



Preparing Public Administration Graduates: Enhancing Public Speaking Competence

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Abstract. This study aimed to explore the needs of Public Administration students in relation to public speaking competence and to prepare them for future job performance. Data were collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and semi-structured interviews with sixth-semester students of the PA Study Program. The FGD revealed that students viewed public speaking as essential for their future careers and highlighted the need for specific topics and teaching methods to enhance communication skills. The interviews provided clarification and support for the FGD results. The study found that students require effective teaching strategies that incorporate materials that support the learning of communication skills. The implications of the study suggest that PA programs should prioritize communication skills in their curricula to better prepare graduates for their future careers.

Keywords: Public Administration · communication skills · graduates · teaching strategies · needs analysis

1 Introduction

Communication skills have nowadays been implemented in any environment and emphasized heavily in schools and institutions. It relates to the capacity to use words in varied contexts or situations [1]. Communication has become one of the markers of social solidarity, social ranking, and professional capabilities, and the majority of the language's components are learned through this medium. The demand for public speaking skills is also on the rise, because as people advance in their careers, they are more likely to present and speak in meetings, seminars, and conferences, and give their opinions on the issues [2].

In this issue, some Indonesian students in Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia try to have the opportunity to enhance their English communication skills, especially speaking, by joining English Show (Epsro) held by the study program of Public Administration (PA), Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo. As the program is held for non-English Education students, these students are further called non-English students who learn to

speak English for specific purposes (ESP) based on their educational background. The Espro will be held in early 2023 and had accepted twelve students among two classes consisting of 70 students. The program is established to accommodate PA students learning to speak English to prepare for good communication performance after they graduate and face their future jobs.

Before the program begins, the materials prepared by the PA study programs involves vocabulary and reading comprehension related to their educational background, completed with grammar. They have also learned to write a paragraph in accordance with the topics given by the teacher. However, the PA students lack chances to learn how to communicate orally by using English. At meeting nine of the program, the teacher gave a topic for the students to discuss. The class was divided into three groups, and they had to tell anything in their minds about the topic. Unfortunately, when finding themselves in situations where they become the focus of attention as they have to address an audience, they experience emotions like fear and anxiety, leading to nausea and excessive sweating. Most of them try to avoid situations where they have to perform or speak in public, but when unavoidable, such situations are endured by distress [3].

Numerous research has discussed the success and the failure of students in EFL countries to acquire communication skills. [4] Revealed the most significant and recommended competence for jobs is communication (speaking). The study focused on Chinese students studying Business and Finance, and they discovered that interactional abilities in business interactions over the phone and presentation skills are the most critical talents to have. They also believe that giving students with appropriate course materials and flexible activities encourages them to learn to speak on their own. In addition, continued collaboration between subject specialists and ELT teachers can lead to more successful course planning and objectives. [5] Discovered that students were unable to improve their communication skills owing to a variety of causes, one of which was a lack of speaking themes that were applicable to real-life situations. This is the most common situation in EFL settings. The lack of need analysis made it impossible to provide relevant training and resources [6]. In other words, without analyzing the need, the themes, topics, and materials for learning English speaking solely relied on teachers' intuitive decisions, which were usually far from real-life situations. As a result, in order to overcome ineffective language education, need analysis must be undertaken to check that the learning has met the students' expectations [5].

To create better results in relation to the English oral communication competence for specific purposes (Public Administration students), a need analysis was used to examine the learners' need for communication and the approaches for accomplishing certain educational objectives. Needs analysis has become significantly more comprehensive with the goal of gathering information about learners and determining the target context and environment for studying ESP. The need analysis has become an important component of English language teaching, particularly in the development of materials whose goal is to determine what the target language teaching and learners require in order to construct an effective curriculum [7] so the teacher can design course materials and determine language learning activities. In addition, the needs analysis technique was utilized to gather information regarding students' needs that covered three main aspects: 1) A summary

of the skills required and the challenges faced; 2) Needed topics overview; 3) Components of communicative competence: skills (hearing, speaking, reading, and writing), linguistic competence (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciations, punctuation, stress, and spelling), sociocultural, and communication strategy.

