

HOTs-based Needs Analysis of the Indonesian Language Assistants in Victoria, Australia Teachers' Voices

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ABSTRACT

Needs analysis in a language teaching is one of important elements to undertake before starting the lesson. The implementation of Higher Order Thinking skills (HOTs)-based needs analysis is expected to achieve the objectives of Indonesian language learning for foreign speakers to master the language and cultural competences. This research aims to describe the implementation of the Indonesian language assistant program from a state university in Bandung to Victoria, Australia from 2017 to 2019 identified on the basis of HOTs. Research data were obtained from observation, interviews and documents analysis. This research applied a case study design through recruiting nine alumni of the Indonesian language assistants employed in Victorian primary and secondary schools, Australia. Through the implementation of previous learning practices, this study tried to reveal strengths and weaknesses of the program to come up with some innovative solutions for the improvement of similar programs in the coming years. The observation and interviews were directed to seek information on HOT skills required by the students that have been taught by the language assistants during the learning processes. Results indicated that the language assistants have not fully implemented HOTs-based needs analysis in formulating materials and implementing the learning processes. For better implementation of future language assistant program, UPI has to provide candidates of the language assistants with more comprehensive pre-departure training which do not only cover English skills, Indonesian language and cultures, but also facilitate them with the formulation of HOTs-based learning materials.

Keywords: *HOTs-based needs analysis, language assistant, teachers' voices*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian language assistant program has been running for almost ten years (OIER, 2011-2019) and it has resulted some outputs related to some aspects, not only about Indonesian language, but also about cultures and global mindset. It should be noted that the main task of the Indonesian language assistant is to assist local teachers in the implementation of learning which includes both Indonesian language and Indonesian cultures (Hardini, Setyarini, & Harto, 2019). In terms of language, for instance, the language assistants have done their teaching tasks well due to the program partners. Some of them claimed that the teachers have performed their teaching tasks well that can be seen from the strategies in handling classroom, presenting joyful activity, providing interesting learning materials, and implementing good assessment through various

alternative assessment methods (Farrell & Jacobs, 2020). The others also stated that language assistants have seriously represented their existence as Indonesian delegates to promote Indonesian cultures. It was done through conducting Indonesian traditional performing arts, playing traditional musical instruments, and promoting Indonesian traditional cuisines. Most of the teachers promoted them through their school cultural days. By doing so, the language assistants recognized it and they tended to be more visible rather than presenting it during the learning process because in cultural day performance, some of the real objects were exposed and all Australian students could enjoy and learn what the objects were, functions, characteristics, and those that could be helpful for them to understand the objects more easily. As a result, their understanding will enable them to communicate in Indonesian language more easily.

Instead of those programs, promoting Indonesia amongst those schools in Victoria were done through an immersion program that is a moment where language assistants get together with Australians and share about Indonesian lifestyles, cultures, education systems, and paradigm so they can improve their understanding about the two countries. To optimize the benefits of the immersion program, it was usually done once for a semester. From these programs, both side of the teachers commented that it was valuable for them to understand more about Indonesian country and its aspects.

Professional development is another program conducted to promote Indonesia. It is commonly done both in schools and the Department of Education and Training (DET), an institution that coordinates the program, especially those responsible for management, funding support and language assistant administration. In running the program, pedagogical aspect seemed to be the main agenda. The resource persons involved were the coordinator from DET and the main teachers under the coordination of DET. It purposes to recharge the teachers particularly language assistants to reconsider all teaching aspects to run their tasks well. It is necessary because language assistants need to know some different pedagogical aspects between Indonesian and Australian. Therefore, they will be sure what to do and not to do in their teaching practices.

As a follow up of all mentioned programs, DET frequently monitors the programs through language assistants they have in several schools. Even, it usually makes annual conference on teaching Indonesian as a foreign language called Victorian Indonesian Language Teachers' Association (VILTA) Conference and Australian Society of Indonesian Language Educators (ASILE) Conference. It aims to invite all language assistants, teachers, university scholars, policy makers to share and think about the better practices of teaching Indonesian to Victorian to meet the needs of the targeted country and the practices are relevant with the situations and context of the existing cultures (Manca, 2012).

However, all those programs do not seem to be able to run smoothly as expected for several reasons. First, language assistant did not get sufficient perspectives about what tasks they are going to do, why they have to do and how they achieve their goals as the outputs of the language assistant program. Second, introducing the target country for language assistants and its aspects (education, cultures, lifestyles, and sexism issues) have not been included as one of the materials in pre-departure training. These issues should be taken into consideration by the program holders since they can guide the language assistants to perform their jobs well because they are supposed to know those aspects in running the programs. As the provider of the programs, UPI should firstly understand the points written in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UPI, Monash University,

and DET (Hardini et al., 2019) and followed up by the other MoU between UPI and DET (Hardini et al., 2019). By doing so, they make a breakthrough of realizing them.

