Students Teachers' Viewpoints on the Implementation of Bridging Course for Immersion Program

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Abstract
This study investigated the practice of bridging course for immersion program at the graduate program, State University of Malang by looking closely at how the student teacher viewed the course concerning four related aspects; factors affecting successful learning English program, material used during the program, expected English skills mastery, and lecturer's qualification and strategies. Eight respondents from chemistry RSBI class (International Standardized Schools) were given an open questionnaire to get the data. This study reported that the students viewed the course was useful for them to prepare their speaking proficiency before get ready for an immersion program in their own schools. Also, they argued that being proficient in speaking skill is the most important if compared with the other skills. They optimist about the results because the instructor was considered has good qualification and strategies to teach English. Nonetheless, there have been some factors that impede their learning English such as lack of the books, limited time for learning English, and less confident to speak English.
Keywords: Bridging course, students, immersion program

1. Introduction and Background

Before conducting immersion program, there should be of particular importance preparations to successfully achieve the goal of the program. It is preparing resources (Cummins, 2003). They are required to enable it to function adequately and the continued high level of commitment of all involved in the program, from policy-makers to teachers and students.

Two problematic areas have been noted in the implementation of immersion programs in Indonesia. These relate to the quality of English oral and written skills that both students and teachers attain. However, one main issue that discussed in details is of teachers' upgrading English skills. It is because teacher' as facilitators during the teaching and learning process should be well-prepared in conducting immersion program. Therefore, some schools held this program to mediate their teachers to learn English in order to be ready as International Standardized Schools (in Indonesia it is called Sekolah Berbasis Internasional). These international-based schools are competitively appearing to be a prestigious school in their own regency. The schools equipped with many facilities in which the immersion program will be started in the future if the resources such as teachers, staff personnel, and students are ready to implement the program.

Unfortunately, students, school personnel, teachers, particularly non-English teachers and those who are involved in the school activities are not ready with their English. Some of the school personnel are still lack of English language mastery. To overcome this problem, recently, some schools in Indonesia have made a strong mutual partnership with the Graduate Program of State University of Malang under the program of RSBI's scholarship. The program is held around 2 years.

The goal is to upgrade teachers' content knowledge as well as English language skills particularly in speaking skill because being proficient to speak in English is a prerequisite to conduct immersion program. The proficiencies in speaking according to Cummins (1996) are two kinds; basic interpersonal conversation skills (BISC) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). In this program, BISC is the ultimate goal for teachers to prepare immersion program, CALP is further required when the school implement the bilingual program.

In this study, the writers want to see the students' point of view on the implementation of the bridging course in immersion program which is categorized into four main categories; factors affecting successful learning English program, material used during the program, expected English skills mastery, and lecturer's qualification and strategies.

Research Question

The study was guided by the following research question "what are the students' view points on a successful bridging course?"

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide insights into the enrichment of both the understandings of immersion program and the bridging course itself. Moreover, by knowing well the students' view point toward this program, it is expected to give useful recommendation for the instructors of this program at graduate program of State University of Malang and elswhere

Literature Review

Immersion program is defined as a method of foreign language instruction in which the regular school curriculum is taught through the medium of the language (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). In this program, the foreign language is the vehicle for content instruction; it is not the subject of instruction (Perez, 2004). Teachers speak only the target language to teach academic subjects, using a wide range of instructional strategies. The ultimate goal of this type of program is for students to become proficient in the target language that is English, and to develop cultural awareness while reaching a high level of academic achievement (Fortune & Tedick, 2008).

Language immersion programs also referred to total and partial immersion (Lenker & Rhodes, 2007). Total immersion is one program format among several that range on a continuum in terms of time spent in the foreign language. In total immersion, all schooling in the initial years is conducted in the foreign language, including reading and language arts. Partial immersion differs from total in that 50% of the school day is conducted in English right from the start. In partial immersion, reading and language arts are always taught in English. Beyond that, the choice of subjects taught in each language is a local decision.

