



Informal English Community Model as an Innovative Andragogy Training Method

1Eva anitasari, 2Suryanto

1ms, 2Professor

airlangga

Abstract

Improving the quality and usage of human resources, particularly education personnel, must be proportionate to the Internationalization of Higher Education, including English competence. The andragogy teaching and learning technique of the Informal English Community is an innovative attempt to develop the English language abilities of education personnel in facing higher education internationalization. This study specifically looked at the university's attempts to improve and optimize the role of education professionals in dealing with the internationalization of higher education by hosting activities in the form of informal English communities. In this study, the author uses applied research, which is one type of research that aims to provide practical solutions to particular problems, that this type of research is carried out with the intention of applying, testing, and evaluating the ability of a policy or program applied in solving practical problems. All stages of the research were carried out at the medical faculty, the most prominent faculty at a leading public university in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, namely Universitas Airlangga. The first stage was to design and implement program activities, and the second stage was to collect primary data with quantitative and qualitative methods. This applied research demonstrates that an English language training program based on the notion of an informal community designed using peer tutoring methods may minimize the rigidity of the learning process, reduce fear, and boost participants' willingness to participate in learning programs to improve English language abilities.

Keywords: English learning, informal community, innovative training methods, non-teaching staff, higher education internationalization.

Introduction

The ability to communicate in English is one of the most needed skills in facing the modernization of the world, which is full of challenges and super-tight competition. Because English is an international language, diverse world information is included in English, and in order to access it, individuals must have a command of the language.

Four hundred million native speakers speak English, and 2 billion people learn it as a second language, which means around 2.4 billion people in the world speak English. In his writing, McKay (2002) stated that the popularity of English is not merely an attempt by the first category countries (inner circle countries) to spread their language but instead to the world community's awareness about the importance of mastering English.

Indonesia is one of the countries that continue to facilitate its people in learning English, as evidenced by the government's policies as stated in the Kurikulum 2013 (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2013) that English lessons are included in the formal education curriculum at least starting from elementary to high school levels. However, the results of a survey conducted by the global 'English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) stated that the English proficiency of the Indonesian people is still in the 74th position out of 100 countries surveyed globally.

One of the reasons for the low English proficiency of the Indonesian people is pluralism. Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country with 17,504 islands, claimed to be the country with the fourth-largest population globally, and the amount of ethnicity, culture, and language affect Indonesian proficiency in English. The use of English in Indonesia is still limited to specific events, circles and tends to be only in official events. Even at the university level, where the sources are intellectuals, the mastery of English is very low. If the problem cannot be overcome, internationalization of higher education will remain a pipe dream.

To increase the level of universities at the world level through webometrics, the internationalization of the university is a consequence. Higher education internationalization is a process involving curriculum

internationalization, administration, management, collaborative academic research, and student and lecturer exchanges (Liu & Dai, 2011). While it is suggested that the majority factor of Higher Education Institutions' ranking is based on research quality and collaboration, all the processes of these activities can not be separated from English proficiency (Sukoco *et al.*, 2021). In order to achieve internationalization, higher education or university will tend to push the educational staff to meet the minimum requirement for implementing performance-based management according to the World University Ranking indicators (Sukoco *et al.*, 2021).

The improvement and utilization of human resources must be positively proportional to the increase in the level of the university, both for educators, students, and education staff is no exception. Based on Law No. 20 THN 2003, PSL 39 (1) defines Education Personnel as personnel in charge of planning and implementing administration, management, development, supervision, and technical services to support the educational process in education units. This understanding is clear that education personnel have a vital role as a driving force for activities at universities so that improving the quality of education personnel can become university ammunition in the internationalization process.

Given the increasingly seamless world of communication and the internationalization of the University, English proficiency as an international language is very important for all academics, including education staff. Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of education personnel in English language training are urgently needed. These efforts are not without obstacles. The obstacles faced are displayed on the low level of self-motivation of most of the education staff. Furthermore, the workload and responsibilities the staff has to bear result in stress and fatigue, which decreases the motivation to learn English outside the work hour (Christy and Widajati, 2020). Also, due to the fact that the university's education personnel comes from a variety of backgrounds, including job status, age range, education level, and everything else, training using the andragogy technique were chosen as a solution.

