

Developing Proficiency Oriented English Instruction Model for Higher Education Students

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ABSTRACT

Achieving certain English proficiency level becomes one of requirements for students in completing their study for some universities in Indonesia. Unfortunately, the approach of proficiency oriented English instruction has not been developed yet. This study aims at developing proficiency oriented English instruction model for higher education students. Moreover, the principle of Cognitive Instructional Design was implemented in this developing process. Research and development design was applied in this study using procedural model. The procedure covered three phases; analyze, develop and evaluate. The result of this study covered the syntaxes of the teaching and learning, social system, principle of reaction and supporting system. The role of teacher or tutor is as a facilitator and consultant for the learners. The success of the implementation of this model is also supported by students' individual responsibility and self-motivation.

Keywords: English, proficiency oriented, instruction

INTRODUCTION

The position of English as an international language effects greatly in some sectors of life such as in level of economy, education and level of development of countries (Aina, Ogundele, & Olanipekun, 2013; Li, 2012; Yan & Cheng, 2015). Sharifian (2009) in *English as International language* book stated that English has reached many parts of the world for various purposes. This condition shows that English has greater role in many fields. This phenomenon has indicated positive interaction, local and global pressure and implication as well in language, ideology, sociocultural, politics and education.

Rapid development of English and complexity of English in international communication become common issues in many countries. This situation encourages someone to have proficiency in English in

order to go with this development. Countries with better English Proficiency Index will have better economy (Mc. Cormik, 2013). It can be seen from the high economy development in some Asia countries such as Malaysia and Singapore. Singaporeans mostly use English for daily communication. Besides, English becomes their official language. Moreover, countries with higher level of English proficiency will be more innovative (Tran, 2015). Since English is used by people around the world and becomes the language of knowledge and information, countries with higher level of English proficiency will be easier in getting and sharing information in English. This condition, of course, influences the citizens' creativity and innovation. Briefly, English brings great role in the development of countries.

In Indonesia, English is a foreign language that is taught in certain level of education as a compulsory subject including in higher education level. The use of English is only in certain area such as classroom with English subject or in international conference or meeting. This means that English still needs more attention in Indonesia. Nowadays, English proficiency becomes the requirements for students to enter or finish their study. Therefore, the design of the study for English proficiency oriented needs to be developed in order to meet all the criteria of achieving certain level of proficiency. This research and development aimed at designing proficiency oriented English instruction for higher education students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The word “proficiency” can be defined simply as high degree of competence or skills; expertise; advancement on knowledge or skill; the quality or state of being proficient (online Merriam Webster Dictionary). Brown (2005) defines a proficiency test as the test that has the function to ‘...assess the general knowledge or skills commonly required or prerequisite to entry into (or exemption from) a group of similar institutions’.

Becomes proficient in English is not a simple thing to achieve. The word “proficient” itself brings multiple definitions and classifications. The terms “beginning”, “intermediate”, and “advanced” are among the first descriptors we use for our students but actually they are slippery terms. Some institutions make their standards in classifying “beginning” level such as students who already know several hundred English words, are able to engage in a rudimentary conversation, and can read simple texts is classified in this level. Meanwhile, in Korea, “beginners” are mostly true beginners. In Indonesia, the classification of proficiency in English as foreign language has not been standardized. In the level of vocational school, for

example, the term “novice” is used in describing the basic level in which some others using “beginning”.

Certain sense of relativity must be taken into account when these terms are used, as context usually implies fuzzy lines of distinction. Therefore, a standard set of guidelines by which levels of ability may be uniformly understood is needed. The standard set of guidelines can be in the form of a number of lists of standards, competencies, guidelines, framework or reference, or proficiency levels.

For more than the last half century, many definitions of ability levels have appeared in the form of guidelines, standards, and other criteria. While such indices are obviously useful for assessment purposes, they have also served as means for gauging curriculum levels, including concise statements of goals and objectives. There are dozens or hundreds of such lists available across the globe. One of internationally recognized English proficiency test is International English Language Testing System (IELTS). This is one of language agencies under the British Council that has invested great deal of effort and expertise in teaching English worldwide. Used in dozens of countries for academic, occupational, and business purposes, the IELTS assesses listening, speaking, reading and writing. The IELTS Band Scale standardizes a system of tests and defines broadly based descriptors of ten different levels of ability.