Such problems may affect all programs determined cannot run well so HOTSs-based needs analysis should be raised as main points/issues to improve the quality of language assistant programs through identifying and solving problems in their works (Brookhart, 2010), in which in turn they can result in creative and critical students (Heong et al., 2012). It is done through some activities starting from analyzing the existing condition, evaluating and comparing what we got and what we want to get, and creating an innovation as the last points to be executed (Bloom, 1956). Beside those three points, the institution as provider should carefully consider what country they have in their networking, so they can get the expected outcomes demanded by the users through the provision of quality instructional processes, materials, and assessment (Nalova & Shalanyuy, 2017) believed to enhance the HOTS.

Former research on HOTS identified some typical conditions in the implementation of HOTS in different fields of interest. Yuliati and Lestari (2018) share the low awareness of students in answering HOTS questions and this is considered to be the biggest problem in the training of HOTS held at the higher education level. In addition, another research has revealed that the adoption of real world task has driven students to be able to relate theory and its practice (Vijayaratnam, 2012). From these two research findings indicated that the most problematic phenomenon in the training of HOTS was the way in raising the students' awareness and the phenomenon would be beneficial when it was related to the real practices found in the community. In the context of the Indonesian language assistant program implemented in Victorian schools, Australia, therefore, the research is worth considering through providing HOTSs-based needs analysis relevant with the context of Australians as the learners of this particular research.

2. METHODS

This study employed a case study as a research design involving nine alumni of Indonesian language assistants (La-1, La-2, La-3, La-4, La-5, La-6, La-7, La-8, and La-9) in the last three years from 2017 to 2019. To collect data, some instruments were employed namely observation (Obs), interview (Int) with the participants, and documents (Doc) analysis (Creswell, 2012; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Malik & Hamied, 2016). The observation was done by visiting the language assistants when they were running class in September 2019. At the same period, the researchers also interviewed a local teacher (Lt), a school principal (Sp), three students (S1, S2, S3), and two DET officers (Do-1, Do-2). Regarding the document analysis, some related documents were used to gain the data such as MoU between the UPI,

Monash University and DET (Hardini et al., 2019) and the other MoU between UPI and DET (Hardini et al., 2019), the Indonesian language curriculum provided by the DET, teaching aids, teachers' journals, and lesson plans. The collected data were then analyzed through making some codes on the data viewed from structural, holistic, and procedural patterns (Schulz & FitzPatrick, 2016) which were obtained from observation, interview, and document analysis. The data were then classified into three categories based on the codes of the participants that have been made (La-1 to La-9, Lt, Sp, S1 to S3, and Do-1 and Do-2), codes of the data collection instruments (Obs, Int, and Doc). The interpretations of data were made through confirming the identified data with the relevant theories of HOTS (Brookhart, 2010) through identifying and solving their existing problems in their works and through providing quality instructional processes, materials, and assessment (Nalova & Shalanyuy, 2017) for improving their HOTS and theories of needs analysis (Pushpanathan, 2013) for determining whether the program meets the goals and objectives of the learners and Songhori (2008) for the bases of designing and carrying out any language course, and finally drawing some conclusions based on the overall research findings.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The followings showed findings and discussion of the study, covering the data from observation, interviews, and document analysis. Details of the findings and discussion are explored in the following sections.

3.1. Findings from the Observation

Observations were done to one of the elementary public schools in Southwest of Victoria. The research team got an opportunity to observe a class of grade five studying Indonesian language and cultures. The topic given at that time was *angklung* as a traditional musical instrument, in this particular context, was from West Java, Indonesia (Obs-La-1). However, some resources define *angklung* differently, for example, *angklung* is an Asian musical instrument made from bamboo (Dictionary, 1995). Another resource defines that "*angklung adalah alat musik yang terbuat dari bambu*" (a musical instrument made from bamboo) (Kamus SABDA, 2012). The other one, *angklung* is defined by KBBI Daring (2016) as "*alat musik tradisional yang dibuat dari tabung bambu*" (a traditional musical instrument made from tubes of bamboo). Then, the class was opened with a greeting in Indonesian language "*Selamat pagi*" and it was translated into English language "Good morning" (Sederet.com, 2020). Some learning sessions were observed such as introducing *angklung* as a traditional instrument, explaining how to play the *angklung*, describing the notes of a song to play, and modelling before the students started to play the

angklung, and practicing to play the *angklung* (Obs-S1, Obs-S2, Obs-S3).