Myriam (1993) suggested that successful immersion programs are characterized by: (1) administrative support; (2) community and parental support; (3) qualified teachers; (4) appropriate materials in the foreign language; (5) time for teachers to prepare instructional materials in the language; (6) and ongoing staff development. Therefore, as what have been mentioned in the background, preparing good resources are prerequisite to conduct immersion

Immersion in Indonesia

Immersion Program in Indonesia

For the time being, some schools particularly those in East Java province have been applying such program due to the crucial role of English. This is a worth-imitating fact, regarding our assumptions that English has played much more immense roles worldwide.

Immersion program actually appears to be something new for Indonesian educators (Priyana, 2007). It was firstly introduced in some Central Javanese schools. One of the schools which have implemented the practice of immersion is SMPN 1 Bantul Yogyakarta. In this school, English has been used for delivering math and natural science lessons. Through its online website, the school offers some useful and possible strategies which might be done to get a meaningful result of immersion program as follow:

- The program has to try to create a supporting academic and social environment.
- English bridging course will be of great benefits to empower the learners who will directly get involved in the activities of English communication.
- The availability of self-access learning center is also important.

In this respect, the topic of this study was related to the second point that is English bridging course. State university of Malang has been being applying the so-called bridging course to improve the teachers' English mastery that comes from schools across Indonesia.

Participants

This study involved eight bridging course students of RSBI who come from different schools around Indonesia. All of them are teachers of senior high school who teach chemistry in RSBI schools. The eight teachers have involved the study in State University of Malang for two semesters. They run their study under a scholarship program in order that they are able to deepen their knowledge both content area, particularly in chemistry, and English skills.

Data Collecting Technique

This study focused on analyzing the students' view point on creating a successful bridging course implemented in the graduate program State University of Malang. To get qualitative data, 8 copies of questionnaire were given to respondents. The questionaire was in form of open questions so that it allow the respondent to answer in any way they wish. Thus, it is considered to be a better means of finding out true opinions and identifying how strongly attitudes are held.

Data Analysis

Having gathered the data, the writers analyze the students' responds qualitatively by describing all items of the questioners into four main categories; factors affecting successful learning English program, material, and expected English skills mastery, and lecturer's qualification and strategies.

Finding and Discusions

As already noted, this study focused on investigating the bridging course students' point of view conducted in State University of Malang. Four related aspects in this study were included as the following; factors affecting successful learning English program, material, and expected English skills mastery, and lecturer's qualification and strategies.

Based on the questionnaires given, the following shows the finding related to the three aspects mentioned above:

1.   *Factors affecting successful learning English program*

Question number 2 dealt with aspects that students should have in order to achieve successful learning English, have been responded in various kinds of answers. However those factors can be substantially categorized into two factors consisted of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. They revealed that learning English should be learned by willingness, students should have a positive attitude in learning English, strong commitment and also consistency. They also mentioned that facilities such as book references are affected to the success and failure of learning English. It is in line with some researchers (e.g Dornyei, 2001; 2005; Gradner, 1985; etc.) who provoke the importance of motivation in learning English for second language or foreign language because it is of critical aspect that every students must have for successful second language learner.

Based on the questions number 3 related to aspects that might hamper them in learning English, most of the respondents consider that the time allotment provided in the course was less than they expected. It was also related to the question number 6 about time allotment of learning English during the program was conducted. They explained straightforwardly that they have three meetings in a week; each meeting consisted of 2 credits about 120 minutes. Thus, they have 360 minutes for their regular meetings each week. The meetings are scheduled into three days; every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. However, 360 minutes a week has not been considered enough for them to practice and learn English. As Gass & Selinker (2008) point out that the more students drill them selves in a highly exposure of second language environment, the more students will students acquire the language they learned.