[8] Emphasized that ESP teaching was a benign and impartial endeavor that aimed to assist nonnative English speakers in coping with language demands in their target situations through comprehension of work-related and disciplinary concepts. This premise has since been called into question, and suggestions for a more critical approach to ESP education have been made. Therefore, the relationship between specific-purpose background information and language ability resulted in specific-purpose language ability. Students with a minimum acquaintance with their desired workplaces and fields may benefit from ESP education [9]. Competencies in ESP, according to [10], pertaining to disciplinary notions from the students' field of study. They claimed that ESP should concentrate on improving students' disciplinary knowledge as well as their linguistic skills. [8] also connected the needs analysis and instruction to achieve goal performance abilities. The demands and expectations of the target environment are revealed by needs analysis, and ESP education aims to assist students to achieve those demands to the degree of proficiency expected. She made an example of hypothetical requirements analysis revealing that one of the skills required of medical practitioners is the capacity to ask questions in order to extract personal medical histories from patients. In addition, according to [11], the reason why Vocational Pharmacy students learn English was to have the ability to actively speak about health issues and pharmacy jargon. This result indicated that students believed their future careers will require competence in English communication. This also demonstrated that students were aware of the labor market needs, as practically all healthcare employers require English language abilities in both oral and written communication.

Since the English Show program in this university is new, the program has not worked optimally due to the lack of a supporting curriculum, syllabus, materials, and activities based on the need analysis. As the PA students expect to master oral English communication skills, the university that has autonomy could create the curriculum, syllabus, materials, and activities to accommodate the students' expectations. [12] Urged that school autonomy to tailor their English curriculum to meet the requirements of their students is unattainable. She also remarked that when the curriculum is set by the authorities, there may be a disconnect between what learners will need to do in the future with the targeted language and what the government wants them to do. This contradicts what has previously been proposed in the literature. Therefore, colleges are expected to create their own syllabuses and interact with those designated by the government to address a specific context problem, in addition to top-down decisions.

In addition, [13] emphasized that English teachers in higher education should devote greater attention to ensuring that the language teaching materials are tailored to the needs of their pupils. Typically, teaching materials are produced based on teachers' expectations in relation to the curriculum's learning outcomes. To put it another way, the curriculum and syllabus are still the formal features that drive learning outcomes, which must take into account the demands of the students. The gap in this study is that most ESP studies discussed curriculum, syllabus, and materials that reflect four skills of

English. Whereas this study would find out the communication skills needed for ESP, Public Administration, through the English show program by viewing the expectations of the stakeholders. It dealt with the development of PA students' communication skills which are consulted to develop the learning objectives in this method. Therefore, this present research would find out the answer of the following questions:

1. What are the challenging aspects of communication faced by PA students of Umsida?
2. What do PA students need in learning English communication skills?

2 Methodology

The design of this study was qualitative to find out the various viewpoints on the current issue, that is, the PA students' needs in English communication were investigated by using sources of data based on several perspectives. Thus, the data of this research originated from the goals, reasons, feelings, intentions, viewpoints, and assumptions of the participants [14].

This study was carried out to find the goals, reasons, feelings, intentions, viewpoints, and assumptions of the twelve participants or students of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo who joined the Espro. The Espro is a supplementary course, apart from the regular credits held by Public Administration (PA) Study Program. It has been established in early 2022 and followed by twelve students. The students are from the fourth and sixth semester and have joined the program for three months.

2.1 Data Collecting

The data were collected by capturing and recording the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The participants of FGD were all the twelve students, one of them was chosen as the captain of the FGD who could accommodate the whole FGD members to deliver their expectations and lacks, particularly in speaking areas. The following four questions were the guideline to help the participants of the FGD flow the discussion.

1. What urgency makes you need to master communication skills?
2. What are the challenges in doing English communication?
3. What are your expectations to learn English communication related to your educational background and your future job?
4. What teaching materials do you need to learn English communication?

