

LEARNING COMMUNITY BETWEEN ENGLISH TEACHER-LECTURER TO DEVELOP INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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LEARNING COMMUNITY BETWEEN ENGLISH TEACHER-LECTURER TO DEVELOP INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

One of the important factors which influences the success of teaching and learning process at school is instructional materials. Instructional materials cover language contents, media, and classroom activities. Ideally, good materials for teaching and learning process should fulfill students' needs and ability. In order to get good materials, English teachers may adopt, modify, and supplement the available materials. It can be done through learning community between English teacher-lecturer who work collaboratively to develop materials which combine theoretical and practical points of view. This paper aims to describe the process of developing instructional materials for junior high school students through learning community between a junior high school teacher and two lecturers of a university. The first step is the teacher and lecturers evaluate the existing lesson plan and materials; then they make a plan by revising the weaknesses found in the existing lesson plan and materials. The result of these revisions are implemented in the classroom by the teacher and observed by the lecturers. Finally, the teacher and lecturers make reflection to what has been implemented by the teacher. By doing learning community both the English teacher and the lecturers get many benefits to improve the quality of teaching and learning English.

Keywords: learning community, instructional material, junior high school student

INTRODUCTION

A teacher should always improve their knowledge, or to make changes because of the rapid education changes. He/she can do this by joining learning community with other teachers or lecturers. Learning community is a group of people who share common academic goals and attitude, who meet semi-regularly to collaborate on classroom. According to the Glossary of Education Reform (2014) Professional Learning Community is a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students. In this study, learning community means a group of educators (English teachers and lecturers) who work collaboratively to develop instructional materials to improve the quality of teaching.

This activity is very important as it gives many advantages both for teachers and lecturers. They can review lesson plans or assessments that have been used in the class, then offer critical feedback and recommendations for the improvement. They can also analyze the students' works and find some weaknesses in order to help students learn certain materials. Furthermore, they can work together to develop materials which are appropriate with their students. In short, teachers and lecturers can share ideas about their experiences and problems in teaching so that they get the best solution from other teachers as well as lecturers.

One of the activities in learning community is developing instructional materials. The materials cover language contents, media, and classroom activities. Ideally, good materials for teaching and learning process should fulfill students' needs and ability. In order to get good materials, English teachers may adopt, modify, and supplement the available materials in course books. Teachers and lecturers can work collaboratively to improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially by developing the materials.

Many English teachers find problems when they follow an available course book. The problems may cover the content are unsuitable with the students proficiency (whether it is too easy or too hard for students), the course book does not include teaching steps that teachers feel should be applied, and the course book does not completely provide language items, skills, ideas, discourse or

strategies that learners need (Nation & Macalister, 2010: 161). In order to solve the problems, English teachers are allowed to provide their own materials.

The fact shows that some English teachers of junior high school in Kediri have problems to provide their own materials. They rely on the existing materials available from the government or other publishers. They do not adapt the materials with the students' needs and ability. As a result, the materials are sometimes too easy or too difficult for students.

The English teachers actually can build learning community¹ with other teachers or lecturers to get a solution. Learning community As Iksan et.al (2014) say that the learning community gives big impact in the lesson study approach by collaboration, discussion and reflection to enhance the development of teaching and learning process. Due to the condition, this study is designed in order to answer the question: "How to develop the instructional materials collaboratively between the English teachers and lecturers?"

METHOD

The method of this study is adopted the steps in conducting Lesson Study (LS). It is an activity in which aims at enhancing the learning outcomes and teaching process continuously² through teacher group collaboration (Sudrajat, 2010). Wang-Iverson and Yoshida (2005) define LS is more than studying instructional materials and developing useful lessons. LS also explores ideas for improved teaching that brings out students' thinking and thinking processes, helps students to develop mental images for solving problems and understanding topic, and expands those skills and abilities (Zahroh and Wardani, 2011). In other words, LS is collaborative activities among teachers and lecturers to find solution and to improve the quality of teaching.