In addition, books reference and their confidence still hinder them to learn English. Although some English textbooks have gradually become available; however, according to them, the number of textbooks that appropriate to their field is still much too small provided by the libraries or the instructor. Textbook are important to help students study English because they are resources that can be learned independently by adult learner. The importance of textbooks in achieving successful language learning have been proven by some researchers (e.g. Bus, 2008: 3; Brasell & Rasinski, 2008; 24; Kucer, 2009: 131 etc.) which reported that books plays an important role in assisting student to learn English independently. Therefore, they do not rely much on meetings scheduled by the institution as they want to improve their English autonomously.

Referring to the number 7 about the way of motivating themselves in learning English during the program, they motivate themselves through insisting in their mind that they are able to communicate by means of English. Besides, they increased their reading frequency from English book or other written English materials such as magazine, newspaper, articles from internet etc. It was the reason for them that going through reading, their vocabulary would increase and thus they can retrieve or access knowledge from English materials. Kamil & Hiebert (2005) avow that vocabulary expansion can be achieved through reading. In the other hand, Vocabulary, among others, plays an important role in reading comprehension.

In addition, pertaining to the question number 10 about students' optimism to successfully master English skills during the program, some of them were optimists enhancing their skills in English, particularly in speaking skill. It was attributed by the fact that the lecture's strategies during teaching and learning English are good. Unfortunately, some of them found it hard to be achieved because the lecturer or the instructor often left the class.

2.   *Material*

Questions dealt with some sort of materials they received, and the materials that instructor used during the program, respectively provided in number 4 and 5. They responded that the material focused on speaking. They were rehearsed using English spoken language for the purpose of teaching instruction during teaching content area i.e. chemistry in the classroom.   Initially, the spoken language was related to how the classes begun and closed during teaching learning process in the classroom. Later, they were gradually trained to use academic language on how the content area delivered to their students by means of English. The dominancy proportion on spiking skill during the program was suitable with the purpose of bridging course that is to improve students' speaking skill. It is because of speaking is the medium to convey material or instruction during the class.

In case of course book that instructor used, they mentioned three main course books for their learning English consisted of *Express It, Classroom English,* and *Module.* Unfortunately, they did not mention the authors and the publishers of the course books. The importance of the course book has been stipulated in the previous section (e.g. Bus, 2008: 3; Brasell & Rasinski, 2008; 24; Kucer, 2009: 131 etc.).

3.   *Expected English skills mastery*

Concerning to the questions number 1 of what English skill they expect to be mastered, all respondents preferred to master speaking skill than the others. It is due to speaking skills is considered as the most important skills. They viewed that speaking is vital for teacher in conveying content material to their students during immersion class that will be conducted later in their own schools. It is suitable with the purpose of immersion program in which English is a vehicle to convey ideas and knowledge in the classroom and out side the classroom (Myriam, 1993; Perez, 2004).

4.   *Lecturer's qualification and Strategies*

Last but not least, it is very much worthwhile to recognize how the instructors teach their students with various backgrounds. In general, lecture's teaching strategies appear to be almost similar to the usual classroom teaching activities. Some of them elaborate that the practice of teaching English was fun and joyful. The class sometimes managed into several groups to conduct presentation for practicing speaking skills for academic purposes. In a meanwhile, the class was also arranged into some groups to conduct role play for practicing daily conversation. These strategies have come up with a satisfactorily result for them to learn English peaking skill. Lastly, all respondents commented that the qualification of lecturer is good because he is expert in his field as he is a doctor in English Education. As Goodwin (2005) said that a good teacher knows the subject they are teaching, but, even more importantly, knows how to teach it. Therefore, lecture's qualification and professionalism should be met with the standard of competence that is he/she reached a teacher' certificate as a profession of teaching English.