2.2 Data Analysis

Several steps were taken to analyze the data. To get an initial sense, the text data was read and re-read. As the FGD was done in Bahasa Indonesia, the researcher transcribed all the recordings and then translated them into English. The next stage was the data redundancy process that allowed the researcher to filter out irrelevant data (Fraenkel, et.al, 2012). The study's credibility was assessed in two ways: transferability and confirmability. It is possible to achieve transferability by employing the two instruments. The results of

FGD and the interview were compared to see the similarities or differences. All data from the investigation may be traced back to their origins and logically employed to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes, known as confirmability.

3 Result and Discussion

The result of this study is aimed at answering two research questions. The first is related to the challenging aspects of communication faced by PA students of Umsida, and the second one is about their need in learning English communication skills related to their educational background based on the FGD and interview.

3.1 The Urgency and Challenge in Communication

The FGD members agreed that the urgency to master communication skills was their future job opportunity. The trend from online job vacancies, mass media, and social media in relation to the job offers that suited to their educational background required communication skills. Besides, they also heard from some of the successful alumni that communication skill is quite important at work, especially in English speaking. English communication skill provides a better and more promising position and higher salary at work. As most graduates are directed to become public servants whose work is mostly serving the community, communication skill is absolutely needed.

In addition, the challenge in English communication is about arranging the words to be meaningful sentences so that listeners or audiences could accept and understand their speeches. Since their communication skills were usually needed in doing presentations in the class, the students tended to write a draft of a given topic. They often forgot what they have written on the draft. They tried to find other words to replace the words they had forgotten. Unfortunately, the replaced words changed the meaning of the sentences which impacted the listeners would not understand their speeches.

Another result related to the challenge in English communication based on the FGD is that the students had to select the appropriate vocabulary when communicating or doing conversations with colleagues. They understood the general context of what other people talked about although they do not know the meaning of certain words. Then, when it came to questions, they also understood the questions given to them and how to answer. However, all the answers had already been in their mind but they could hardly utter appropriate words to talk and answer the questions. In short, the students could not synchronize their thought and mouth so they faced difficulty in communicating. They agreed that it was their opportunity to learn more about vocabulary, how it is pronounced, and arrange it into meaningful sentences.

Through FGD, all students stated that mastering speaking English is quite important. As they had seen from the alumni, having English communication skills, in fact, assisted them to easily be promoted in their jobs. Some students expected to master speaking to help them obtain a coveted position at work. They went on to say that this was due to rising global competitiveness, with individuals from all over the world flocking to Indonesia

in search of work. As a result, they were aware of the importance of improving their communication skills in order to keep their work.

When the students graduate from the university, they will face the real world of working. There will be many problems faced by either the Indonesian government or the government in other countries. There are also great offers from private companies both domestic companies and foreign ones. The students' chance to follow the flow of existed job offers has widely opened. As the teachers in the study program have shared all the knowledge they need for jobs, what the students need to do next is to prepare to face the universal problems by improving their communication skills.

3.2 The Needs in Communication Skills

There are a lot of things the students expected from learning English communication skills related to their educational background and future job. Through the interview with the head of Public Administration study program, the communication skills the students need to prepare the graduate performance are advocacy, diplomacy, press conference, and negotiation. She put the teaching strategy to the teacher, that is, all skills can be integrated or separated. Yet, the result is that the students can communicate and express their idea through their speaking competence because the advocacy, diplomacy, press conference, and negotiation are all produced in speaking.

Otherwise, through the FGD, the researcher could not understand clearly what students need in communication skills. Then the researcher met the captain of the group to confirm. The students expected from the English Show program to enhance their communication skills covered some strategies in learning English. The strategies are integrated from reading, listening, and speaking skills. They are explained in the following points.

