



REDESIGNING GENERAL ENGLISH I SYLLABUS FOR INTENSIVE LANGUAGE PROGRAM

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Abstract

The objectives of this study are: 1) to describe the current General English I syllabus coverage, 2) to find out the *IAIN Walisongo* student's needs in General English I. 3) to explain the redesigning processes of the syllabus of General English I, and 4) to explain how suitable is the redesigned syllabus of General English I to *IAIN Walisongo* students. The study conducted was research and development (R&D) which consists of seven stages to redesign the syllabus. The instruments used to gather the data use questionnaire, interview, observation, and test. The subjects of the study were 68 students. The findings show that the current syllabus of General English I is an integrated course that is mainly about reading and grammar. The students' needs deal with the materials and activity that can support them to practice and communicate as well as TOEFL materials. The redesigning syllabus employs systematic procedures including current syllabus, students' needs, and institution policy that were needed to be considered in determining syllabus components. The syllabus suitability was justified based on five aspects namely lecturer's ability to develop the syllabus, adult learning characteristics covered in teaching learning activities, characters classification, syllabus practicality, and competence achieved.

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INTRODUCTION

Syllabus is crucial as it becomes the core of teaching-learning process. Hutchinson and Waters (2002: 80) defines syllabus as “a document which says what will (or at least what should) be learnt”. On the other hand, Nunan (1988) states that syllabus focuses more narrowly on selecting and grading the content. The definitions state broader roles of syllabus such as helping to provide practical basis for assessment, textbook, and learning time division; giving moral support to teacher and learners as it makes the learning task seems manageable; and expressing implicit statement of views on the nature of learning (Hutchinson and Waters, 2002). From the definitions above we can say that syllabus is a document consists of contents and other components used by teacher in educational programs as guideline as well as map for teaching learning process. The syllabus in this research is intended for English language teaching and learning for adult learners in English for university students’ context in the frame of General English course.

As adult learners, university students are typically different from young learners in learning style, method, purposes, needs, activities etc in which all of these should be covered in syllabus. The course is usually in the form of general English in which the goal is usually an overall mastery of the language that can be tested on a global language test (Richards, 2003: 33). The General English course should not merely teaching general purposes or aimed to prepare for the test. The learners of General English at *IAIN Walisongo* are categorized into adult learners and they will use what they learn in different settings and purposes. The syllabus for adult program should take this matter as consideration.

In Walisongo State Institute for Islamic Studies (*IAIN Walisongo*) Semarang, General English is an integrated English course for non-English Department students. The course is compulsory for all students and the implementation is organized by the faculties. The course is supposed to integrate the four

language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing skill. During the study at the university, the students will have the course consisting of three levels with two credits for each.

Dealing with the General English implementation, a preliminary study showed that although the course was supposed to be integrated skills, the general English classes at *IAIN Walisongo* emphasized only on vocabulary building and reading comprehension. In the teaching-learning process revealed that most of the students state that the process did not provide them with activities to develop spoken skills. Around 75 percent of the overall activities were focusing on understanding the written text and they were mostly taught the grammar. This condition led to monotonous process in which the lecturers did not give students varied activities. The lecturers just taught them with the way they study with their lecturers before. This is because their background was not English education program. The lecturers did not use English as instructional language at the classroom so that the students could not get example how English was spoken and used. The material coverage was not balanced to provide these two skills namely written and spoken. The materials learned also led them to focus more on written form, especially English grammar. Consequently, by the end of the course they still could not use English to communicate, especially speaking in English. This is what they need actually from the course. Considering students’ needs are crucial. The previous study conducted by Dehnad et al (2010) concerned a lot on the importance of need analysis in Syllabus revision. The need analysis becomes the important aspect and should be taken into consideration in syllabus designing.

The major problem of the implementation above is that the process did not facilitate students to communicate adequately. The goal of language teaching is to achieve the communicative competence. Teaching-learning must not only focusing on reading comprehension skill and vocabulary, but also presenting more language tasks for students to exercise listening, speaking and writing skills.