Looking at the important of English in this globalization era, education field should have certain plan in improving the level of English proficiency for some purposes. Moreover, students have their perception of English as an influential language for them (Yang, 2016). Besides, students’ proficiency in English will also correlate with their other subject achievements (Yu & Yu, 2016). The status and function of English in Indonesia have analysed and showed the importance of it for students (Lauder, 2008). Therefore, designing qualified instruction which leads

the students in improving English proficiency is needed.

There are many elements in teaching that teachers and designers should be taken into their consideration before designing an instruction. In the process of learning, an individual will change his or her knowledge or behaviour and it is relatively permanent due to experience. Psychologists have been interested in studying the process of learning since 1800's but their views of learning have evolved over the years. There are three major learning theories that commonly used as the basis of designing an instruction; behavioural, cognitive, and social learning theories. Learning theory is used as the framework in Instructional Design (ID). In language instruction, cognitive theory is mostly used as the approach of designing the instruction since in the process of both acquiring and learning of language, cognitive plays the most important roles (Krashen, 1988).

Cognitive psychology has a different theoretical orientation than behaviourism. The original purpose of the cognitive revolution was to bring the 'mind' back into the human sciences (Bruner, 1990; Gagne, 1985). Therefore, the tenets of cognitive psychology are based on how individuals obtain, process, and use information. Cognitive learning theory focuses on explaining the cognitive structures, processes and representations that mediate instruction and learning (Smith & Ragan, 2005). There are three cognitive orientation; Gestalt theory, information processing theory, and schema theory.

In the application of cognitive instructional design (CID), in form of cognitive design strategies that facilitate the storage and retrieval of information, there are some strategies that can be implemented such as rehearsal, chunking, mnemonics and advance organizer. The explanation of those strategies is presented as follow;

a. Rehearsal

One of the goals of rehearsal is to relate learners' prior experiences and knowledge (stored in long-term memory) with new

information in working memory. Learners with previous knowledge of a topic can recall many things from long term memory that can help them process the new information. Some rehearsal strategies that can applied in a lesson such as repeating key points, providing questions and answer, predicting and restating, reviewing and summarizing.

b. Chunking

To promote efficient learning and long-term retention, instructional designers can create materials that incorporate recoding activities which recognize the standard capacity of short term memories. The amount of information in a single item can be altered by chunking, or grouping, similar information. For example in teaching parts of speech, teachers or designers can group the words into classes.

c. Mnemonics

Mnemonics are another useful techniques or strategy for promoting information storage and retrieval. Learning what may appear to be unrelated information will make more sense when connecting it in a memorable fashion. A mnemonics provides a retrieval cue for factual information.

d. Advance Organizers

Advance organizers are introductory materials that are presented at a higher level of generalization, simplification, and comprehensiveness than the learning content itself. The advance organizer is presented prior to the material to help bridge the gap between what the learners know and what they need to know when learning the material.

e. Cognitive task analysis

Cognitive task analysis is the extension of traditional task analysis techniques to yield information about the knowledge, thought processes, and goal structures that underlie observable task performance. Cognitive task analysis can be the alternative technique in teaching productive skills such as speaking and writing.

In the instruction field, there are two common terms used by the designer or instructor, Instructional Design (ID) and

Instructional System Design (ISD). The definition of Instructional design (ID) is varied in some ways but most of the definitions highlight process. Smith and Ragan (2005) define Instructional Design as “the systematic and reflective process of translating principles of learning and instruction into plans for instructional materials, activities, information sources and evaluation”. This definition underlines ID’s scientific foundations and range of products emanating from ID projects. Meanwhile, Dick, Carey, and Carey (2009) simply say that ID is ISD in which ISD process covers analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation.

In the other hand, Reigeluth (1983) interprets ID as a facet of instruction, “the process of deciding what methods of instruction are best for bringing about desired changes in student knowledge and skills for specific course content and a specific student population”. In this case, design is viewed as a planning activity.

Some instructional design definitions emphasize function more than process. Instructional design (ID) is a systematic process that is employed to develop education and training programs in a consistent and reliable fashion (Gustafson and Branch, 2007). This is also in line with the definition of Reigeluth (1983) that describes ID as “a body of knowledge that prescribes instructional actions to optimize desired outcomes, such as achievement and affect”.