¹ Lewis (2002) formulates the three main stages of LS cycle: PLAN, DO, and SEE. Moreover, Carbin and Kopp in Sudrajat (2010) propose six steps LS include: 1) Form a team, 2) Develop student learning goals, 3) Plan the research lesson, 4) Gather evidence of student learning, 5) Analyze evidence of learning, and 6) Repeat the process

The implementation of LS in this study involved one¹ English teacher of a Junior High School and two English lecturers of a university. They worked collaboratively for each session that starts from defining the objectives of the teaching up to the reflection. Because this study aims to build a learning community among English teachers and lecturers in order that the teacher is able to develop the instructional materials, therefore the steps of this study are adapted as follows: 1) evaluating lesson plan and materials; 2) Revising the lesson plan and adapting the materials; 3) Implementing in the class; 4¹ reflecting.

The first step in the lesson study is the English teacher and the lecturers discuss and specify learning objectives appropriate to the target students. They evaluate the lesson plan, especially the teaching objective and develop the materials. They analyze the compatible of the teaching objective and the materials used for teaching. The materials should be in line with the teaching objectives and the students can follow the lesson easily. The objectives of the content should not¹ too much for the students to understand and to be taught effectively. Iksan et.al (2014) suggests utilizing a student-centered teaching approach is recommended so students can actively participate and fully involve.

The second step is the teacher and the lecturers collaboratively revised a complete lesson plan for teaching. The lecturers and the teacher helped each other to define the teaching objectives and to develop the materials. They may use the existing materials if it is suitable with the teaching objective. ¹ it is not, then they work together to resource the materials. Hopefully this partnership would generate more brilliant ideas which result in an interesting lesson plan.

The third step is the teacher used the lesson plan as guidance to teach in the classroom. She implemented the teaching process and the lecturers monitored and made notes for evaluation. The lecturers played role as collaborators to observe the teaching process by using observation check lists and a field note. Questionnaires were given to the students in order to collect information about their perception on the learning process.

The last step is the teacher and the lecturers made reflection on the instruction and discussed to see the strength and weaknesses of the process so that changes could be made to improve the teaching plan.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this part it will be presented the process of developing the instructional materials done by the English lecturers and teacher through learning community.

1. Evaluating the lesson plan and materials

The first activity of learning community is evaluating the existing lesson plan and materials written and developed by the teachers. The lecturers and the teacher shared ideas in Forum Group Discussion (FGD) as a team. The aim of FGD was to identify the weaknesses of the lesson plan and the materials used by the teacher to teach English. From the discussion, it was identified that two problems faced by the teacher, they were misconception of formulating teaching objectives and the steps of teaching. Actually the material selected by the teacher was interesting, but the ways how to present the materials was not suitable with the students' needs. She provided video as the teaching media and also power point slides.

The problem found was the teaching objective was not clear so that the competence expected from the students were difficult to measure. For example, the formulation of teaching objective made by the teacher was: "*Students are able to response a descriptive text orally*". The word response in the formulation is not clear. There are many activities to response a descriptive text. For examples, if the teacher focuses on listening skill, the students can identify some factual information such as the object to be described, the characteristics of the object, etc. When the team checked the materials and the learning activities, it was found out that the students were assigned to fill in the blank parts in the text. The students had to complete the missing words in text after they had listened to the text were read orally.

The other problem was the formulation of indicator of learning only reflected the students' final competence. In fact, according to Susanto (2010) indicators are students' behaviors which can be measured and observed to show certain competence. Indicators are formulated in order to show steps how students reach the competence. They should reflect the sequence of learning. This formulation will influence the choice of learning activities.

In teaching speaking, the teacher only formulated the indicator: "*Students are able to describe a person*". Then the team read and analyzed the steps of teaching and the student worksheet in the lesson plan. It was found out that the steps of teaching did not reflect the sequence how the student learn to practice speaking skill. It was written, after the teacher explained the characteristics of descriptive text, the generic structure, and the language features. The next activity was she played the video of a descriptive text and the students were assigned to answer a number of question about the information in the video. After that she reviewed about the materials and she asked the students to make a descriptive text based on the pictures given. The students had to write first in pairs before they performed in front of the class.

2. Revising the lesson plan and adapting the materials

From the problems above, the teacher and the lecturers tried to find the solution. They reformulated the indicators and added some activities to facilitate students learning. The team applied 'learning strategy based' to formulate the indicators and to provide the learning activities. O'Malley and Chamot (1990, P 1) define that learning strategy is special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information. Learning strategy here refers to the process and actions that are consciously deployed by language learners to help them learn or use a language more effectively. Learning strategy based means the formulation of the indicators are based on the typical strategies deployed by Indonesian students to perform speaking competence. For example, the goal of teaching is students are able to describe an object orally. The students usually make preparations before they are ready to perform speaking ability in front of the class. The strategies are developing ideas which will be described, finding the English words to express, arranging the ideas into an English text, and practice how to perform.