Some points were identified during the observation, such as the language used, pronunciation, and linguistic and cultural knowledge. In term of language function, the teacher tried to introduce gambits such as "*Selamat pagi anak-anak*", "*Selamat pagi Bu*", *Baik Ibu, etc.* Introducing to gambits aimed to teach how to say greeting in Indonesian appropriately, particularly in focusing on the use of the respected teachers by saying "*Ibu*" and "*Bapak*". Dealt with the linguistic aspects, the students were trained how to arrange simple sentences by using subject, verb, and object such as "*Kita main angklung*" in declarative and interrogative forms, "*Apakah kalian senang bermain angklung?*" and "*Apakah kalian senang alat ini?* (Obs-La-1)".

In term of pronunciation, some points could be identified; they were, among others, the teacher who seemed not to pronounce some words in Indonesian language appropriately. From this identification, the researchers perceived that the teacher tended to be influenced by English pronunciation so that the intonation and the pronunciation were slightly different. The right Indonesian pronunciation should also refer to the application of phonetic transcription published by the International Phonetic Association (IPA) for the BIPA learners (Setyowati, Bertalya, & Ningsih, 2014). Then, in dealing with cultural knowledge, the teacher was enthusiastic to introduce one of the traditional musical instruments, *angklung*, to Australian students. She likely intended to show her pride of having very typical musical instrument from Indonesia. The way she played this instrument was indicating that she really liked it because in front of the classroom, she was relatively skillful to train the students how to use it and arrange the rhyme of the songs.

This performance looked interesting and good because the teacher showed her patient to teach the students; even she tried to give a hand to the students who could not start playing it (Obs-La-1, Obs-S1). Her pedagogical strategy was another point showing her professionalism in delivering cultural knowledge because she kept demonstrating how interesting the song was accompanied the traditional musical instrument. Through the whole observation, it was found that a learning theme/topic was taken from cultural knowledge of Indonesian and considered as one of the favorite topics for the students because they claimed that as if they were in the setting of Indonesia. However, this favorite topic could not run well without any support from the other aspects, i.e. linguistic and pronunciation.

Some supports related to the existence of language assistant were also found good in that context. Those supports were derived from the principal and the teachers of Indonesian language for foreign speakers (*Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing, BIPA*) (Obs-Lt, Obs-La-

1). The principal supported the running program of language assistant well, either in giving good facilities both inside the classroom and outside the classroom. The contribution from the principles were found from his concern in providing learning aids for teaching Indonesian language such as some traditional musical instruments, i.e. *angklung*, *kendang*, *gamelan*, puppets, and posters of Indonesian fruits and animals, to mention just a few. In contrast, support to language assistant for outside activities was relating to the involvement of the language assistant in some activities, such as camping, art performing night, educational drama, teachers and parents' gatherings. By doing so, it indicated that the principal treated the subject of Indonesian language equally to the other subjects like, for instance, science and math.

Beside support from the principles, BIPA teachers seemed to be very helpful to language assistants. It could be seen from her concern on guiding her to teach from the beginning until the end of the session. Moreover, she involved a lot to the teachers' condition, not only about her task, but also her personal problems related to her survival condition. From her involvement, it was noticed that the language assistant was treated as a family member of that school. It is no wonder that the teacher felt convenient and engaged.

3.2. Findings from the Interview

Interviews in this study were conducted to several people categorized into four groups, namely group of language assistants, group of students, and group of language teachers, and representatives of DET. In conducting the interview, the team used the instruments such as interview guide and rubrics to focus on the questions given to the interview while rubric was intended to specify the information gained from the participants.

Interview with the students focused on what they taught about Indonesian language, their language teachers and assistants, and the benefits of learning Indonesian language (Int-S1, Int-S2, Int-S3). Some questions directed to the language teachers covered the recognition of Indonesian language as one of the subjects in schools supported by the authorities and parents, their challenges and their alternative solutions. Dealing with the authorities (DET and the principals) highlighted that their comments, evaluations toward the subject of Indonesian language taught in school (Int-Do-1, Int-Do-2, Int-Sp). Besides, the questions went to the authorities were also raised to give comments on the presence of language assistants in Victoria.

The last participants interviewed by the researchers were the language assistants. The questions were directed to explore the information about their overall programs, their teaching tasks, benefits of the program, the

challenges in the workplace and strategies to overcome the problems and suggestions to the program providers (Int-La-1 to Int-La-9). It is relevant with the paradigm of HOTs covering rational, design, and system thinking related to problem solving (Wang & Wang, 2014).

Interview with the students resulted some statements that they enjoyed learning Indonesian language because they got some description on the beauty of Indonesia and they just realized that Indonesia was the closest neighbor. The students also commented that learning cultural knowledge of Indonesia was becoming a favorite topic since they never met in their place before so they found a new experience of new things (Int-S1, Int-S2, Int-S3). Some findings from interviewing the authority persons, such as the principal and DET officers, revealed that overall, they supported that the Indonesian language was taught in Victorian schools. They liked this subject because it could introduce some perspectives to the students not only related to their close neighbors but also how to teach them to appreciate the neighbors' culture and specialty (Int-Sp, Int-Do-1, Int-Do-2). The findings from interviewing the language assistants identified some points but overall program they enjoyed it although some small notes were addressed to the policy makers to improve the quality of the programs—not only in fulfilling the administration but also in preparing them to be established in the new place through pre-departure training.