The scope of ID is a broad range of activity starting from analysis through evaluation. To some designers, ID processes are almost same as the various design phases. ID knowledge relates to a wide variety of topics that impact many parts of the design process. Richey, Klein and Tracey (2011) picture the ID into six content domains; learners and learning processes, learning and performance contexts, content structure and sequence, instructional and non-instructional strategies, media and delivery systems, and

designers and design processes. These domains encompass a broad array of specific elements that play a role in ID. These domains, however, are not distinct unto themselves, and in many cases they overlap. From this case, learning theory is commonly used as the basis of designing an instruction.

The primary purpose of instructional design (ID) is to facilitate learning and improve performance. As a result, theories which explain learning are extremely relevant to designers and the field of knowledge base. Learning theory includes understanding the role of human behaviour and mental function of the mind. There some learning theories such as behavioural, cognitive and social learning theories that commonly used in ID.

The most important aspect of cognitive learning psychology for instructional designers relates to promoting retention of learned material. Therefore, there are two concepts in the implication of cognitive concept for instructional- the role of practice and specific techniques for storing and retrieving information (Richey, 1986). Furthermore, in ID we know three main models in designing an instruction; conceptual model, procedural model and mathematical model. Richey (1986) presents a conceptual model of instructional design that draws to a considerable extent on cognitive theory and which requires the considerations of such factors as students’ intelligence, cognitive style, cognitive development, and information processing skills.

In brief, cognitive learning theory provides a large part of the theoretical base of instructional design. Learning theory remains a significant element in ID practice, especially as it guides designers in the selection of instructional solutions.

MATERIALS & METHODS

This study implemented research and development method in the process of developing proficiency oriented English instruction model. Procedural model was

chosen as the characteristics of instruction that fitted the step by step process in procedural model. There were 3 phases of research; analyze, develop and evaluate.

Those three phases covers some other processes. The following figure shows the detail of the process in developing the model.

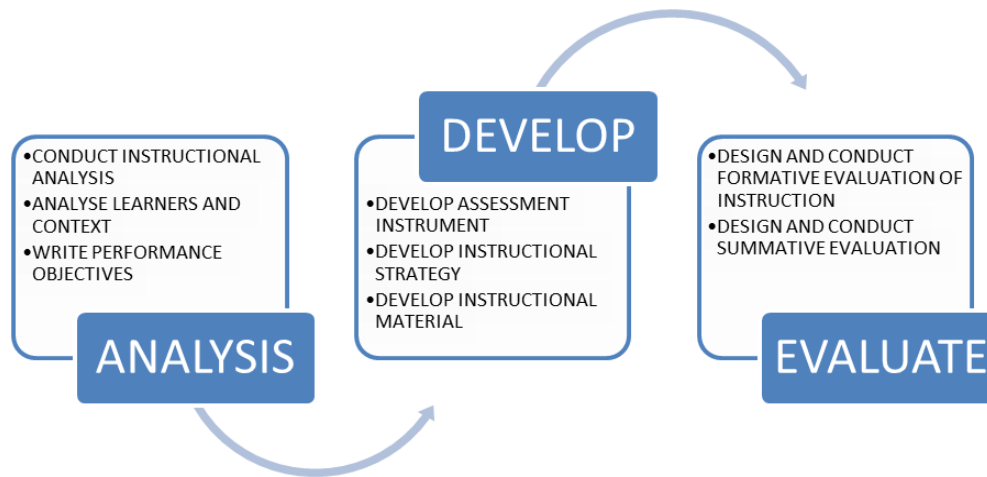


Figure 1: the process of developing the model the

The procedure of the research and development is presented as follow:

1. The researchers conducted instructional analysis by using instrument of instructional analysis adapted from instructional analysis rubric from Dick, Carey and Carey.
2. The researchers analyzed learners and context in which students of higher education are the focus of it. Interview and observation were implemented to get deeper information.
3. The researchers wrote performance objectives for proficiency oriented English instruction subject.
4. The researchers developed assessment instrument for English for proficiency based on the result of analysis phase.
5. The researchers developed instructional strategies for English for proficiency based on cognitive approach.
6. The researchers developed instructional material based on the result of analyzing the learners and objectives of the subject.
7. The researchers designed and conducted formative evaluation in order to know the effectiveness of the products.
8. The researchers revised and conducted summative evaluation to know the

success of the implementation of proficiency oriented English instruction.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Proficiency oriented English instruction focuses on the process of teaching and learning that is oriented on improving students' English proficiency score. Started from theory of learning and English language acquisition theory as well as appropriate teaching strategies, this model was arranged.