Training is an organized method of learning and development that extends the efficiency of individuals, groups, and organizations (Smith, 1991). The primary function of this theory is to acquire knowledge, cooperation, inventive thinking, and problem-solving (Meister, 1998). The fundamental purpose of some employee development programs is to realize the mission of the organization and support workers to learn the organization's culture (Gerbman, 2000). Training can be either formal or informal. Under the characteristics

of university education staff and the position of English in Indonesia, informal English training is considered appropriate to be chosen and carried out. Airlangga University, as a leading university in Indonesia, conceptualizes the informal training as a community where it functions as a forum, namely a place for participants to express themselves in the use of English freely without tension, although tutors are appointed from the education staff themselves so that the impression of training from education staff appears. For education staff, peer tutoring is therefore appointed as a theory in this activity.

This article intends to explore efforts to innovate informal learning models in the form of an English community for education staff in the face of higher education internationalization.

Literature Review

A. Andragogy Learning

According to McCauley *et al.* (2017), trainees vary in interpreting the training material based on their age in adults so that an andragogy method is needed, namely a learning method for adults or employees, or education personnel. The latest conceptualization about andragogy confirmed based on some assumptions about adult learning participants, which commonly used six assumptions (e.g., Chan, 2010; Dachner & Polin, 2016; Knowles *et al.*, 2015; Taylor & Kroth, 2009) :

- 1) Self-concept of students. According to the self-concept assumption, andragogy argues that adult trainees need to control their own learning experiences because independent learning experiences are more effective in forming an awareness of their self-concepts (Knowles *et al.*, 2015).
- 2) The role of experience. Adults have accumulated unique life experiences that they can use to shape their learning.
- 3) Readiness to learn. Adult learners have a desire and readiness to learn, especially when the learning is highly relevant to the real-life situations they face. Certain events such as job loss or divorce often trigger an adult's need to learn something new (Knowles *et al.*, 2015).
- 4) Learning orientation. Adults have a task-centred and problem-focused learning orientation that prompts them to seek immediate application of their learning.

- 5) Motivation. Adults are more motivated to learn through intrinsic motivation. They are driven by a desire for self-esteem, goal attainment, or personal reward.
- 6) Need to know. Adult learners need to know what they will learn, why this learning is essential, and how they learn.

B. Peer Tutoring

There are many definitions of peer learning developed by theorists. The word peer in peer learning refers to another individual in the same situation who does not have a role as a teacher or expert practitioner (Boud *et al.*, 2001). Maxwell (2008) also added that a peer is someone who is of the same social status. In this regard, tutoring or mentorship become vary, adjusting the atmosphere and environment of both tutor and tutee, which result in high-structured and low structure programs, such as planned activities, periodic evaluation or less rigorous and fewer scheduled activities that allow the tutor to have more freedom in interacting with their tutee (Haqee *et al.*, 2020).

Peer learning involves various activities where students work together to gain knowledge and complete a task (Johnson *et al.*, 2010). According to Topping (2005), Peer learning is defined as knowledge and skills acquired through the active help and support of peers of equal status. Peer learning involves people from the same social group and not professional teaching staff so that students will learn from each other.

Another definition of peer learning, according to (Boud *et al.*, 2001) also explained that peer learning is a two-way learning activity between reciprocal students in which each participant will benefit. Peer tutoring has the characteristic of a specific role-taking where one student will act as a tutor while the other student will act as a tutee (Topping, 2005). Tutors in peer tutoring are not teachers and do not have professional qualifications. The selection of peers as tutors is expected to make the tutee respond without fear of being ridiculed and reduce reluctance when answering or asking questions in class. Maxwell (2008) stated that the implementation of peer tutoring also requires a difference in knowledge between two individuals, namely the tutor and the tutee. Tutors need to be better knowledgeable, more skilled and experienced to assist and guide less-skilled students (tutees). Thus, the process of knowledge transfer through sharing motivation and personal knowledge is expected to become friendlier and can adjust with the tutee conditions (Gunawan & Herachwati, 2016).

According to Maxwell (2008), the preparation of peer tutoring involves three variables, namely the status of the participants, the place where the peer tutoring activities are carried out, and the roles performed. Peer tutoring can be done by an older, more skilled student or a younger student with experience as a tutor or a less experienced tutee. Maxwell (2008) also adds that students taking peer tutoring can vary based on age, experience, skill level and can be paired to provide support and assistance to less skilled students.

This method is used for encouraging meaningful learning that involves students teaching and learning from one another. Peer learning activities involve sharing ideas, knowledge, and experiences and emphasizing the interdependence of students (Boud *et al.*, 2001). The peer tutoring method is considered suitable to remove the formal and intimidating impression in English training for adults.