Covering these four language skills will provide students to practice productive and receptive skills that will bridge to communicative competence. With the absence of those skills in General English classes, students are unable to use English communicatively. What is needed to solve the problem above is by providing syllabus meeting the students' needs that becomes guidelines as well as map for teachers.

Based on the notions above, the need for syllabus that covers goal of language-teaching learning and student's needs is vital. Since the current syllabus is considered unable to fulfill the goal expected, it is necessary to redesign it to meet the students need with goal. On the other hand, the English language teaching at *IAIN Walisongo* is centered at the Language Development Center. With new goal and new policy, it is hoped that the teaching learning process will be in progress.

This study is aimed to describe the current General English I syllabus coverage, to find out the *IAIN Walisongo* student's needs in General English I, to explain the redesigning processes of the syllabus of General English I, to explain how suitable is the redesigned syllabus of General English I to *IAIN Walisongo* students.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed the modified research and development (R&D) approach by Borg and Gall (1983) which consists of seven stages to redesign the syllabus namely pre-observation, analysis of needs, redesigning syllabus, testing the redesigned syllabus, field testing the redesigned syllabus, data analysis and advancement. The subjects of this study were students of *IAIN Walisongo* Semarang who were taught with General English I syllabus, specifically, *Tarbiyah* faculty (FT-6) and *Ushuluddin* faculty (FU-4) that consisted of 68 students. The try out was conducted in both classes for 14 meetings from March 4th to June 10th 2013 to find out the syllabus suitability. The instruments used to gather the data used questionnaire, interview, and expert validation. The steps of data analysis were conducted in

every meeting based on the indicators of syllabus suitability namely lecturer's ability to develop the syllabus, adult learning characteristics covered in teaching learning activities, characters classification, syllabus practicality, and competence achieved.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To redesign syllabus, two major steps were conducted as the basis. The two steps were pre-observation and need analysis. The pre-observation was conducted through identifying and mapping the current syllabus of General English I. The data of pre-observation showed that the syllabus of General English I was an integrated course that covered reading, speaking, listening and writing skills. However, the current syllabus of General English I covered mostly Grammar and reading as stated in the basic competence and materials. The material to develop English speaking was only stated through the material of requesting. On the other hand, requesting also did not match with basic competence that focused mainly on understanding grammatical rules. The writing activities were practiced through grammar exercises while listening activities was not explicitly stated as they were included and combined with speaking activities. The basic competences did not elaborate the course description especially the material and activity that dealt with speaking skill development. This was because the materials of asking and requesting could not fulfill in expressing feeling, experience, condition, need, and event in English. On the other hand, the time allotment of every material was not mentioned so that the mapping or organization of the course cannot be maintained clearly. Since the syllabus was mainly focusing on Grammar and reading, it was clear why the teaching learning process did not give adequate practices to communicate in English. As a result, many students feel that the course did not give them adequate practice for speaking.

The need analysis was conducted to describe *IAIN Walisongo* students' needs through

questionnaire. The respondents were students, lecturer, and stake holders. Based on the analysis conducted, the data showed that the student's needs deal with the materials and activity that could support them to practice and communicate. The respondents also considered the importance of TOEFL materials to prepare students for English proficiency test. The character values of respect and responsibility should also be established through teaching learning process in the classroom. Viewing from the outcomes of General English I, all of the respondents said the current syllabus of General English I could not meet the students need. So, the redesigned syllabus of General English I should include materials and activities that could support students to practice and communicate. In addition, TOEFL materials should also be inserted because it was considered as important material that should be learned in the course.

After the two major steps were conducted, it was the stage for redesigning syllabus. The basis to the planning of redesigning syllabus of General English I was based on the current syllabus of General English I, student's needs and institution policy. The syllabus coverage and needs were based on the results of pre-observation and need analysis. Here, the needs elaborated the learning goals and what to learn in the course. The institution policy managed how the teaching learning process was carried out. After mapping the plan for the course and stating the learning objectives which were based on current syllabus, needs and policy institution, then the mapping was ready to be used for redesigning syllabus.

