodologies. Robinson, (1991) has also revealed that there are disagreements among the perceptions of teachers and students. The results show that teachers may not always be the best judges of students' needs and challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the investigation that has been done to students and teachers of SMA N 3 Bukittinggi who have learned and taught Cross-Interest English Program, it was found that *first*, the students' target needs are mainly related to their academic and occupational English in the future. The students have been proved to be lack in some micro-skills of speaking which will be needed in the target situations. But, speaking is not practiced much during their study in the program. Reading, on the other hand, is also considered as one of the main skills needed but luckily they have got sufficient reading skills in the program. *Second*, some conclusions about the learning needs have also been derived from the investigation. It has been concealed that the students need more various learning strategies from the teachers. Eventhough some of them said that they like it if the teachers explain the materials in the old way, it is not considered as it seems. The reason behind that is because they more easily understood the lesson through explanation, but they do not experience the process of discovering it.

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