After knowing the students learning strategy, the team formulated the indicators. Students are able to:

- a. Develop ideas based on the pictures
- b. Create sentences based on the pictures
- c. Arrange sentences into a text
- d. Introducing a special person.

The next activity was that the team selected the materials which were appropriate with the teaching objectives. The team tried to get the instructional materials which were suitable with the context in a real communication. For example, when the students are able to describe something, they identified some situations in which a speaker uses a descriptive text. Before having FGD, the teacher only provided a picture of some famous important persons, such as 'Joko Widodo', 'Liliana Natsir', 'Taylor Swift', etc. However, she did not provide a context when someone has to describe those persons. Then, they create some situation in which a speaker had to introduce a famous person. The activity chosen was a TV presenter who interviewed a famous person. When she/he had to introduce the guess, she/he gives information about the name, the age, her/his profession, her/his achievement, her/his social activities, etc. This is the application of real speaking skill activity that is describing a person. A presenter does not need to tell in detail about the physical appearance of the guess. Another example of the application of describing person is when an announcer gives information about the missing person. She/he will describe the characteristics of the person in detail, including the physical appearance. She/he does not need to inform about the achievement of the missing person.

Based on the selected materials, then the team arranged the learning activities for the students, including how to manage the class. They decided to have a small group discussion reach the teaching objectives. The next step was they rewrote the steps of teaching and the assessment.

3. Implementing in the class

After revising ⁴ the lesson plan, the teacher applied the plan in the classroom. The teacher applied the plan, such as preparing worksheets for the students, arranging the student seats, making group-work activity. The lecturers played roles as the observers. The lecturers made notes about the situations during the teaching-learning process in field-notes. They noted about students' participation, the process interaction between teacher and students, and students' response toward the developed materials. Besides, the students had to write their perception of the teaching process in the questionnaire. At the end, to know the effectiveness of the instruction the students were tested by performing in the classroom.

Some notes from the observation can be reported here. At first, the students felt strange that there were some observers, but gradually the class ran normally. The students were active during the learning process. When a student had problems, her/his partner helped her/him. For example, a student did not know some English words to express characteristics of a person, and her friend told her what the English words were. Next, the class was alive as the activity was in real context. They played roles as a TV presenter and a guess to be introduced. The observer also noted that the teacher could easily manage the class. She arranged the seats i. She asked the students to make a group of three students for the activity.

4. Reflecting

After the application the teacher and the lecturers had discussion to make reflection. Each person reported what they felt and thought about. The teacher as the model made confession that she felt nervous as it was the first time she was being observed. That was why she made some small mistakes as she did not inform the goal of teaching and sometimes her instruction was clear. However, she thought that there were some positive things as the steps of teaching were in the right order. She thought that her students enjoyed the activities she provided.

The lecturer also made a report on what they saw from the observation. The teacher had already applied the plan. There were positive responses from the students that they attended the class seriously, but the situation of the class was relax. They seriously followed the activity. When the teacher asked them to make a report after they had finished doing the discussion in pairs, most of them presented confidently. In the last activity, the students had to perform as if they were a TV

presenter and a guest. Some of them still had problem, especially the fluency. The observer thought that they need time to practice before they perform. However, the teaching presentation was overall good. After doing one cycle of LS, the team used the reflection to make plan for the next teaching preparation.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Learning community in LS approach is beneficial for English teachers and lecturers. Through this activity they can collaboratively work to share knowledge and experience in teaching English. From the present study it can be concluded that the problem faced by the teacher was developing materials for teaching English. The problem was how to formulate the teaching indicators and how to provide learning activity for the students. As one team they worked together to reformulate the teaching indicators, to select the materials, and to arrange the materials for learning activity for the students. After doing the LS the teacher was more concerned with the process of teaching students, and the students are more motivated to study English.

Based on this study, English teacher should always develop their professional by creating learning community with other teachers or lecturers. They can work collaboratively to find solutions of their problems of teaching.

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I dedicate this article to education in my country, especially in my hometown. Hopefully, it will inspire teachers that by having learning community, they can share ideas to do many good things for students. I would like to thank all my colleagues and my students who participate in this learning community.

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