There were several stages in redesigning syllabus of General English I. The first stage of syllabus design process is identifying needs and goals that have been conducted. Based on the need analysis, the learning objectives of redesigned syllabus should provide materials and activities that could establish language skill to communicate and prepare for TOEFL materials. In this process, the syllabus components and materials are determined to meet the learning objectives. The second stage was determining the syllabus components. Then,

next stage was stating objectives of the course. Because the course focused on listening and speaking with main objective to foster ability to communicate, the competence standard of the redesigned syllabus was understanding and demonstrating ability to communicate using variety of appropriate spoken English language and short functional texts, fluently, accurately, and politely in transactional and interpersonal discourse based on Islamic teaching. The Islamic teaching and values were added because the institution was Islamic one. This competence standard was formulated based on the previous research consideration such as current syllabus and needs. This was because the current syllabus did not state the component of standard competence. This standard competence became the basis for basic competence, materials, activities, and indicators. The basic competences of the redesigned syllabus were formulated based on the competence standard. There were only two basic competences stated on the current syllabus. The basic competence should be the frame of the components below it such as materials, teaching and learning activities, indicators etc. Therefore, the basic competence of the basic competence of the redesigned syllabus was formulated for every material. After determining the objectives and basic competences, the next stage were selecting and grading the content. In a course with two credits, there were fourteen meetings that should be covered. Therefore, there should be various materials prepared. The materials should enable students to foster general communication with consideration that they had learned English since elementary or junior high schools. Considering that grading materials could be debatable, the course consisted of twelve kinds of topics. The materials were about language function that can be combined with students' basic knowledge. The material was started with the basic material that was commonly stated in the first meeting namely introducing oneself. Then, the material was followed with like and dislike, describing someone or something, asking for and giving direction, asking for and giving suggestion, complaining and apologizing,

inviting people, going shopping, talking about jobs, giving presentation, and more focused listening material for TOEFL. The last two topics were placed in the last because those two materials were considered more difficult than other materials before.

The distribution of the materials above became the basis for the next procedure namely selecting and grading the learning task and activities. The learning tasks and activities were graded based on the revised bloom taxonomy of learning. The realization of teaching learning activities with indicators and assessment instrument were based on the standard competence and basic competence of the syllabus. The activities made aimed to foster students activeness and communication skills.

The redesigned syllabus was the validated by the expert through expert validation instrument. After validated by the experts, the redesigned syllabus of General English I was ready to be implemented. Before implemented, the lecturer was asked to develop it into lesson plan. The lesson plans were then validated by the expert. These two steps were crucial to check whether or not the syllabus meets the basic requirement of teaching administration. Then, the syllabus was ready to be implemented.

The data analysis of syllabus suitability was based on the field testing of the syllabus. The data were analyzed to explain how suitable was the redesigned syllabus for lecturers and how suitable was the redesigned syllabus of General English I to *IAIN Walisongo* students. The analysis of syllabus suitability was based on the making process of the lesson plans that were based on the redesigned syllabus. The analysis was supported with questionnaires and direct questions to the lecturers. The analysis was made based on the five indicators of syllabus suitability namely lecturer's ability to develop the syllabus, adult learning characteristics covered in teaching learning activities, characters classification, syllabus practicality, and competence achieved.

Based on the implementation in every meeting, it was found that the lecturer was able to develop the lesson plan. The lesson plan made

consisted of components such as course identity, competence standard, basic competence, indicators, objectives, materials, teaching learning methods that were stated in the redesigned syllabus. The aspects that were developed by the lecturer was the teaching learning activities according to the discourse of the basic competence. The activities were started with brainstorming to the topic by providing situations and different people involved. Then, the activities were continued with listening comprehension activities such as responding, predicting, and gap filling. The identification of expression related topic was made to practice certain topics. The students were also invited to discussion on how Islam dealt and regulated the given topics. They were finally asked to practice role play about famous people from different countries to practice fluency and accuracy in their speaking.