Methodology

In this study, the author uses applied research, which is one type of research that aims to provide practical solutions to specific problems. Cooper & Schindler (2011) state that "Applied research is research carried out to apply the findings to solve particular problems that an organization is experiencing. This research does not focus on developing an idea, theory, or idea but instead focuses on the application of the program in everyday life. The main characteristic of this research is the low level of abstraction, and the benefits or impacts can be felt directly. Applied research is carried out to apply, test, and evaluate the ability of a policy or program that is applied in solving practical problems.

Several steps have been carried out to optimize the results of this study. First, the researcher and related stakeholders form or hold an activity program in the form of training in an informal English language community aimed at academic staff interested in improving their skills in using English.

Second, primary data collection with quantitative as well as qualitative methods. The quantitative method aims to evaluate the success of the program results with a series of tests to program participants. The qualitative method is conducted by interviewing the relevant leaders to evaluate satisfaction (Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007). The interviewer read all interview guides to make a reasonable interpretation and equal perception of the data collected and analyzed.

All stages of the research were carried out at the medical faculty, the most prominent faculty at a leading public university in Surabaya, Indonesia, namely Universitas Airlangga. Universitas Airlangga is one

of the universities expected by the government through the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education (Kemristek Dikti) to penetrate the top 500 world-class rankings.

Result and Discussion

A. Informal English Community and Training

As a university that the Indonesian government expects to compete to improve the international level, it is necessary to support all components of the university, including education staff. The English informal community program is a program that aims to improve the English language competence of education staff with an informal approach. The name "community" is synonymous with relaxed, accessible, and open so that this program is considered able to attract the interest of education personnel who come from various backgrounds, such as age, employment status, education level, and age level.

As an effort to create an informal atmosphere and not seem rigid, activities can be carried out anywhere within the Faculty of Medicine, Airlangga University (Airlangga University Medical Faculty), such as gazebos, canteens, meeting rooms, classrooms, etc. The routine implementation time is at least twice a week for two hours before going home from work. This is so that the training does not become an additional burden for participants outside office hours.

The concept of the English language community program is essentially a program for education staff. The organization optimizes its human resource assets, in this case, education staff who have the ability to speak English (certified) to provide training or mentoring for this activity program as tutors or companions. This makes the trainees feel comfortable because the companion or tutor is a peer known as the peer tutoring learning model.

The Peer tutoring learning model (Gardner *et al.*, 2002) is defined as people from the same social group who are not professional teachers helping each other learn and teaching themselves by teaching. Furthermore, according to Gardner, students will feel more comfortable and concentrate more on the subject matter with peer tutors than professional teachers or consultants. Supardi (n.d) said that peer-to-peer assistance, in general, can give better results, and the relationship between students feels closer than the relationship between students and teachers. Hayati (2013) stated that learning by using peer tutors significantly increased student activity and learning outcomes.

The informal English community activity program aims to develop the personality of educational staff in this case, boost self-confidence, increase the ability of educational staff in English skills, improve excellent service to stakeholders, and optimize the university's human resource assets by appointing program tutors. The activities of the education staff themselves strengthen the relationship and intimacy between education personnel so that it will facilitate work coordination and minimize friction and conflict between individuals. The development of the activity program cannot be separated from the milestones that were utilized as a reference at the start of program determination by the key stakeholders, which are as follows:

Place Figure 1. (Activity Milestone) here

Starting from the leadership of the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga, forming a committee in charge of organizing and ensuring the activity program runs optimally, and the planning details are included in the activity proposal. Assignment of tutors by the dean on the committee's recommendation, tutors assigned to informal English community programs are education personnel who meet qualifications such as a Bachelor of English Literature degree.

Selected tutors make the syllabus for the informal English community program. The criteria for choosing a topic are light, essential, and closely related to situations and conditions in the office, such as the introduction of the alphabet, number, greeting, time and date, identifying things, location & direction, and telephone manner. Although a syllabus controls the activity program, the method used is reciprocal learning; namely, the tutor will maximize the involvement of participants in discussions with light themes. The English informal community program is a community for education staff to get used to speaking English actively.

The committee then carries out socialization of activities to prospective participants. Program participants are active educational staff who have an interest in improving active and passive English language competence. This is evidenced by independent registration without coercion from any party.

Tests are conducted on training participants or community members in 3 types and times, namely: 1) Placement Test to determine class groupings based on the participants' English proficiency level, 2) Mid-meeting test and 3) Final test to evaluate the success of activities and the ability of community members or

participants training. Meanwhile, to evaluate leadership satisfaction, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with related leaders.

Figure 2. (The results of recapitulation of the assessment form) here

Figure 3. (Assessment Form) here

B. Community Evaluation and Informal English Training

Evaluation of the success of the English informal community program at the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga (Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga) was carried out using both the results of participant assessment scores during the mid-test and post-test, while the evaluation of satisfaction from the program was obtained through interviews with participants and leaders in this case. are deans, vice deans, subsection heads and department heads.