Conclusion and Suggestions

To sum up, the study reported four aspects that support successful learners during bridging course program was conducted. First, factors affecting successful learning English program, two general factors were highlighted here included: a highly positive motivation both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. These motivations were various depend on the individual. Some of them were optimism, effort to try hard to study, commitment and positive attitude, sustainable learning; reading much, plenty of time allotment to learn English, and facilities such as book, media and video tape. If those factors are mostly available for student, the success of learning English can also be possible.

Secondly, the analysis of the finding shows that the students received a particular material mainly on speaking skills. They were rehearsed to speak both interpersonal skills and academic language skills. Additionally, they also used several books. Yet, they were still much too small afforded in libraries or lecturer. Therefore, institution or lecturer was suggested to provide some more books in order that students can easily access or retrieve knowledge from various kinds of resources.

Thirdly, the finding confirms that students mostly need to master speaking skill. Being proficient in speaking was the reason for them to be able to convey the materials using English both dealing with content area and dealing with teaching instruction. Thus, lecturer should provide appropriate material for them in term of their background knowledge and educational background since that some of them still complain about inappropriate of speaking materials.

Finally, the strategies of teaching are varied based on the lecturer's preferences based on the topic. Teaching the non English teachers, however, needs a bit 'smarter' and more straightforward strategies. It is fair to say that being an instructor of a bridging course is not that easy. Therefore, an instructor is also suggested to improve their way of teaching by making use of new method which might be valuable.

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Appendix
Appendix

Ibu/ Bapak yang terhormat,

Kami sedang melaksanakan kajian tentang sudut pandang guru-guru RSBI terhadap program pembelajaran bahasa asing, dalam hal ini adalah bahasa Inggris, dimana program tersebut bertujuan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berbahasa Inggris demi terwujudnya proses pembelajaran program immersion yang kemudian berlanjut ke program pengajaran dwi bahasa (bilingual) di Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional. Dengan demikian, kami mohon bantuan ibu/bapak untuk menjawab beberapa pertanyaan yang telah kami sediakan. Ibu/Bapak tidak perlu menyebutkan nama, seluruh informasi tertulis akan digunakan sebagaimana mestinya untuk penyusunan artikel sehingga tidak akan ada pihak-pihak yang dirugikan. Terimakasih atas kerjasama dan partisipasi ibu/bapak.

Jawablah pertanyaan di bawah ini dengan jelas!

1. Keterampilan berbahasa Inggris terdiri atas empat jenis; Speaking, Listening, Reading dan Writing. Keterampilan berbahasa manakah yang paling anda harapkan untuk bisa dikuasai? Jelaskan alasan anda!
2. Menurut pendapat anda, aspek-aspek apa saja yang harus dimiliki oleh pembelajar bahasa Inggris agar program pembelajaran bahasa Inggris anda berhasil? Sebutkan alasan anda!
3. Menurut anda, aspek-aspek apa saja yang menjadi hambatan selama belajar bahasa Inggris? (misalnya; kurangnya buku referensi, rendahnya kualitas pengajar, kurangnya waktu yang disediakan dsb.)
4. Materi apa saja yang sudah anda peroleh selama program peningkatan keterampilan berbahasa Inggris berlangsung? Sebutkan yang paling anda kuasai!
5. Apakah ada buku khusus yang anda gunakan dalam program pembelajaran bahasa Inggris anda? Jika ada, sebutkan judul bukunya!
6. Berapa lama anda belajar bahasa Inggris dalam seminggu? Jelaskan waktu; hari dan jumlah jam serta frekuensi pertemuan!
7. Bagaimana anda memotivasi diri anda sendiri untuk terus belajar bahasa Inggris?
8. Apakah tenaga pengajar bahasa Inggris anda berkualitas? Jelaskan alasanya!
9. Apakah strategi pengajaran yang anda peroleh memuaskan? Jelaskan alasannya!
10. Apakah anda yakin dengan dilaksanakannya program pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di Universitas negeri Malang akan meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa Inggris anda? Jelaskan alasan anda!

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