The activities made by the lecturer were based on adult learning characteristics such as brainstorming and discussion that invited students to share their opinion and ideas as well as developing their critical thinking. The identification process and pair work provided them opportunity to develop their autonomy or independent learning and to improve their creativity. Here, the activity's interactivity was also practiced.

The two character classified in the study were respect and responsibility. These two characters were reflected in the activities of discussion, sharing the answer, and practicing. In these activities, students practiced to be responsible to what they have said and done. In such activities, they had forum that also practiced with respect and love by valuing the student's views, thoughts and concerns. Those are what they could contribute to their surroundings. They also practiced to respect other opinions and speaking performances. This could raise students' motivation to practice because students were respecting each other in the performance. Therefore, they did not have to worry when performing. That meant that they respected for the rights and dignity of all

persons. The activities done were good to develop student's characters.

Based on questionnaire in every meeting, it was showed that most of the respondents answered with positive responses or with more than 50%. It was assumed that the teaching learning process based on the redesigned syllabus was suitable to students as more than 60% of the respondents responded positively by considering that what they learned could develop students' interests to learn English. More than 60% of the respondents considered that understanding the material taught and said that the material and activities provided communication practice and character values.

In terms of indicators, the success was recognized with more than 60% of the respondents could understand the discourse, predict the contents of dialog. Most of the respondents could explain the material, identify the expression and have ability to demonstrate the topics given. In demonstrating, the respondents were asked to practice the dialog with their partner so that assessment could be taken in order to know whether they could demonstrate or not.

This was also happened to test that was conducted to know the competence achieved in seventh and twelfth meetings. In seventh meeting, there were ten FU-4 students who were chosen randomly to practice dialog about the topic. They performed in various events, places, times, and different excuses if the invitation was refused. Based on the pretest, only some students who were able to perform well the dialog required. The lowest score was 57 while the highest score was 80. The average score gain in the pre-test was 70.9. However, after the class activities were done, the students gain significant improvement in which some of them could improve their performance as stated in the average score with 77.3. Meanwhile in twelfth meeting, there were ten FT-6 students who were chosen randomly to practice dialog about the topic. They performed giving presentation on certain topic. The question and presentation scoring rubric were stated in the appendix 7. Based on the pretest, only some students who

were able to perform well the dialog required. The lowest score was 57 while the highest score was 72. The average score gain in the pre-test was 65.1. However, after the class activities were done, the students gain significant improvement in which some of them could improve their performance as stated in the average score with 71.5.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussions of this study, there were four conclusions that can be drawn. First, the current syllabus of General English I is an integrated course that covers reading, speaking, listening and writing skills. However, the course is mainly about reading and grammar with minor speaking activity performed with request. Writing activities are practiced through grammar exercises while listening activities are not explicitly stated as they are included and combined with speaking activities. Second, based on the results of the study, the student's needs deal with the materials and activity that can support them to practice and communicate. They also consider the importance of TOEFL materials to prepare students for English proficiency test. The character values of respect and responsibility should also be established through teaching learning process in the classroom. These are considerations that should be included and inserted in the syllabus. Third, the redesigning syllabus employs systematic procedures that include current syllabus, students' needs, and institution policy. Those considerations are used in redesigning syllabus that was started by identifying mapping the current syllabus coverage, needs and goals. Then, it is continued with determining basic competences and followed with selecting and grading contents that include twelve materials are stated and graded from the easy to the more difficult one. The following stage is selecting and grading the learning tasks and activities based on the revised Bloom taxonomy of learning. The last stage of redesigning syllabus is selecting and grading the objectives of learning, and other

components of the syllabus. All of the stages stated are compared with the current syllabus of General English I to provide clear distinction of the redesigned syllabus. Fourth, the result analysis of the try out from meeting one up to fourteen shows that the redesigned syllabus is suitable to *IAIN Walisongo* students as it can meet their needs and contribute to the development of students' communication skill as shown in the questionnaire that stated the indicators of learning outcomes in every meeting. In term of syllabus implementation after field testing or try out, the redesigned syllabus is justified suitable for lecturer since the lecturer is able to implement, evaluate, and develop the redesigned syllabus.

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