1. Reading aloud. The students need to read the passages aloud, discuss the unfamiliar words, and want to try to understand the meaning by translating the whole context of the text, not translating one word by one word. It makes them feel bored in learning. Through the reading activity, they expect to understand the main purpose of the text and then discuss it with friends.
2. Reading and listening to English narration. The PA students like news. They expect they can read the news text completed with the audio but they are afraid of making mistakes in producing the appropriate sound when uttering it. In other words, they read the news text, and at the same time, they listen to the audio so they can follow correct pronunciation, word stress, and intonation. For example: The students read the news text first, only the text. Then, they started reading the text for the second time while listening to the audio. They follow again the audio while reading the text, and then retell the news in their own words. Thus, they expect this strategy, reading and listening at the same time, can increase their communication skills.
3. Watching movies. The students expect to watch movies twice within a period of the ES program. The movies can be any, so instead of learning, they can refresh their mind. From the movies, the students analyze the situation, what makes the condition happen, and what impacts they can see from the movies. In the end, the students will discuss and retell the movies with their group mates.

4. Practicing conversation. The students expect that the teacher will give the cases or topics starting from the simple topic such as daily life, how to deal with people in public places, practicing press conferences, and discussing welfare for the country. By having the simple topics at the beginning, the students think that they will get accustomed to talking and conversing, so they can be more ready to discuss more challenging topics related to their educational background.

Regarding the materials, according to the discussion in the focus group, the PA students expect to learn about (1) reviewing English spoken news related to international problems, both in written and oral production; (2) Discussing the public issues by comparing the problems in Indonesia and other countries. In this point, the students have already understood the context of the trend of international problems; (3) Discussing public service by comparing the working styles of inter public servants in all over Indonesia, and also comparing the working styles of public servants in Indonesia, Asia and European countries; (4) Discussing the issues of bureaucracy and government related to the problems and solution to help the nation overcome the problems, (5) Discussing about politics and economics in Indonesia and how it relates to the growth of the nation to face the global competitiveness; (6) Discussing the development of the public sector and its relation to the human welfare.

Furthermore, based on the study program perspectives, teaching materials expected to enhance the students' communication skills is that the students can get the topics or cases related to the study of policy. It is closely related to the advocacy, diplomacy, press conference, and negotiation that she mentioned before so the students can focus on their competence during their study in Public Administration study program. She also expects that the teacher does not give too much lecturing but facilitating the students with much time to practice speaking.

3.3 Discussion

It is no longer debatable that English is currently the international language of communication. Communication skills, as seen through interactions between teachers and students in the classroom, have grown increasingly important in the teaching and learning process [16]. As what has been stated in the finding, the students of Public Administration expected good collaboration of teaching and learning process to accommodate their need in improving their communication skills. This condition is purposed to meet the future job opportunities that require English communication skill to collaborate in international partnerships. The findings supported [17], they stated that public servants' communication abilities are adequate, and that individual employee characteristics and job motivation are two factors that have a positive and significant impact on all aspects of communication skills. Communication skills were discovered to have a positive and significant impact on public servants' work performance, with media skills being the most accurate predictor. In short, English is the language of corporate executives, intellectual life, and politics in many cultures. This terminology is frequently associated with high-level vocations and positions [18] that makes many people believe that someone who has excellent English skills is likewise successful.

Related to the communication challenges, the improved teaching capacities are required to produce meaningful classroom instruction for students' communicative development. The continual need analysis approaches are required to effectively identify the gaps between what has been taught and practices in English teaching and learning. However, teachers' position of becoming a facilitator is somehow more challenging to accommodate students' hope of being able to communicate English effectively better than. Teachers' abilities are frequently tied to their capacity to communicate in English and to comprehend teaching pedagogy [1].

4 Conclusion

As stated from the beginning, this study aimed at investigating the needs of non-English students and lecturers to prepare the graduates' performance of public speaking competence. The result showed that both students and the study program focused on the learning goals of enhancing communication, based on the needs for the future jobs of the graduates. The students' communication needs were discovered in three primary categories: learning needs, teaching strategies, and teaching materials. Students are expected to communicate well for the sake of international collaboration, and job possibilities. Several problems, however, arise in order to meet the learning goals and demands of the pupils. Students, for example, expected teachers to provide appropriate speaking strategies and materials appropriate to the students' educational background. Besides, the students also expected that the teacher could give them more chances to perform speaking with appropriate pronunciation by delivering teaching strategies and expanding their vocabulary. This strategy may help to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world employment.

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