Learning theory that was used in this research was Cognitive learning theory in which schema theory fitted the criteria of getting and processing information. Meanwhile, in language acquisition, learning is the process of getting the knowledge. In education, cognitive language academic proficiency becomes one of the goals in language learning. From those two theories, then designing appropriate language teaching was the main purpose of this research and development. In the instruction, language teaching especially for adult with its characteristics needs special strategies and also teaching material as well as teaching media. The correlation of each element in developing

proficiency oriented English instruction can be explained in the following figure.

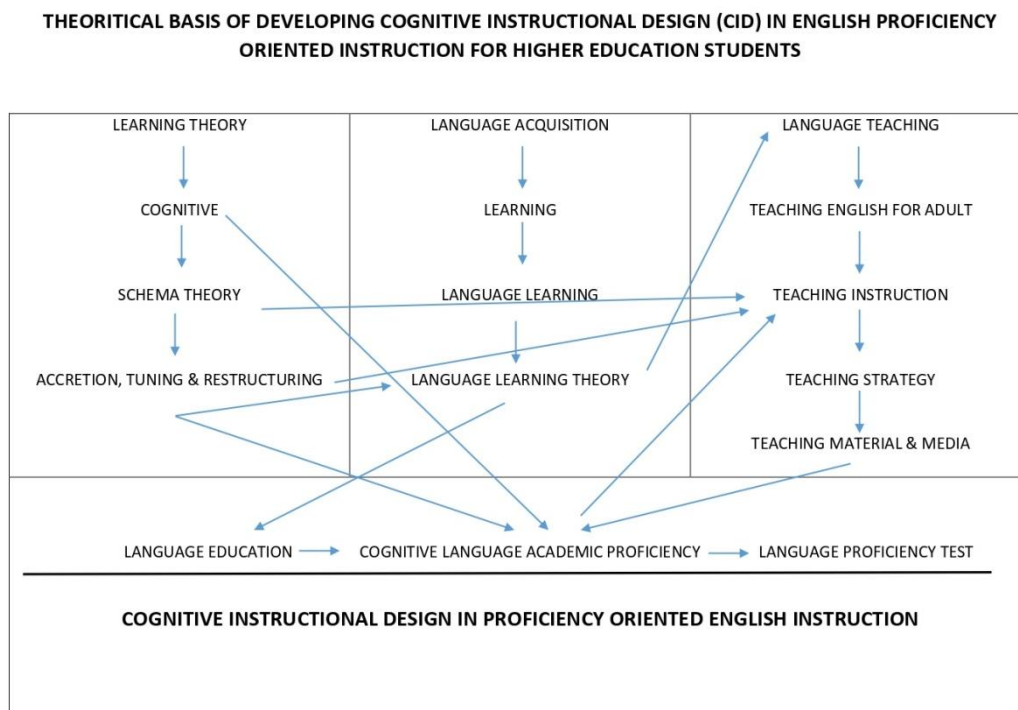


Figure 2: Theoretical Basis of Developing Proficiency Oriented English Instruction

The figure explained the correlation of learning theory, language acquisition and language teaching to form the proficiency oriented English instruction model. Furthermore, the developed model covered the syntaxes, social system, reaction principle, and supporting system. The discussion of them is elaborated as follow;

a. The Syntaxes

The syntaxes explained steps in proficiency oriented English instruction by using cognitive as the approach of developing it. Based on the concept of cognitive in the process of getting and processing knowledge, the cognitive process of schema theory was implemented. Schema theory covers three methods in creating or modifying the schema; accretion, tuning, and restructuring. Those three methods were elaborated in proficiency oriented English instruction.

In accretion, as the first step in instruction, students get the knowledge or question and should understand it well. In English language learning, the process of understanding or comprehending is very

important since there are some language components that must be well understood by the students before they can understand the whole meaning of phrases or sentences. Moreover, mastering all the language skills plays important role in the success of this phase.