The results from the interview with the language assistants also denoted that providers should concern more in giving good coaching related to learning strategies to teach BIPA in Victoria contextually (Int-La-1 to Int-La-9). This is due to their expectation to be well accepted in teaching their students. Some linguistic materials should be well trained before departing because most the language assistants did not know exactly that BIPA was taught in complete way not only from the language use, linguistic, pronunciation, but also from some sociolinguistic aspect they met in the new place by considering those aspects. Therefore, the language assistants would be more confident in running the program because they got a good guidance in pre-departure training.

3.3. Findings from Documents Analysis

Moreover, the findings from document analysis focusing several documents such as MoU between UPI and DET (Hardini et al., 2019), the Indonesian Victorian Curriculum provided by DET, learning materials, teaching aids, and teacher's journals revealed that the language assistants focused on several aspects, including levels of thinking skills, cultural diversity, and teacher's creative thinking. With regard to the Indonesian Victorian Curriculum, it was written that the language assistants should help the local teachers in developing the students' understanding about the role of language and

culture in communication. It could be reflected on language use and language learning applied in other learning contexts. The language assistants should bear in mind several targets of learning Indonesian language such as: (1) contributing to the strengthening of the community's social, economic, and international development capabilities; (2) extending literacy repertoires and the capacity to communicate, strengthens understanding of the nature of language of culture, and the processes of communication; (3) developing intercultural capability, including understanding of and respect for diversity and difference, and an openness of different experiences and perspectives; (4) developing understanding of how culture shapes and extends learners' understanding of themselves, their own heritage, values, beliefs, culture, and identity; (5) strengthening intellectual, analytical and reflective capabilities, and enhances creative and critical thinking.

3.4. Discussion

Considering the findings of data collected from three research instruments, it clearly indicates that to run language assistant program, the provider has not conducted HOTS-based needs analysis for several reasons. Firstly, taking a look at the procedures done by the institution of providers, they have not done this program based on needs analysis, particularly HOTS-based needs analysis. HOTS-based needs analysis is admitted to be important to compass the program of language assistants (Brookhart, 2010; Nalova & Shalanyuy, 2017), because the providers could design the programs based on the demands of the targeted countries as users. This strategy was essential because what the country of user required can be well prepared by the institutions. Such condition was not yet done or at least anticipated by the institution. As a result, they only did the candidate selection by using the manual and recycled assessment rubrics done by year to year without any revision and innovation. If this conventional system does still exist, the quality of language assistants as the main ambassadors cannot be prolonged or promoted because the users believed that the employed language assistants do not have good qualification as they thought since the language assistants were not formal programs but they are informal as stated by institution providers that "Language assistants have been done for almost ten years and it runs smoothly every year, should we think about innovation? What is it for?" (Interview with one of the institutional providers). In addition, HOTS-based needs analysis so far (Pushpanathan, 2013; Songhori, 2008) is not considered urgent because the providers believed that mastering Indonesian language aspects is everything without considering that the other aspects such as cultural knowledge, personality, and commitment amongst the language assistants determines the success of the language assistant program.

4. CONCLUSION

Language learners require higher skill level to develop their ideas and language concepts in the process of learning. This language competence can be achieved through the language learning activities which are well formulated by the teachers through considering the students' low order thinking which is usually implemented in their daily life and higher order thinking which should be sharpened through creative and critical thinking processes. The Indonesian language assistant program organized by UPI is driven to focus on the implementation of Indonesian language learning for speakers of other languages hosted in different countries. For that reason, the learning formulation and its implementation should consider the needs of students as learners in the targeted countries through the implementation of HOTS-based needs analysis. From the data that have been managed by the providers and the analysis of needs organized based on HOTS so far, the language assistant program can be implemented quite well which can be viewed from the recruitment system and its collaborative activities with its partners of both DET and Victorian schools. However, the implementation of learning practices and formulation of lesson plans which are supposed to have accommodated the analysis of students' needs with regard to HOT skills have not been fully implemented since the language assistants still implement low order thinking (LOT) skills. This can be seen from the practices of learning which do not require students to creatively and critically think about the lessons, instead, they are practicing the skills through introducing and practicing simple daily living learning materials although the materials and the media themselves have been considered to be obviously various. Therefore, as one of the providers of the Indonesian language assistants, UPI has to provide the candidate of the language assistants with sufficient knowledge and skills to teach Indonesian to speakers of other languages with the implementation of HOT skills in the relevant situations and contexts.

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