1) Participants of the English Informal Community Program

Faculty of Medicine Universitas Airlangga (Faculty of Medicine Universitas Airlangga) is the 3rd best Faculty of Medicine in Indonesia according to the QS WUR assessment (Prabowo, 2021) and excellent faculties at Airlangga University. Faculty of Medicine Universitas Airlangga employs around 25% of the total education staff at UNAIR.

This teaching method using peer tutors with informal concepts is a suitable method to use in language learning at an adult age because it can increase the learning motivation of trainees, and by providing appropriate learning materials, trainees can easily understand the material provided.

Various life backgrounds in the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga, affect the level of motivation in personality development through improving English language skills. Different backgrounds such as employment status, age, and education level have no positive effect on the motivation level of the trainees. Informal English training participants come from various employment statuses, age scales, and education levels, which proves that learning or training English with the concept of an informal community can eliminate fear in learning.

The employment status at UNAIR is divided into Civil Servants (PNS), UNAIR Permanent Employees, and Non-Permanent Employees of the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga. The trainees and members of the informal English training community represent all types of employment status, as follows:

Table 1 (Percentage of Participant's Employment Status) here

Airlangga University is Indonesia's second-oldest public university (Rosa, 2021) and was established in 1954. This affects the age level of its human resource assets. According to Nielsen (2017), the baby boomer generation was born in 1947 to 1964 or aged between 54 and 71 years. Some of the baby boomers have the characteristics of being resistant to new policies and programs in an organization so that they tend to have difficulty adapting to all changes made to achieve organizational goals. However, the concept of an informal English community program has succeeded in increasing the motivation of a small number of baby boomers to join the community.

Table 2. (Percentage of age level of participants) here

Based on the level of education, the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga, has varying levels according to the competence of the type of work concerned. However, the internationalization of higher education requires the role of all components of the higher education or university from the highest to the lowest level. The ability to speak English is vital for all education personnel regardless of educational background. The English language training with the concept of an informal community initiated by the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga, has succeeded in attracting the interest and motivation of education staff who represent various educational backgrounds.

Table 3. (Percentage of participants' education level) here

2) *Understanding of The Training Materials By The Participants*

The informal English community program is a manifestation of the efforts made by the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga, to motivate education staff to improve English language skills. Even though Sardiman (2018) said that learning motivation is a non-intellectual psychological factor, passion needs to be

grown, feeling happy and eager to learn. Motivation can create a fun learning environment. The learning environment used is informal but practical so that trainees can better understand the material being discussed.

The materials discussed and designed are adapted to the basis of communication. Furthermore, the provision of grants in the form of handouts of English subject matter based on the syllabus made previously in each meeting and is proof of the seriousness of the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga. The impact of the material handouts given to the training participants can increase the motivation of the participants as well as the availability of handouts to support the process of training activities.

The syllabus has several benefits for trainees. Some of these benefits include clarifying and simplifying the presentation of material so that it is not too verbalized (question and answer) to overcome the limitations of time, space, and senses.

The learning evaluation results obtained from the mid-test and post-test scores help measure the extent to which training success rate is implemented. The following are the results of the evaluation of the implementation of the training.

Table 4. (Percentage of English training mid-test evaluation scores) here

Table 5. (Percentage of English training post-test evaluation scores) here

3) *Program Satisfaction and Benefit*

According to Gagné (2010), learning is a process by which an organism changes its behaviour. These behavioural changes include three learning domains, namely the cognitive (knowledge), affective (values and attitudes), and psychomotor (skills). The change in professional behaviour is felt and has an impact directly or indirectly by the relevant leadership. The following is the percentage of leadership satisfaction related to changes in community participants after undergoing the informal English community program.

Table 6. (Percentage of leader satisfaction) here

Conclusion

This applied research shows that the English language training program with the concept of an informal community designed using peer tutoring methods can reduce the rigidity of the learning process to reduce fear and increase the motivation of participants to participate in learning programs to improve English language skills.

Researchers highly recommend continuous monitoring of the informal English community program results for further research topics by involving community members in every university activity that requires English language skills such as welcoming inbound students, inbound staff, etc. The researcher is fully aware that this applied research still has many limitations as a pilot project, including the scope of activities that are only carried out in one faculty out of seventeen faculties at Universitas Airlangga. This applied research and in the future are expected to contribute to the university in increasing the participation of education personnel in realizing the university's vision and mission to achieve university or higher education internationalization.

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