Tuning, as the second phase of schema theory, is the process of linking the existed knowledge to create or modify schema. For example, in teaching structure and written expressions about past participle, teacher will give stimulus in form of the definition and the example of the use of it in sentence. In this case, student will start to link or tune the use of past participle in present perfect tense and past perfect tense that have been studied in general English before.

Restructuring, as the last step in schema theory, is the process of analyzing in order to find the knowledge or the answer of questions. This step is very crucial as the orientation of this instruction is the student is able to do proficiency test well. Analysis is done by looking at the probability of

getting the right answer based on the existing knowledge of the students.

Deep analysis and existed knowledge of the students will decide the final result of finding appropriate answers of the questions in proficiency test. To following is the detail of the schema theory process in proficiency oriented English instruction model.

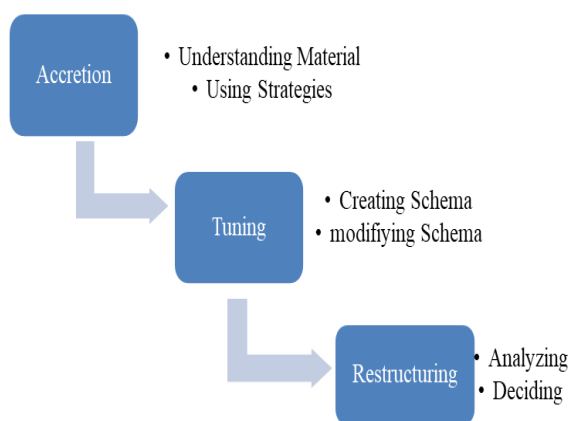


Figure 3: Schema theory process in proficiency oriented English instruction

In proficiency oriented English instruction, teacher or tutor plays his/ her role as a facilitator and also counselor in the classroom. The detail of the teaching steps of proficiency oriented English instruction is elaborated as follow;

1. Teacher or tutor gives the basic material in English proficiency test.
2. Teacher or tutor tells the strategies in doing the material in proficiency test.
3. Teacher or tutor gives exercises to the students in order to know the students understanding.
4. Teacher or tutor discusses the result of exercises with the students in order to know the students' problems in doing the exercises.
5. Teacher or tutor gives proficiency test in order to know the level of students' proficiency.

b. Social System

Proficiency oriented English instruction is one of the teaching and learning process that needs students' seriousness and attention besides students skills and cognitive process. Therefore, the social system in this

instruction is individual responsibility. This means that students' self-motivation in achieving certain level of proficiency is needed in order to success the process of teaching and learning using this model.

c. Principle Reaction

Proficiency oriented English instruction forces teacher or tutor to play his/ her role as a facilitator for the students in order to reach the learning target. The main role of the tutor is to tell the strategies in doing the proficiency test based on the tested skills. In this instruction, students should try their best to improve the knowledge and to do more exercises.

d. Supporting System

Easy understood and well organized material becomes one of the keys in the success of implementing proficiency oriented English instruction model. Besides, professional and qualified tutor or teacher also influences the success of it. Moreover, online learning can be a supporting system of instruction since the time for face to face instruction sometimes very limited. Therefore, increasing students' knowledge and skill in form of review of material and exercises can be delivered online.

CONCLUSION

English as an international language brings great influence in some sectors of life such as in economy, education, and the development of a nation. Countries with better English proficiency have better economies and more innovative. High demand of English proficiency in this era becomes one of the considerations of higher education institution to design their curriculum.

Instructional design which facilitates and improves performance takes great influence in the success of learning. Cognitive theory, one of early learning theories, is used as the basis of developing an instructional design. Cognitive learning theory focuses on explaining the cognitive structures, processes and representations that mediate instruction and learning. Furthermore, the cognitive learning theory

can be applied in instructional design which can be shown in the instructional methods and strategies.

Proficiency oriented English instruction model was designed by using cognitive approach. It covers the syntaxes, social system, reaction principle and supporting system. The role of teacher or tutor as a facilitator and well organized material became the factors of the success of this model. Moreover, students' individual responsibility and self-motivation play important role in increasing students' proficiency score as the goal of the instruction.

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